

Revisiting Jung's dialogue with yoga: observations from transpersonal psychology

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In spite of the considerable body of scholarly literature on Jung's ambivalent relationship to Indian mystical traditions and his misreading of their canonical materials during the last three decades, Jung's persistent warnings against the practice of yoga by Europeans deserve more systematic examination by Jung scholars than they have so far received. At a time of increasing globalization inconsistent with Jung's East/West psychological relativism, Jung scholarship needs to engage with the considerable body of literature of transpersonal psychology addressing issues central to Jung's dialogue with yoga in the 1930s and 1940s. In this article, drawing upon the materials of transpersonal psychology, I examine two such issues: (1) Jung's claim that the European practice of yoga leads either to repression of unconscious contents by consciousness or to psychotic states in which consciousness is overwhelmed by the unconscious; (2) Jung's objection to the claim of Indian non-dualist traditions that the ego can be completely dissolved in, or absorbed by, the transcendental self. The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to catalogue challenges by transpersonal psychologists to Jung's model of psychological and spiritual development; second, to consider whether, because of Jung's defensive distancing from Indian spirituality, he exaggerated differences between the individuation process and the Indian mystical traditions he engaged with.

Keywords: yoga; transpersonal psychology; non-dualism; individuation

In spite of the considerable body of scholarly literature on Jung's ambivalent relationship to Indian mystical traditions during the last three decades (Faber and Saayman, 1984; Coward, 1985, 2002; Reynolds, 1989; Bishop, 1992; Jones, 1993; Clarke, 1994; Gomez, 1995; Shamdasani, 1996; Daniel, 2007), his writings on 'the dreamlike world of India' (Jung, 1939a; Schlamm, 1998) and on yoga¹ remain frozen in the time they were written. Because Jung's orientalism prevented him from listening to the religious and cultural 'other' in a conversation of equals, from reaching out empathically to the 'other' in an attempt to see the world from the other's point of view (Coward, 1985; Reynolds, 1989; Jones, 1993; Clarke, 1994; Gomez, 1995; Shamdasani, 1996; Schlamm, 1998),² Jung scholars have generally been reluctant to attempt to carry forward Jung's dialogue with Indian religious traditions, seeing little of value in dreaming Jung's dream of 'the dreamlike world of India' onwards. In this article, I want to argue that, in spite of Jung's caricaturing of Indian spirituality, his misreading of Hindu and Buddhist canonical materials

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(Coward, 1985, 1992; Reynolds, 1989; Jones, 1993; Clarke, 1994; Gomez, 1995; Schlamm, 1998),³ and his misunderstanding of Indian spiritual practices, at this time of increasing globalization that is inconsistent with Jung's East/West psychological relativism or enclavism (Clarke, 1994), Jung scholarship needs to dream Jung's dream onwards by engaging with the considerable body of literature of transpersonal psychology addressing issues central to Jung's dialogue with yoga in the 1930s and 1940s.

While much of this article is devoted to cataloguing challenges by transpersonal psychologists to Jung's model of psychological and spiritual development, its main purpose is to demonstrate that, because of Jung's misunderstanding of Indian canonical materials and spiritual practices, he exaggerated differences between the individuation process and the Indian mystical traditions he engaged with, and thereby prematurely curtailed his dialogue with the East – a tragedy, I suggest, not only for him, but also for us. By revisiting Jung's dialogue with yoga, through identifying his distorted image of it, analytical psychology can be enriched by moving toward greater clarity of its own distinctive theistic spiritual vision, and can achieve a deeper understanding of what really divides it from the non-dualistic traditions of India. In this article I have chosen to focus my attention on only two of many issues separating Jung from Hinduism and Buddhism, in order to demonstrate what is at stake in attempting to carry forward Jung's dialogue with the East: (1) Jung's claim that the European practice of yoga, a form of mimetic madness, leads either to repression of unconscious contents by consciousness or to psychotic states in which consciousness is overwhelmed by the unconscious (Jung, 1935/1953; 1936; 1939b; 1943); (2) Jung's objection to the claim of Indian non-dualist traditions that the ego can be completely dissolved in, or absorbed by, the transcendental self (Jung, 1939b, 1939c).

Jung's persistent warnings against the practice of yoga by Europeans deserve more systematic examination by Jung scholars than they have so far received. The failure of the Jungian community to engage vigorously with Jung's proscription of the European practice of yoga can, I believe, be attributed to a 'take it or leave it' attitude of contemporary scholars: either Jung's claim that the practice of yoga in the West can only succeed in producing an artificial stultification of Western intelligence and the means not of addressing Western psychological and spiritual problems but of avoiding them is accepted as veridical; or it is acknowledged that Jung's spiritual and cultural provincialism prevented him from anticipating the psychological changes experienced by Europeans (including the widespread adoption of yoga practices in the West) during the decades since his death. What Jung scholars have generally avoided exploring is the middle ground between these positions: that Jung's position was partly but not wholly justified; that Jung identified dangerous psychopathological phenomena which could be triggered by the European practice of yoga, but exaggerated their significance and thereby underestimated the psychological and spiritual value of yoga practice in the West. This middle ground has been explored extensively during the last four decades by transpersonal psychologists, who evince little familiarity with Jung's reasons for his proscription of the European practice of yoga. Instead of engaging systematically with Jung's writings on the East, transpersonal psychologists have drawn upon a wide range of psychoanalytic materials to alert their readers to clinical issues associated with meditation, which are similar to, and often indistinguishable from, those identified by Jung.

Jung's claim in his essays on the East, especially in *Yoga and the West*, that the European practice of yoga leads either to repression of unconscious contents by consciousness⁴ or to psychotic states in which consciousness is overwhelmed by the unconscious⁵ (Jung, 1936, paras. 867–868, 870–871, 875–876; 1935/1953, paras. 847–848) finds startling confirmation in the writings of several leading transpersonal psychologists. Writing from a Buddhist perspective, Jack Engler observes that you have to be 'somebody before you can be nobody' (Engler, 1993, pp. 120). You have to have a well-developed ego or self before attempting to transcend this ego or self through Buddhist meditation practices such as *vipassana*. The practice of *vipassana* presents serious risks to those suffering from a failure to fully develop and integrate the self or ego before attempting to transcend this centre of the personality through Buddhist meditation practices. Such risks include the destruction of fragile ego boundaries, the upsurge of primitive drives which can only be controlled by disavowal, and violent oscillation between states of rage, emptiness and depression at one extreme, and euphoria and bliss counterfeiting experiences of mystical unity and self-transcendence at the other. Such oscillations further weaken the ego, becoming a source of resistance to integrating experiences of oneself and others. Moreover, Engler observes that Westerners show relatively slow progress in the practice of *vipassana* because their meditation practice is dominated by 'primary process thinking', by an increase in fantasy, daydreaming, reverie, spontaneous recall of past memories, derepression of conflictual material, and incessant thinking and emotional lability. These observations clearly support Jung's claim that when Westerners begin to meditate, they immediately encounter their own subjective fantasies rather than transpersonal realms of the unconscious (Jung, 1943, para. 939). Engler also notes that Buddhist practice is often embraced, particularly by those in late adolescence and those passing through a midlife transition, as a means to avoid or prematurely abandon developmental tasks of identity formation. Similarly, those suffering from narcissistic and borderline personality disorders may be tempted to embrace the Buddhist doctrine of no-self, *anatta*, to legitimise their lack of self-integration. Indeed, Engler affirms that many forms of psychopathology (e.g. autism, schizophrenic and psychotic syndromes, borderline personality disorders) cannot be addressed by *vipassana* (Engler, 1986, pp. 17–51; see also Odajnyk, 1993, pp. 110–112).

Mark Epstein and Jonathan Lief, have also commented on psychiatric complications associated with meditation practice in support of Engler's observations. Among the dangerous side-effects of meditation practice cited by them are depersonalisation and derealisation experiences frequently requiring psychiatric consultation, anxiety, tension, agitation and restlessness, extreme depression as well as euphoria, excessive pressure from unconscious material, grandiose fantasies evolving into religious delusions with messianic content, paranoia, psychotic and schizoid defence mechanisms of denial, delusional projection and distortion, unprepared exposure to unresolved psychic conflicts and unexplored drives, excessive fascination with personal unconscious material, and dissociation from libidinal drives during which the opposites of such drives are embraced as natural products of newfound spirituality (Epstein & Lief, 1986, pp. 53–63).⁶

Michael Washburn (a Jungian-oriented transpersonal psychologist who has been heavily influenced by Jung's night-sea journey celebrated in *Symbols of transformation*) in his formulation of his clinical concept of regression in the service of transcendence (Washburn, 1988, pp. 36–38; 155–185; 249), has offered many

observations in support of Jung's warnings in the 1930s and 1940s against using meditation to force one's way into the collective unconscious, thus exposing the defenceless ego to unconscious dominants (Jung, 1935/1953, para. 848; Washburn, 1988, p. 151). The long-term practice of meditation can lead to an encounter with the shadow, exposure to buried psychic wounds, and confrontation with fears, fantasies and disturbing feelings that were previously manageably contained. Meditative demobilisation eventually suppresses or disengages the ego's embedded defensive structures, rendering it vulnerable to a breakthrough of unwelcome repressed materials, including extremely potent, non-egoic, numinous energies and complexes which can destroy the ego (Washburn, 1988, pp. 145–154). Echoing observations by Joseph Campbell and many others (Campbell, 1972, pp. 201–232; Wapnick, 1972, pp. 153–174), Washburn affirms that the difference between the mystic and the madman is that the former's ego is seaworthy whereas the latter's is not (Washburn, 1988, pp. 186–214). Yet he affirms the value of this dangerous process of regression in the service of transcendence as the destructive phase clearing the way for the building of a new human being. During this negative phase the psyche is transformed from a repressed and imploded system into a derepressing and exploding one, in which the two poles of the psyche, consciousness and the dynamic unconscious, are brought into conflict with one another (Washburn, 1988, pp. 184–185). These observations have also been supported by Stanislav and Christina Grof's writings on the psychopathological expressions of spiritual emergency, personal crises teleologically triggering psychological healing, spiritual transformation, and the evolution of consciousness (S. Grof & C. Grof, 1989, pp. 1–26; S. Grof & C. Grof, 1991).

Clearly, Engler, Epstein, Lieff, and Washburn, as well as other transpersonal psychologists, provide much material of interest to scholars engaging with Jung's writings on yoga. The difference between these transpersonal psychologists and Jung, however, is that whereas the former embrace the practice of meditation in spite of the many forms of psychopathology associated with it, affirming its spiritual value, the latter argued that the many forms of psychopathology associated with the Western practice of yoga, including the risk of psychotic breakdown and avoidance of confrontation with shadow issues (Jung, 1943, para. 939; Bishop, 1992, pp. 169–170), signalled the need for Europeans to develop their own Western form of yoga through psychotherapeutic practice and active imagination in preference to the exotic, but alien spiritual practices of the East (Jung, 1936, paras. 875–876). What Jung failed to acknowledge is the possibility of a variety of Western responses to yoga, some more psychologically healing and spiritually informed, because supported by spiritual preparation and the systematic study of Hindu and Buddhist soteriological traditions, than others.

Jung's sweeping dismissal of the Western practice of yoga is based upon his East/West psychological relativism or enclavism (Clarke, 1994, pp. 152–155). Eastern and Western mentalities are fundamentally different because they are the product of different histories, shaped by different climates and topographies. In the light of our experience of increasing globalisation and religious syncretism in the West since Jung's death, such a claim today, to say the least, appears exaggerated. Jung's claim that the East/West psychic differences identified by him are structural, rather than superficial, has recently been challenged, for example by some Buddhist scholars, who argue for a common psychic structure and functioning of all human minds transcending cultural differences (Reynolds, 1989, p. 149). Since Mahayana Buddhism successfully exported its meditation methods from India to the very

different cultures of China, Japan, Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, Korea and Vietnam (with their very different languages, conceptual frameworks, and histories), although this process of cultural adaptation required centuries to complete, there is no reason to suppose that Buddhist meditation methods cannot be gradually adapted to respond sensitively and skilfully (*upaya*) to the very different cultural needs of the West. Similarly, Theravada Buddhism spread from Sri Lanka and India to Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos; Islam spread from the Arabian deserts to India and Indonesia in the East and through North Africa to Andalusia in the West; and Christianity spread from the Middle East to Europe and the Americas, Africa, Australasia, India and China.

These observations, which could be supplemented by many more about the complex religious histories of India and China, for example, bring into focus two key problematic issues raised by Jung's East/West psychological relativism which need to be addressed: (1) can Jung's psychological enclavism adequately explain this transmission of religious traditions across many parts of the world?; (2) did Jung underestimate the differences between Asian religious and cultural traditions, while exaggerating the differences between Eastern and Western mentalities? I suggest Jung's failure to identify and engage with these issues can be traced, on the one hand to his severely limited exposure to Indological, Sinological and Islamic scholarship, and on the other to his failure to recognise the need for quantitative research on twentieth-century yoga practice in the West to support his claim for East/West psychological relativism (Fontana, 2003, pp. 100–101). Jung scholars today, in collaboration with transpersonal psychologists, need to begin to develop the quantitative research methods necessary to offer a balanced assessment of the reasons for Jung's proscription of the European practice of yoga. In this way, they can begin to make significant contributions to wider intellectual and spiritual debates of our times about the opportunities and dangers of religious syncretism in the West and globalisation.⁷

I turn now to the second theme of this article: Jung's persistent objection to the claim of Indian non-dualist traditions that the ego can be completely dissolved in, or absorbed by, the transcendental self (*brahman*, *atman*, *purusa*, *nirvana*) in a trance-like state (*samadhi*) attained by yoga practice. He argued that the identification of the self-conscious subject with, or its disappearance within, a universal consciousness celebrated by Eastern canonical traditions must be equated with unconsciousness and that exclusion, selection, and discrimination are the root and essence of consciousness. Jung conceded that the practice of yoga can produce to a remarkable extension of consciousness, but it cannot lead to an egoless state, because there must always be something or somebody left over – the infinitesimal ego, the knowing 'I' – to experience the realization that there is no distinction between subject and object. If there is no knowing subject, the non-dual position cannot be stated as an object of knowledge (Jung, 1939b, paras. 774–775, 817–818; 1939c, para. 520; 1951, para. 45; Coward, 1985, pp. 73–75; 2002, pp. 76–77, 81–82; Reynolds, 1989, pp. 106–108, 145; Jones, 1993, 174–175; Clarke, 1994, pp. 146–147).⁸ Peter Bishop, bridging the fields of archetypal and transpersonal psychology, decades ago concluded that Jung did not fully appreciate Buddhist meditation, tending to interpret it as an introvertive process of surrender to the collective unconscious requiring a one-sided attempt to withdraw from the world (Bishop, 1992, p. 173; Jung, 1939b, para. 774). This view has also been endorsed by the archetypal psychologist Roberts Avens. He argues:

There is no denying that Jung himself saw meditation as a one-sided attempt to withdraw from the world, dissolving the ego and leading back to an indefinite experience of oneness and timelessness. To him it was a kind of surrender to the collective unconscious – a dangerous indulgence that too lightly dismisses the importance of the ego. (Avens, 1980, p. 80)

Challenging Jung's persistent claim that the unconscious is unknown to consciousness (Jung, 1916/1928, paras. 274, 398–399, 405; 1939d, para. 890; 1963, p. 208), he continues:

The unconscious process as 'a mode of relationship' is in fact unknown and unknowable only to the focal and selective type of consciousness, but it is fully known or rather intuited (I should prefer to say 'imagined') as the transpersonal background of an experiential field whose foreground consists of discrete, sharply differentiated figures. In states of wider awareness which are characterised by diffuse attention, we can apprehend not only the foreground (discrete figures) but also and at the same time its 'unconscious' ground; we find ourselves in direct touch with the whole experiential field, or as Buddhists say, with 'things as they are'. (Avens, 1980, pp. 80–81)

Similarly, more recently transpersonal psychologist John Welwood has offered a Buddhist reading of Jung's psychological and philosophical dismissal of non-dualism, which he associates with Jung's proscription of the European practice of yoga. He has complained that Jung could not allow for egoless awareness as a developmental step beyond ego, seeing it only as a step backward toward a more primitive state of mind, a dissolution of consciousness, a position inconsistent with the experience of most meditators that meditation practice heightens and sharpens consciousness. Offering a critique of Jung's dualistic and theistic model of psychological and spiritual development, Welwood insists that meditation is a royal road to non-dualistic experience, rather than to a subterranean unconscious mind, revealing awareness of a unified field where divisions between subject and object, the inner world and outer reality, and consciousness and the unconscious, are recognised as possessing only conventional significance, but from the perspective of a higher order of truth of Buddhism simply do not exist. Such divisions, including Jung's division between ego and unconscious, are, for Welwood, symptomatic of the confused state of mind known in Buddhism as *samsara* (Welwood, 2002, pp. 58–63; see also Watts, 1973, p. 106).

While not wishing to arbitrate between Welwood's and Jung's competing narratives of spiritual transformation, I argue that Jung's interpretation of Indian experiences of liberation and enlightenment is suspect because he was misled by the translation of Wilhelm Hauer (with whom he had collaborated in the Kundalini Yoga seminars in 1932) of the term *samadhi*, the enstatic trance of yoga, as '*Einfaltung*', introversion, sinking back into the depths, as opposed to *Entfaltung*, extraversion (Jung, 1938–9, p. 15). Because Jung's intellectual exposure to yoga practice was primarily through the dualist *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali (Jung, 1938–9, pp. 121–139), which is disinterested in any post-Enlightenment engagement with the physical and psychical world and therefore most removed from his model of individuation, he failed to consider whether non-dualistic traditions, such as the Advaita Vedanta of Sankara, Theravada Buddhism, and the *sunyavadin* and *vijnanavadin* schools of Mahayana Buddhism might be less introverted than the Yoga tradition of Patanjali. This failure, in turn, led him to mistakenly assume that the enlightened or liberated being (*jivanmukti* – liberated while still embodied) has completely obliterated his ego as a psychic mechanism of adaptation to the outer world – not only during states of

meditative absorption (*samadhi*) but also during states of ordinary waking consciousness. The reason Jung chose not to visit Ramana Maharshi when in India in 1938, against the advice of Heinrich Zimmer, is that he felt he could learn nothing from this egoless spiritual teacher (Case, 1994, pp. 10–12).⁹ Commenting on the dissolution of the ego in the *atman* in the life and thought of Ramana in his essay ‘The holy men of India’, Jung observes:

The inevitable consequence is the depreciation and abolition of the physical and psychic man (i.e. of the living body and *ahamkāra*) in favour of the pneumatic man. Shri Ramana speaks of this body as ‘this clod’. As against this, and taking into consideration the complex nature of human experience (emotion plus interpretation), the critical standpoint admits the importance of ego consciousness, well knowing that without *ahamkāra* there would be absolutely no one there to register what was happening. Without the Maharshi’s personal ego, which, as a matter of brute experience, only exists in conjunction with the said ‘clod’ (=body), there would be no Shri Ramana at all. Even if we agreed with him that it is no longer his ego, but the *atman* speaking, it is still the psychic structure of consciousness in association with the body that makes speech communication possible. Without this admittedly very troublesome physical and psychic man, the self would be entirely without substance... (Jung, 1944, para. 959)

Jung’s assumption that Ramana Maharshi, as a *jivanmukti* (Fort, 1998, pp. 146–149), had completely obliterated his ego as a psychic mechanism of adaptation to the outer world is mistaken, as anyone familiar with his ‘self-enquiry’ (*vichara*) and the Advaita Vedanta teaching of the two orders of truth on which it is based will confirm (Godman, 1985, pp. 34–37, 47–49, 53–54, 56–57). What is obliterated is not this mechanical psychic mechanism which is only eliminated at the moment of death, but identification with it, giving rise to the experience of psychic agency attendant upon the identification of *ahamkāra* (ego) with either objects of the outer world or inner psychic events (thoughts, memory, feelings etc.). Unlike ignorant human beings who misconstrue the lower order of truth (ordinary reality) generated by *ahamkāra* as a psychic agent as reality, the *jivanmukti* realises that this state of consciousness is and always has been an illusion, and that only timeless *brahman*, indifferent to all change and located in the heart, is real.

Jung’s reading of Ramana Maharshi’s teaching, and more generally of the state of consciousness of the *jivanmukti*, has been recently challenged by the literature of transpersonal psychology. Mark Epstein, for example, has argued that, from the Buddhist perspective, it is mistake to view egolessness as a developmental stage beyond the ego. During transpersonal states of consciousness the ego is not abandoned, nor completely transcended; rather, the spiritual practitioner realises that the ego lacks concrete existence. It is not the ego that disappears; rather the belief in the ego’s solidity, the identification with the ego’s representations, is abandoned in the realisation of egolessness during states of ordinary waking consciousness (Epstein, 1993, pp. 121–123). This relationship between ego and egolessness has also been persistently endorsed by Ken Wilber’s spectrum of consciousness model of transpersonal development in his many publications (Wilber, 2000, 2006; Visser, 2003; Schlamm, 2001), as well as by John Welwood (Welwood, 2002, pp. 35–47). Wilber argues that the ego, with its capacity for detached witnessing of the conventional world, is not dissolved but preserved by transpersonal development. Although exclusive identification of consciousness with the ego is transcended during spiritual development, the ego is included within, and utilised by, all transpersonal levels of consciousness (Wilber, 2000, p. 91; Schlamm, 2001, p. 20).

Moreover, Michael Washburn has observed that states of enstasy (*samadhi*, *jhana*) differ considerably from hypnotic trance and drug-induced altered states because, although egoless in the sense of being unselfconsciously absorbed, they have at their disposal egoic faculties and knowledge. While these states are without the reflexive self-awareness usually associated with the ego, reality testing, operational cognition, acquired knowledge, and other functions and resources normally linked to the ego are fully available to individuals experiencing such enstatic states (Washburn, 1988, pp. 247–248). If this is the case, such egoic faculties and knowledge must be equally available to enlightened individuals during waking consciousness. Indeed, Ramana Maharshi could hardly have functioned as a spiritual teacher without them.

Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein has argued that enlightenment does not obliterate the personality, even though identification with the personality complex and the ego is transcended. Indeed, he has insisted that enlightenment does not destroy the shadow, because vertical paths to liberation, unlike horizontal paths to psychic integration, are not interested in addressing shadow issues. Acknowledging that enlightened individuals can be just as saintly or beastly, eccentric or neurotic, after their spiritual awakening as before it, Feuerstein draws attention to the need for scholars to examine post-enlightenment, horizontal, time-bound, psychological development of awakened individuals, especially spiritual teachers (Feuerstein, 1991, pp. 240–241, 243–246; see also Bharati, 1976, pp. 87–111). If Jung had visited Ramana Maharshi at Tiruvannamalai in 1938, if only to deepen his understanding of what liberation might mean in the Advaita tradition, much of his confusion about the absence of the ego triggered by spiritual awakening in Indian soteriological traditions might have been dispelled, and firmer ground established on which to deepen his dialogue with the East. He might even have anticipated Feuerstein's observations about the presence of the shadow in liberated individuals, and thereby realised that he had indeed exaggerated differences between the individuation process and the Indian mystical traditions he engaged with. Moreover, through such a realisation, he might even have been able to abandon his defensive distancing from Indian spirituality without undermining his own Western, theistic, vision of spiritual and psychological development.

Why did Jung choose not to visit Ramana Maharshi? In *Memories, dreams, reflections*, he offers an explanation:

I studiously avoided all so-called 'holy-men'. I did so because I had to make do with my own truth, not accept from others what I could not attain on my own. I would have felt it as a theft had I attempted to learn from the holy men and to accept their truth for myself. Nor in Europe can I make any borrowings from the East, but must shape my life out of myself – out of what my inner being tells me, or what nature brings to me. (Jung, 1963, p. 305)

In his 1944 essay 'The holy men of India', however, he offers another explanation:

I ran across a disciple of the Maharshi. . . . in this modest, kindly, devout and childlike spirit I encountered a man who had absorbed the wisdom of the Maharshi with utter devotion, and at the same time had surpassed his master because, notwithstanding his cleverness and holiness, he had 'eaten' the world. I acknowledge with deep gratitude this meeting with him; nothing better could have happened to me. The man who is only wise and only holy interests me about as much as the skeleton of a rare saurian, which would not move me to tears. The insane contradiction, on the other hand, between existence beyond *māyā* in the cosmic Self, and that amiable human weakness which fruitfully sinks many roots into the black earth, repeating for all eternity the weaving and rending of the

veil as the ageless melody of India – this contradiction fascinates me; for how else can one perceive the light without the shadow, hear the silence without the noise, attain wisdom without foolishness? . . . My man – thank God – was only a little holy man; no radiant peak above the dark abysses, no shattering sport of nature, but an example of how wisdom, holiness *and* humanity can dwell together in harmony, richly, pleasantly, sweetly, peacefully and patiently, without limiting one another. (Jung, 1944, para. 953)

Jung's celebration of the conjunction of opposites in this passage reveals his dismissal of Ramana Maharshi's 'metaphysical', 'pre-psychological', 'pre-Kantian' transcendence of opposites (*nirdvandva*) and his 'curious detachment from the world of concrete particulars we call reality' (Jung, 1944, para. 956; 1976, p. 438). In sharp contrast to Ramana Maharshi's non-dualist teaching affirming the possibility of the perfectibility of human nature, for Jung, because the individuation process can never be completed, suffering caused by the dynamic interplay of opposites can never be fully overcome and complete liberation from these opposites means death (Jung, 1963, pp. 306–307; 1973, p. 247; Coward, 2002, pp. 61–82).

Did Jung exaggerate differences between the individuation process and Ramana Maharshi's non-dualism? I suggest that he did. Jung celebrated the emphasis Eastern yoga traditions place on detachment from egocentricity as the condition for the spiritual transformation of consciousness, because it provided support for his affirmation that individuation requires the shifting of the centre of the personality away from the ego (and its emotional attachments to the outer world) and towards the *self*. Recognizing that the ego stands to the *self* as the moved to the mover, or as object to subject leads to an extension and refinement of consciousness familiar to the East, enabling the analysand to achieve relief from suffering caused by the conflict of opposites and to realize that it is not that something new is seen but that one sees or experiences differently (Jung, 1939d, paras. 890–893; see also Jung, 1931/1962, paras. 17–20, 64–71; 1939b, paras. 770–771, 779; 1973, pp. 240–241; 1976, pp. 385–385). What impressed Jung most about the transformation of consciousness celebrated by the yoga traditions of the East (equated by him with the self-liberation of the mind in contrast to the grace of God in Christianity) was the importance assigned to bringing the divinity within the range of human experience rather than, as in much Western religion, accepting that God is inaccessible to human consciousness (Jung, 1939b, paras. 770–771, 779). What distinguishes the individuation process from what Jung judged to be the excessively introverted nature of Ramana Maharshi's non-dualism is the curiously hybrid nature of Jung's model of spiritual transformation, conjoining introversion with extroversion, self-liberation of the mind with a theistically-oriented distinction between the ego and the unconscious which acknowledges the need for divine grace.

Notes

1. Jung identified the term 'yoga' with the spiritual development of the personality within the Hindu, Buddhist and Taoist religious traditions. Rather than distinguishing between the variety of yoga practices and competing soteriological perspectives established by the canonical traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, Jung was interested in yoga as a natural process of introversion, seeing the inner processes to which yoga gave rise as universal and the indigenous methods employed to achieve them as culturally specific (Jung, 1936, para. 873; Shamdasani, 1996, p. xxix). For Jung's dialogue with Taoism, see, for example, Jung, 1931/1962; 1950; Odajnyk, 1993; Clarke, 1994; Coward, 1996; Karcher, 1999; Davy-Barnes, 2009.

2. Sir John Woodroffe, translator of the Tantric text on which Jung commented in his 1932 seminar on 'The psychology of Kundalini yoga', observed: 'We, who are foreigners, must place ourselves in the skin of the Hindu, and must look at their doctrine and ritual through their eyes and not our own' (Shamdasani, 1996, p. xxvi). Jung, however, was unable to embrace this scholarly orientation to Eastern religious traditions. Jung argued that we, as Westerners, cannot 'place ourselves in the skin of the Hindu' because of our different psychological, spiritual and cultural histories. As Westerners, we can read Sanskrit texts with some profit, but we can only attain a limited grasp of their intended meaning; we cannot understand them experientially as the Hindu does. In the Kundalini Yoga seminar Jung observed that the introverted 'Hindu is normal when he is not in this world (as the extraverted European is) ... if you get into the Hindu mentality, you are just upside-down, you are all wrong ... it is no use discussing the Hindu idea of the unconscious because we don't know it (in experience)' (Shamdasani, 1996, pp. 16, 19).
3. Jung scholars to date have not identified Jung's misunderstanding of the Sanskrit technical term *purusha* in the Samkhya and Yoga traditions. In his commentary on the *Yoga Sutra* Jung comments on Deussen's translation of *purusha* as 'the subject of knowledge freed from everything objective':

I doubt this definition—it is too logical, and the East is not logical; it is observant and intuitive. So it is better to describe the *purusha* as primeval man or as the luminous man. (Jung, 1938–9, p. 121)

In fact, Deussen is correct, and Jung is mistaken. Remarkably, also, Jung argues that the *Yoga Sutra* is not radically dualist, because the opposition between *purusha*, masculine pure spirit, and *prakṛti*, feminine nature or psycho-physical reality, is mediated by the subtle body of *sattva* (light), *rajas* (passion or activity), and *tamas* (darkness) (Jung, 1938–9, p. 125). But this conjunction of the opposites of *purusha* and *prakṛti* is an expression not of liberation but of spiritual imprisonment in the *Yoga Sutra*, because the subtle body is a part of *prakṛti*. The soteriological goal of this text and tradition is, contrary to Jung, the eternal separation of *purusha* from *prakṛti*, leading to the 'aloneness', *kaivalya*, of the former.

Similarly, Jung misunderstood the Sanskrit technical term *atman*. Contrary to the *Upanishads* and later schools of Vedanta (*darśhanas* – points of view) commenting on them, Jung distinguishes between a personal and a suprapersonal *atman* or self (Jung, 1938–9, p. 41). However, these scriptural sources (*śruti*) and later philosophical commentaries on them (*smṛti*) persistently affirm that *atman* is not personal. Jung also mistakenly equates *atman* with *purusha*, associated with both the *Yoga Sutra* and the *Rig Vedic* cosmic giant and the creator god Prajapati. Jung has failed to realise that whereas for the *Yoga Sutra* there are an indefinite number of *purushas*, for the *Upanishads* and later schools of Vedanta there is only *atman* (in the singular) equated with *Brahman*.

4. Jung provides his most detailed explanation for his claim in *Yoga and the West* that the European, unlike the Indian, will inevitably use the practice of yoga to strengthen his will and consciousness in order to cramp the flow of unconscious contents and thus inhibit his experience of instinctual life (Jung, 1936, para. 875) in a letter to Oskar Schmitz, colleague of Count Hermann Keyserling at the Darmstadt School of Wisdom and author of *Psychoanalyse und Yoga*, in 1923. In this letter he argues that the European psyche has experienced a different psychic history to that of the Indian, and has thus 'produced conditions which are the most unfavourable soil one can think of for the application of yoga' (Jung, 1936, para. 876; see also Jung, 1931/1962, para. 16; 1973, pp. 39–41; Schlamm, 1998, pp. 62–63, 68–69).
5. 'One often hears and reads about the dangers of yoga, particularly of the ill-reputed *kundalini* yoga. The deliberately induced psychotic state, which in certain unstable individuals might easily lead to a real psychosis, is a danger that needs to be taken very seriously indeed. These things are really dangerous and ought not to be meddled with in our typically Western way. It is a meddling with fate, which strikes at the very roots of human existence and can let loose a flood of sufferings of which no sane person ever dreamed' (Jung, 1935/1953, para. 847). For a recent discussion of the dangers of *kundalini* yoga, particularly through an analysis of the involuntary *kundalini* awakening of Gopi Krishna, see Thomas, 2000.

6. Expressing his misgivings about the European adoption of Indian spiritual practices in *Memories, dreams, reflections*, Jung observed: 'A man who has not passed through the inferno of his passions has never overcome them. They then dwell in the house next door, and at any moment a flame may dart out and set fire to his own house. Whenever we give up, leave behind, and forget too much, there is always the danger that the things we have neglected will return with added force' (Jung, 1963, p. 306).
7. I know of only one Jung scholar, Walter Odajnyk (1993, pp. 110–112), who has begun to engage with the materials of transpersonal psychology on twentieth-century European practice of yoga, particularly through the work of Engler. Much more collaboration between the intellectual and clinical communities of analytical and transpersonal psychology, however, is now necessary, in order to move beyond excessive celebration or condemnation of Jung's writings on yoga toward a balanced assessment of his East/West psychological relativism.
8. 'The experience of "at-one-ment" is one example of those "quick-knowing" realizations of the East, an intuition of what it would be like if one could exist and not exist at the same time... But for my part I cannot conceive of such a possibility. I therefore assume that, in this point, Eastern intuition has overreached itself' (Jung, 1939b, para. 818).
9. 'Perhaps I should have visited Shri Ramana. Yet I fear that if I journeyed to India a second time to make up for my omission, it would fare with me just the same: I simply could not, despite the uniqueness of the occasion, bring myself to visit this undoubtedly distinguished man personally. For the fact is, I doubt his uniqueness; he is of a type which always was and will be. Therefore it was not necessary to seek him out. I saw him all over India, in the pictures of Ramakrishna, in Ramakrishna's disciples, in Buddhist monks, in innumerable other figures of the daily Indian scene, and the words of his wisdom are the *sous-entendu* of India's spiritual life. Shri Ramana is, in a sense, *a hominum homo*, a true 'son of man' of the Indian earth. He is "genuine", and on top of that he is a "phenomenon" which, seen through European eyes, has claims to uniqueness. But in India he is merely the whitest spot on a white surface... there is no village or country road where that broad-branched tree cannot be found in whose shade the ego struggles for its own abolition, drowning the world of multiplicity in the All and All-Oneness of Universal Being. This note rang so insistently in my ears that soon I was no longer able to shake off its spell. I was then absolutely certain that no one could ever get beyond this, least of all the Indian holy man himself; and should Shri Ramana say anything that did not chime in with this melody, or claim to know anything that transcended it, his illumination would assuredly be false. The holy man is right when he intones India's ancient chants, but wrong when he pipes any other tune. This effortless drone of argumentation, so suited to the heat of southern India, made me refrain, without regret, from a visit to Tiruvannamalai' (Jung, 1944, para. 952). In this observation, Jung has obliterated the variety of soteriological traditions and spiritual teachers of India.

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