

# I. Jung's Encounter with Yoga\*

## I. Yoga as Inclusive of the East in Jung's Thought

For Carl Jung, yoga is a general term indicating all of Eastern thought and psychological practice. In his writings yoga is used to designate Eastern traditions as diverse as Hinduism, Indian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism and Chinese Taoism. For Jung, therefore, yoga should not be confused with the narrow and technical definitions of the term which are encountered in Eastern thought itself. In Indian philosophy, for example, yoga refers to one of the six classical schools of thought—the yoga viewpoint systematized by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras*.<sup>1</sup> Although Jung was aware of this technical usage of yoga as early as 1921,<sup>2</sup> (and based his 1939 Lectures<sup>3</sup> given at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zurich, on Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*) his interest from the beginning was not with Patañjali's technical definitions but with the spiritual development of the personality as the goal of all yoga.<sup>4</sup> In his lectures Jung observes that in India the practice of yoga involves both psychology and philosophy. To be a philosopher in the East requires that one has undergone the spiritual development of yoga. It is in this sense that Jung sees yoga as a general term (inclusive of psychology as well as philosophy), which is the foundation of everything spiritual not only for India, but also for Tibet, China and Japan. Consequently in writing his

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Tibetan commentaries,<sup>5</sup> Jung talks about Tibetan yoga. In his commentary on the Taoist text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*,<sup>6</sup> he refers to Chinese yoga and in his *Psychology of Eastern Meditation*<sup>7</sup> (actually a commentary on the Pure Land Buddhist Text, *Amitāyur-dhyana Sūtra*), Jung speaks of the Japanese practice of yoga.

Although yoga in Eastern thought often has a very technical meaning, it is also employed in a general way similar to Jung's usage. Mircea Eliade, in his well-known book, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, observes that yoga is one of the basic motifs of Eastern thought.<sup>8</sup> And T. H. Stcherbatsky, the Russian scholar of Buddhism, maintains that yogic trance (*samādhi*) and yogic courses for the training of the mind in the achievement of the goal of release from suffering (*mokṣa*, or *nirvāṇa*) appear in virtually all Eastern schools of thought—be they Hindu or Buddhist.<sup>9</sup> It is exactly this sense of yoga as a way to release and self-realization that Jung has taken as the general theme of all Eastern thought and practice. However, the conception of the nature of the self-realization to be achieved, and the proper method to follow, are points on which Jung and the East show significant differences. An analysis of these differences and similarities is undertaken in the following chapters. For now, all that is required is that the reader be aware of the broad general way in which Jung uses the term yoga.

## II. The Attitude (or Worldview) which Jung Brought to Yoga

If we are to understand Jung's encounter with yoga, a firm grasp of the viewpoint from which Jung began is required. Although the period of Jung's life with which we are concerned was very turbulent both personally and professionally,<sup>10</sup> through it all one thing remained firm his mind—namely, that he was an empiricist, grounded completely on observation and experience. Jung understood his whole encounter with the contents of his unconscious as a scientific experiment. In Jung's view, the possibility of being an objective psychological observer of others required first that the observer be sufficiently informed about the nature and scope of his own personality: "He can, however, be sufficiently informed only when he has in a large

measure freed himself from the levelling influence of collective opinions and thereby arrived at a clear conception of his own individuality."<sup>12</sup> It is Jung's view that as one goes further back in his history and as one goes East, the individual is more and more swallowed up in the collectivity of the society. Only in recent times has there been sufficient individual awareness to make possible impartial observation and objective psychology.<sup>13</sup>

From a scientific point of view, Jung's purpose in opening himself to the contents of his unconscious was twofold. In the first place, it was necessary that he gain awareness of these contents with their warping needs and biases if he was to become an objective observer of others. Secondly, the contents of the unconscious are, for Jung, empirically real, and therefore proper objects for the scientific study of psychology. With regard to yoga, this means that Jung saw his approach as that of an objective observer who had encountered certain psychic realities in his own self-analysis, and then looked elsewhere (including to the East) for supporting evidence. This is made quite clear in Jung's September 1935 letter to Paster Jahn in Berlin. Jung says:

. . . you seem to forget that I am first and foremost an empiricist, who was led to the question of Western and Eastern mysticism only for empirical reasons. For instance, I do not by any means take my stand on Tao or any yoga techniques, but I have found that Taoist philosophy as well as yoga have very many parallels with the psychic processes we can observe in Western man.<sup>14</sup>

In his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung offers two examples of how the study of yoga can provide verification or support for something already encountered in Western consciousness. The first has to do with Jung's 1918–1920 discovery of the psychic development of the self occurring in a circular rather than linear fashion. He found that this new insight could best be expressed in paintings such as his "Window on Eternity." Several years later Jung reports an event that provided for him confirmation of his experience of the self. He received a letter from Richard Wilhelm enclosing the Taoist treatise, *The Secret*

of the *Golden Flower*, with the request that Jung write a commentary on it.

I devoured the manuscript at once, for the text gave me undreamed-of confirmation of my ideas about the mandala and the circumambulation of the center. That was the first event which broke through my isolation. I become aware of an affinity; I could establish ties with something and someone.<sup>15</sup>

The second example comes out of Jung's struggle with the contents of his unconscious. In the course of his self-analysis one of the several dream figures he encountered was Elijah (called by Jung Philemon). Psychologically, says Jung, Philemon came to represent superior insight. He was a guide through the inner darkness.<sup>16</sup> Many years later, in a conversation with an Indian friend, the role of the Indian *guru* in the process of education was discussed. When Jung's friend admitted that Śāṅkara, the eighth century philosopher-saint, had been his personal *guru*, Jung made the discovery that in yoga there are "spirit *gurus*". Jung reports the conversation as follows:

"You don't mean the commentator on the Vedas who died centuries ago?" I asked.

"Yes, I mean him," he said to my amazement.

"Then you are referring to a spirit?" I asked.

"Of course it was his spirit," he agreed.

At that moment I thought of Philemon.

"There are ghostly gurus too," he added.

"Most people have living gurus. But there are always some who have a spirit for a teacher."<sup>17</sup>

To Jung this did not signify that he had experienced an Indian spirit *guru*. Only that, as he put it, "Evidently, then I had not plummeted right out of the human world, but had only experienced the sort of thing that could happen to others who made similar efforts."<sup>18</sup> It was confirmation only in the sense of confirming that Jung's experience of Philemon was a true human experience and not an idiosyncratic fantasy of Jung's own mind. But the content of Jung's Philemon remained res-

olutely Western, understandable not through the teachings of Eastern yoga, but through the wisdom of Western alchemy. As we shall see, this principle of finding confirmation in form rather than content, typifies most of Jung's contacts with yoga.

But the principle of looking for "confirmation in form" of psychic experience is too narrow. For Jung, yoga was not just an after-the-fact confirmation of his Western discoveries. Yoga often played the role of broadening and heightening one's experience of consciousness, by stimulating one to an increased awareness. This does not mean, warns Jung, that Western science should be belittled or given up—only that one must not become so encapsulated in the Western scientific approach as to claim that it is the only approach there is. In his Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung says, "The East teaches us another broader, more profound, and higher understanding—understanding through life."<sup>19</sup> The difficulty the typical Westerner has in experiencing this higher understanding arises from two things: his attachment to Western science as the only valid way of knowing; and his difficulty in identifying with the strangeness of Eastern texts such as *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. This means that the Westerner approaching Eastern yoga must not give in to his first reaction which will be to quickly dispose of it by calling it "Eastern wisdom," in quotation marks, or by relegating it to the obscurity of religion or superstition. Nor must he make the mistake of attempting to cope with the strangeness of Eastern ideas by becoming an uncritical imitator of yoga practices. Through a shallow imitating of yoga practices, says Jung, Western man "abandons the one safe foundation of the Western mind, and loses himself in a mist of words and ideas which never would have originated in European brains, and which can never be profitably grafted upon them."<sup>20</sup> The increased awareness, which Jung values as a result of his contact with the East, comes not through mindless imitation. It comes, rather, as a result of critical study of the East as a parallel to our human experience in West—a parallel which reawakens Western man to aspects of his own experience that in modern times he had lost touch with, namely, the intuitive, the spiritual.

A careful study of Eastern texts such as *The Secret of the Golden Flower* stresses the importance of having a balance between opposites in one's experience. When the opposites

balance one another, says Jung, that is a sign of a high and stable culture. "Onesidedness, though it lends momentum, is a mark of barbarism."<sup>21</sup> This, in Jung's view, is the difficulty in which the modern West finds itself. After having placed great value on the spiritual and the intuitive during the Middle Ages, the intellect has come to a position of overwhelming dominance in modern man. But now there is a reaction in the West against the onesidedness of the overstressing of intellect to the virtual exclusion of the other aspects of human experience. At this point, study of the East is helpful in presenting an approach to life which includes all of the aspects or opposites and attempts to hold them in tension—intellect balanced with intuition. The truth of the East is not in the Eastern way itself, but in the demonstrated need for a balance between intellect and intuition, between thinking and feeling. And this serves to provide parallel confirmation of the reaction in the modern West in favor of feeling and intuition as a cultural advance or "a widening of consciousness beyond the narrow limits set by a tyrannical intellect."<sup>22</sup> The wisdom of Eastern yoga for the West is that one must "yoke" these extreme oscillations from intuition to intellect and now back again towards intuition, into a creative tension or balance. To be overbalanced in any one aspect of consciousness is a sign of immaturity and "barbarism", to use Jung's word for it. Consequently, it is not the case that the modern West should give up its highly developed scientific intellect—only that the intuitive and feeling aspects of psychic function must achieve an equally high development in Western consciousness so that a creative balance can be achieved, and a widening of consciousness result.

While Jung openly admired the Eastern yoga principle of inclusiveness and balance between the opposing aspects of psychic function, it is clear that he felt that the East had overstressed the intuitive, just as the modern West had overdeveloped the scientific. As Jung put it in his *Commentary on The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, "In the East, the inner man has always had such a firm hold on the outer man that the world had no chance of tearing him away from his inner roots; in the West, the outer man gained ascendancy to such an extent that he was alienated from his innermost being."<sup>23</sup> Jung illustrated this contention by observing the following difference in Eastern versus Western religious practice. In the

West, the spiritual is associated with something external and lifted up, thus the high and raised up place of the altar and cross in Christian churches. In an Eastern Śiva temple, however, the spiritual symbol, the lingam, is often sunk in a deep shaft several meters below ground level. To Jung this indicated that in Eastern experience, the spiritual is to be found in the inward direction, in the deepest and darkest place.<sup>24</sup> In his *Psychology of Eastern Meditation*, Jung makes the same point:

The West is always seeking uplift, but the East seeks a sinking or deepening. Outer reality, with its bodiliness and weight, appears to make a much stronger and sharper impression on the European than it does on the Indian. The European seeks to raise himself above this world, while the Indian likes to turn back into the maternal depths of Nature.<sup>25</sup>

The principle of all Eastern yoga is that the pairs of opposites (*dvandva*), the extremes, must be transcended or held in creative tension.<sup>26</sup> They must not exclude or devalue one another. From the East, therefore, the West needs to rediscover or resensitize itself to the interior aspects of intuition and feeling—but without letting go of its strong grip on exterior scientific consciousness. The East, on the other hand, needs the science, industry, and technology of the West, but not at the expense of its sensitivity to the inner man.

On both sides, said Jung, a balanced, widened, and inclusive consciousness needs to be achieved. But on the question of how this balancing was to be achieved, Jung was emphatic. The West must not simply attempt to copy the Eastern spiritual yoga, or the East blindly adopt Western science. Each should study the other and gain inspiration from its example, but each must pursue its own development within its own historical consciousness. As E.A. Bennet put it, "A race with an ancient cultural heritage, in Jung's opinion, had a collective experience not available to other races."<sup>27</sup> The modern West, says Jung, cannot graft Eastern yoga on to its scientific consciousness as so many misled individuals naively attempt to do.<sup>28</sup> In his letters the question of the practice of Eastern yoga frequently arises, and Jung's response is always emphatic and always the same. Yoga is suitable to the Eastern but not to the Western

mind.<sup>29</sup> The occidental world should leave it alone and instead develop or rediscover its own spiritual practice. While yoga is the spiritual foundation of everything in the East, on no account is it a suitable practice for the West.<sup>30</sup> Although Jung admits to having practiced yoga himself on a few occasions during his turbulent period of self-analysis, he states that his purpose was quite different from that of an Easterner.

I was frequently so wrought up that I had to do certain yoga exercises in order to hold my emotions in check. But since it was my purpose to know what was going on within myself, I would do these exercises only until I had calmed myself enough to resume my work with the unconscious. As soon as I had the feeling that I was myself again, I abandoned this restraint upon the emotions and allowed the images and inner voices to speak afresh. The Indian, on the other hand, does yoga exercises in order to obliterate completely the multitude of psychic contents and images.<sup>31</sup>

This is not the place to critically examine the correctness of Jung's analysis of the Easterner's experience of yoga. For the present our concern is to understand the attitude which Jung brought to his study of it. It is quite clear that for Jung the study of yoga served two important purposes. First it provided confirming evidence that others had had similar experiences to those of his own. Secondly, it suggested that consciousness was wider than the typical modern Western fixation on the scientific intellect. The study of Eastern yoga highlighted the intuitive side of psychic functioning, and encouraged modern Western man to redevelop his sensitivity to this aspect which had been so dominant in Western experience during the Middle Ages. For Jung personally, as we shall see, the role Eastern yoga played in the development of his thinking was brief but influential. Although Eastern ideas lingered on throughout his thinking, Jung's main fascination with yoga occurred during the 1920s and 1930s, culminating with his journey to India in 1938. By the end of his visit, however, the focus of his interest had already returned West, so that when his boat docked at Bombay he had no desire to leave the ship to see the city. "Instead", reports Jung, "I buried myself in my Latin alchemical texts."<sup>32</sup>



Indeed it may well be that in the development of Jung's thinking yoga lead him on from his early fascination with Western gnosticism and then back to Western alchemy, which then remained the keystone for the rest of his life.

### **III. Jung's Approach to Yoga Through Western Gnosticism**

In a conversation with Richard Evans a few years before his death, Jung recalled the way he had come upon the notions of archetypes and the collective unconscious. He noticed that in primitive groups, as well as the great religious traditions, there exist certain typical patterns of behavior, often supported by mythological tales. In religions there are the codes of conduct as well as the examples set by the saints. In Greek mythology there are the poetic models of fine men and women. As he thought about the notion of archetypes, Jung asked himself whether anyone else in the history of the world had studied that problem. Casting his 'scholarly net' widely, Jung's first finding was "that nobody except a peculiar spiritual movement that went together with the beginning of Christianity, namely, the Gnostics. . ." had concerned themselves with the problem of archetypes.<sup>33</sup> The Christian Gnostics, who lived in the first, second, and third centuries, had come across structural elements in the unconscious psyche and made a philosophic system out of it. In his autobiography Jung notes that between 1918 and 1926 he seriously studied the Gnostic writers.<sup>34</sup>

It is in his *Psychological Types*, first published in 1921, that Jung's analysis of Gnosticism is clearly seen. Jung points out that the further we go back into history, the less the individuality and the more of the collective we encounter. In primitive peoples, says Jung, we find no trace of the concept of the individual. Indeed, the very idea of individuality is fairly recent in the history of human thought. Jung felt that the development of the notion of individuality went hand in hand with the differentiation of man's psychological functioning.<sup>35</sup> The Gnostics caught Jung's eye because they were one group in classical Western literature that did differentiate between basic types of psychological functioning, and stressed the individual development of the personality even to the point of perfection.<sup>36</sup> As we shall see, this notion of the perfectibility of man's nature

is also found in Eastern yoga, although it is a premise which Jung never accepted. The Gnostic dual emphasis on perfectibility and the need for disciplined individual development, both of which are shared by yoga, may well have paved the way for the movement in Jung's thinking to the East.

Gnostic philosophy established three basic types: the *pneumatikoi* or "thinking type," the *psychikoi* or "feeling type," and the *hylikoi* or "sensation type."<sup>37</sup> In addition to their perception of different psychological types, the Gnostics, says Jung, lay before us "man's unconscious psychology in full flower, almost perverse in its luxuriance; it contained the very thing that most strongly resisted the *regula fidei*, that Promethean and creative spirit which will bow only to the individual soul and to no collective ruling."<sup>38</sup> For Jung, therefore, the Gnostic evidenced awareness not only of different psychological types, but also the importance of individuality. In Jung's view, such psychological knowledge set the Gnostics apart from the collective psychology characteristic of the centuries before and after them right up to the modern period. Jung expressed it in these words, "Although in crude form, we find in Gnosticism what was lacking in the centuries that followed: a belief in the efficacy of individual revelation and individual knowledge."<sup>39</sup>

It is clear that the foundations for several of Jung's major theoretical concepts may have originated or at least received strong support from the early Christian Gnostics, that is, the psychic functions of thinking, feeling, sensing, and the process of individuation. The Gnostics were also fascinated with symbols and the question of how to release these symbols (e.g., God, Sophia, and Christ) from the entrapment of the baser instincts. While all of this fascinated Jung as a parallel providing his thinking with historical support, he became increasingly frustrated by the lack of material available due to the suppression of the Gnostics by the early Christian Church. In his autobiography he summarizes his Gnostic studies in the following words:

But the Gnostics were too remote for me to establish any link with them in regard to the questions that were confronting me. As far as I could see, the tradition that might have connected Gnosis with the present seemed to have been

severed, and for a long time it proved impossible to find any bridge that led from Gnosticism—or neo-Platonism—to the contemporary world.<sup>40</sup>

That bridge from Gnosticism to the modern world Jung later discovered to be medieval alchemy. But Jung made this discovery through his study of Eastern yoga.

It is quite natural that Jung's study of early Christian Gnosticism should have led him to the East. One of the Gnostics who most fascinated him was Origen,<sup>41</sup> and of course Origen was much influenced by Eastern thought. In addition Jung was also reading the contemporary philosopher Schiller. Schiller was strongly influenced by Schopenhauer who championed Eastern yoga as it is presented in the Hindu scriptures, the Upanisads. It is not surprising then to find Jung putting aside Gnosticism and immersing himself in Eastern thought, beginning with the Indian Brahmanical tradition of the Upanisads.

#### **IV. Jung's Encounter with *Dvandva* or the Pairs of Opposites of Yoga**

In his memoir, Jung reports that very early in life he had become aware of a kind of split within his personality, as if two opposing souls were housed in the one breast.<sup>42</sup> And when, as a young man, Jung read Goethe's *Faust*, it awakened in him the problem of opposites, of good and evil, of mind and matter, of light and darkness.<sup>43</sup> Faust, and his inner shadow Mephistopheles, presented to Jung in dramatic form his own inner contradictions. "Later", says Jung, "I consciously linked my work to what Faust had passed over: respect for the external rights of man, recognition of 'the ancient,' and the continuity of culture and intellectual history."<sup>44</sup> Although Jung's search into the 'ancient sources' first took him to the Gnostic experience of the opposites of matter and spirit, it was in the Eastern approach to the problem that he found the first real "light."

*Dvandva* is the Sanskrit term for the pairs of opposites in classical Indian thought.

*Dvandva* includes one's individual experience of opposites such as hot and cold, love and hate, honor and disgrace, male

and female, as well as the encounter with universal cosmic opposites such as good and evil. In Hindu thought, it is frequently through creating of the pairs of opposites (or more explicitly, by separating them from one another) that the universe itself comes into being.<sup>45</sup> The experience of *dvandva* is psychologically analyzed by Jung as being caused by a split in the deployment of psychic energy at the level of the unconscious.<sup>46</sup> There is an infinite variety in the amounts of psychic energy that could be contained on either side of the split, for example, 50–50, 60–40, 70–30, etc. In Jung's view, however, an unbalanced deployment of psychic energy on one side can only go on for so long until finally the opposite tendency will reassert itself and swing the pendulum in the other direction. Jung said that this is exactly what is occurring in modern Western experience: the psyche has developed in too one-sided a fashion with an over-emphasis on the scientific intellect, thus robbing the intuitive function of its power. Now the intuitive side is reasserting itself (witness the contemporary Western fascination with the East) and the movement is beginning to flow in the opposite direction.

In Jung's view any unbalance in the split of psychic energy, while it may produce the short-term gains of rigorous specialization (e.g., modern Western technology), will, in the long run, prove detrimental.

Naturally this split is a hindrance not only in society but also in the individual. As a result, the vital optimum withdraws more and more from the opposing extremes and seeks a middle way, which must naturally be irrational and unconscious, just because the opposites are rational and conscious. Since the middle position, as a function of mediation between the opposites, possesses an irrational character and is still unconscious, it appears projected in the form of a mediating god, a Messiah.<sup>47</sup>

The projection of a mediating Messiah, says Jung, is indicative of the more primitive nature of Western religion—primitive because it lacks insight into the psychological balancing of the opposites that is occurring, and instead blindly accepts the whole thing as the action of God's grace. By contrast, the East

has for thousands of years known of the processes required to balance the opposites, and has made them into paths (*marga*) of liberation or release.<sup>48</sup>

In his *Psychological Types*, Jung reviews the teaching of the Vedas, Upaniṣads and *Yoga Sūtras* on the problem of the pairs of opposites<sup>49</sup> and reaches the following conclusions. In Hindu or Brahmanical thought, the pairs of opposites are experienced as a continuum extending from external opposites such as heat and cold to the fluctuations of inner emotion and the conflict of ideas such as good and bad. The Hindu *marga* or path, aims at freeing the individual completely from entanglement in the opposites, which seem inherent in human experience, so that he can experience oneness with Brahman (*mokṣa*). What is meant, says Jung, is a union of opposites in which they are cancelled out. “. . . Brahman is the union and dissolution of all opposites, and at the same time stands outside them as an irrational factor. It is therefore wholly beyond cognition and comprehension.”<sup>51</sup> The specific psychological process the yogi uses to realize this transcendence of opposites involves the systematic withdrawing of libido or attention from both external objects and internal psychic states—in other words, from the opposites. This eventually results in the elimination of sense-perception and the disappearance of conscious contents (rational ideas), which opens the way for rising up of images from the collective unconscious. These, says Jung, are the archetypes, “. . . primordial images, which, because of their universality and immense antiquity, possess a cosmic and suprahuman character.”<sup>52</sup> The great images of the Vedas, such as *ṛta* (divine cosmic order) and *dharma* (the universal moral law), are symbols with the power to regulate and unite the destructive tensions of the pairs of opposites.

In Indian thought *ṛta* acts as a principle of dynamic regulation by withdrawing energy from any imbalance existing between the pairs of opposites until a balance or middle path is achieved. As Jung put it, “The optimum can be reached only through obedience to the tidal laws of the libido, by which systole alternates with diastole—laws which bring pleasure and the necessary limitations of pleasure, and also set us those individual life tasks without whose accomplishment the vital optimum can never be attained.”<sup>53</sup> It is this psychological vital optimum that is symbolized in Indian concepts such as *ṛta*. *Rta* and *dharma*

function to bring out the inherent fundamental laws of human nature which, when followed, guide the natural flow of libido into the middle path through the conflict of opposites. Although Jung finds close agreement between his own personal experience and the Indian view of the dynamic relationship between the pairs of opposites, there is one point on which he sharply differs. In a letter to his friend V. Subrahmanya Iyer, *guru* of the Maharajah of Mysore, and with whom Jung had searching talks during his visit to India in 1938, Jung discusses the impossibility of getting beyond the pairs of opposites in this life. Whereas to the orthodox Hindu *mokṣa* means a complete freedom or transcendence from the tensions of the pairs of opposites, Jung argued that without the dynamic tension between the opposites there is no life.

It is certainly desirable to liberate oneself from the operation of the opposites but one can only do it to a certain extent, because no sooner do you get out of the conflict than you get out of life altogether. So that liberation can only be a very partial one. It can be the construction of a consciousness just beyond the opposites. Your head may be liberated, your feet remain entangled. Complete liberation means death.<sup>54</sup>

The basis of Jung's disagreement is rooted in his typically Western view of ego. Since the experience of oneself as an individual ego is fundamentally an experience of separation of oneself from other objects and persons, and since separation is the cause of the pairs of opposites, the complete overcoming of the pairs of opposites would also require the eradication of the ego and its sense of separation. But if there is no ego, there is no knower and therefore no consciousness. Abolishing the ego to transcend the opposites leaves only unconsciousness. In response to Subrahmanya Iyer's suggestion that there is, at the highest level, a consciousness without ego. Jung replies, "I'm afraid this supreme consciousness is at least not one we could possess. Inasmuch as it exists, we do not exist."<sup>55</sup>

In contrast with the very idealistic approach of Hindu yoga, Jung found the attitude of Chinese yoga more realistic in its perception of the problem of the pairs of opposites. Jung observed that like Hindu *rta*, the Chinese *Tao* is a uniting

symbol for the pairs of opposites. Jung uses the fact that uniting symbols are found independently in Chinese and Indian thought as evidence for the existence of a uniting archetype in the collective unconscious. In Jungian theory this uniting archetype comes to be known as the self. For Lao-tsu, author of the *Tao Te Ching*, the *Tao* is hidden, nameless and yet at the same time the source of all creation. The *Tao* manifests the created universe by being divided into a fundamental pair of opposites named *yang* and *yin*. All of the other pairs of opposites can be grouped under *yang*, on the one side, and *yin*, in the other. *Yang*, for example, includes warmth, light and maleness, while *yin* is cold, darkness and femaleness.<sup>56</sup> The Taoist view is that psychic danger occurs when there comes to be too great a split between the opposites thus resulting in a serious imbalance. In his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung says that this is exactly what has happened to the psyche of the modern West. As contemporary Western man's conscious scientific intellect achieved more independence and power, his intuitive unconscious was thrust into the background to a corresponding degree. This made it even easier for the evolving emphasis upon consciousness to emancipate itself from the unconscious archetypal patterns. Gaining in freedom, the modern Western scientific intellect has burst the bonds of mere instinctuality and reached a condition of instinctual atrophy.<sup>57</sup>

The overdeveloped conscious intellect of today's Western man not only suffers from being cut off from his instinctive roots in the collective unconscious, but, due to this very rootlessness, he experiences a false sense of mastery over and freedom from nature—to the point of proclaiming himself god.<sup>58</sup> Jung points to Nietzsche as an example of just such a result.<sup>59</sup> Jung also takes up the Chinese insight that when one of the opposites reaches its greatest strength the other will begin to reassert itself. Quoting from the *I Ching* he says, "When *yang* has reached its greatest strength, the dark power of *yin* is born within its depths, for night begins at midday when *yang* breaks up and begins to change into *yin*."<sup>60</sup> For Jung, the Dionysian eruption of Nietzsche's unconscious, with its intuitive and instinctive qualities, was confirming evidence of the correctness of the ancient Chinese insight.

Jung also saw the split of psychic energy into varying levels of imbalance throughout the pairs of opposites as a helpful

theoretical model for understanding mental breakdown. Speaking as a psychiatrist of his typical patients, Jung says,

. . . a consciousness heightened by an inevitable one-sidedness gets so far out of touch with the primordial images that a breakdown ensues. . . . Medical investigation then discovers an unconscious that is in full revolt against the conscious values, and that therefore cannot possibly be assimilated to consciousness, while the reverse is altogether out of the question.<sup>61</sup>

Modern Western man and his physicians thus stand confronted with the chronic problem of a severe imbalance and disunity within the psyche. The Easterner, by contrast, through the practice of his various yogas has kept a better balance between the pairs of opposites and thus does not as yet suffer from the same chronic problems as his Western colleague. Here Jung again sounds his warning that the solution for the Westerner cannot be found by taking up the direct practice of Eastern yoga. Says Jung, the neurosis or split within consciousness would then simply be intensified.<sup>62</sup> But what can be learned from the East is a general approach to be adopted so that the split, the imbalance between the opposites may be brought into harmony.

Although during 1918 and 1920, Jung had received from the analysis of his own unconscious a clue that the way to psychic integration was not linear but circular, it was not until his encounter with *The Secret of the Golden Flower* several years later that his therapeutic concept of "circumambulation of the self" was crystalized and confirmed.<sup>63</sup> In his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung points out that "the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational thing, nor is it a matter of will; it is a process of psychic development that expresses itself in symbols."<sup>64</sup> Jung maintains that in Western as well as Eastern experience the symbols of integration that appear are chiefly of the *mandala* type. *Mandala* means circle, and implies a circular movement focused on the center. It is a mental image or a ritually acted-out symbol which aims at engaging all sides of one's personality—all the positive and the negative opposites of one's nature.



In Jungian theory, the unifying psychological process of symbol formation is usually described as the raising or individuating of an archetype from the level of the collective unconscious to the level of conscious awareness. This may occur with varying degrees of psychic intensity from a relatively ordinary insight experience to the most extraordinary mystical experience (e.g., Paul's visionary experience of Christ). In conformity with much Eastern yoga, Jung admits that such a symbolic unity cannot be achieved by a determined effort of the conscious will—because the will is by nature, biased in favor of one of the sides of the opposites, namely, the conscious side. It is necessary that the appropriate cultural image, through the psychic process of intuition, be allowed to speak to and engage the contents of the collective unconscious in a manner that defies definitive expression.

It is the purpose of the various meditational techniques of Eastern yoga to make possible and promote this process. In the West this same goal of psychic unity should be pursued, not by imitating Eastern yoga, but by developing parallel Western practices such as the culture of what Jung calls active imagination. By such means, the contents of deeply unconscious layers can be raised and brought into fertile contact with ego-consciousness. Human history, too, may be seen to progress and unfold by such moments. When this happens, a pair of opposites may, momentarily at least, be said to be in balance and harmony.<sup>65</sup>

## **V. The Place of Religion in Jung's Encounter with Yoga**

Jung, in the "Late Thoughts" section of his biography, observes that religious symbols "by their very nature, can so unite the opposites that these no longer diverge or clash, but mutually supplement one another and give meaningful shape to life."<sup>66</sup> This insight, which is nowhere more necessary than in reconciling the inevitable internal contradictions in any conception of God or Absolute Reality, Jung encountered in a highly refined form in Tibetan Buddhism. While writing his Commentary on *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, he notes that in the Tibetan meditations the different gods are nothing but symbolic representations of various aspects of the pairs of opposites

which when taken together, constitute the whole.<sup>67</sup> In Indian and Chinese thought too, any representation of the divine in either philosophical or artistic forms almost always includes the various aspects of the pairs of opposites. The Hindu gods, for example, are balanced and completed by their goddesses (e.g., *Śiva-Sakti*). Indeed this balancing and fulfilling union between the male and female aspects of the absolute Brahman is the dominant symbolism in medieval Indian art.<sup>68</sup> The same theme may be found in the Tibetan *yab-yum* images,<sup>69</sup> the Taoist *yin-yang* symbol<sup>70</sup> and the many different ways in which Zen art represents the finite in the infinite.<sup>71</sup> This aspect of Eastern religious symbolism seems to have made a profound impact upon Jung. It provided a bridge for his return to Western thought in that he discovered the same sort of symbolizing of the opposites in Western alchemy.<sup>72</sup> However, perhaps even more important, it provided him with a theoretical structure for the Christian experience of God by means of which "the unavoidable internal contradictions in the image of a Creator-god can be reconciled in the unity and wholeness of the self as the *coniunctio oppositorum* of the alchemists or as a *unio mystica*."<sup>73</sup> It is clear that Jung's most significant religious experience did not have to do with the reconciling of God and man, but rather with the reconciliation of the opposites within the God-image itself. Although Jung's theological solution takes its content from Western alchemy, its form was largely shaped in his earlier encounter with Eastern religion. In his Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung summarized the significance of this encounter as bringing God within the range of his own experience of reality. By this he did not mean that he was adopting the metaphysics of Eastern yoga, for this he explicitly rejects. By seeing God, not as an absolute beyond all human experience, but as a powerful impulse within my personality, says Jung, "I must concern myself with him, for then he can become important, even unpleasantly so, and can affect me in practical ways. . . ." <sup>74</sup>

While analyzing the differences he found between East and West Jung noticed that in the East the religions received great respect because they provided the paths or yogas by which entrapment in the tensions of the pairs of opposites could be overcome. By contrast, Western forms of contemplation are little developed and in general are not respected. Contemplative

religious orders are often judged to be worthless because they spend their time meditating and doing nothing, rather than in helping the needy. Jung states it concisely. "No one has time for self-knowledge or believes that it could serve any sensible purpose . . . We believe exclusively in doing and do not ask about the doer. . . ." <sup>76</sup> This leads Jung to conclude that the religious attitude of the West is extraverted while that of the East is introverted.<sup>77</sup> While Western religion sees God at work in the historical events of the external world, and acting through grace in his transcendental separation from the world, Eastern religion finds spiritual information and guidance mainly through introspection.<sup>78</sup> Here Jung would probably admit that he is overemphasizing for the purpose of making his point. Eastern religions such as Hinduism do not receive spiritual information and guidance *only* through introspection. For the Hindu, the encounter with his scriptural revelation, the Veda, which comes to him from the external world, is essential for his eventual realization of *mokṣa* or release. Similarly, the Western Christian, for example, has some sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit within. But the general insight Jung stated as a result of his encounter with Eastern yoga still receives credance today. Recent Western commentators such as Jacob Needleman<sup>79</sup> and Theodore Roszak<sup>80</sup> still stress the necessity of an "inward turn" exactly as Jung prescribed it some forty years ago.

Yet another aspect of Eastern religion which attracted Jung was that it was based on an experiential knowledge of man's own consciousness, and not on the blind faith or otherworldly grace that he felt characterized much Western religion. If the Eastern approach were adopted by the West, not only would this remove religion from the realms of otherworldly superstition, it would also do away with the conflict between religion and science. As long as science is based on empirical fact, and religion on blind faith, the barrier between the two will remain and the psychic split within Western man will deepen into still more of Nietzsche's madness. In the West both science and religion have to become less dogmatic and expand their awareness. "There is no conflict between religion and science in the East," says Jung, "because no science is there based upon the passion for facts, and no religion upon mere faith. . . ." <sup>81</sup> Of course Jung realized that he was referring here to traditional Eastern science and not to the imported brands of Western

science that one now encounters in contemporary Eastern universities.<sup>82</sup>

## VI. Jung's View of the Limits (Benefits and Dangers) in the Western Encounter with Yoga

There is little doubt that Jung's encounter with the various Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese forms of yoga had a significant and beneficial impact upon his life. But it was an impact that he found difficult to communicate to his Western readers. Jung was only too aware of the strong possibility that any such attempt would run the risk of promoting misunderstanding at many different levels—some relatively harmless, others quite dangerous. He realized that because the Westerner typically does not know his own unconscious, it is quite likely that when he finds the East strange and hard to understand he will project onto it everything he fears and despises in himself. Anyone who has had the experience of teaching the East to the general public of the West can confirm this insight of Jung. The other type of typical Western reaction, and perhaps the one which Jung feared most, is to be quickly attracted to the East, to give up one's own heritage, and, with little or no understanding of the psychic processes involved, to become a surface imitator of Eastern yoga—in a word, to mindlessly ape the East. As Jung put it, "The usual mistake of Western man when faced with this problem of grasping the ideas of the East is like that of the student in *Faust*. Misled by the devil, he contemptuously turns his back on science and, carried away by Eastern occultism, takes over yoga practices word for word and becomes a pitiable imitator."<sup>83</sup> The reason Jung feared this so much was that he felt the direct practice of yoga by a Westerner would only serve to strengthen his will and consciousness and so further intensify the split with the unconscious. This would simply add more aggravation to the already chronic Western ailment—overdevelopment of the will and the conscious aspect of the psyche. The outcome would be just as disastrous for the Western neurotic who suffers from the opposite problem of a lack of development of the conscious and a predominance of the unconscious. Since the thrust of yoga is inward, it would only plunge such a neurosis further into the depths.<sup>84</sup> In addition

to these considerations, Jung pointed out that if we try to snatch spiritual techniques directly from the East "we have merely indulged our Western acquisitiveness, confirming yet again that 'everything good is outside,' whence it has to be fetched and pumped into our barren souls."<sup>85</sup>

When the above limitations and dangers are taken seriously, Jung felt that the West could obtain substantial benefits from encounter with the East. One of the major contributions of Western contact with the various spiritual disciplines of Eastern yoga is that they serve to remind the West that something similar may be found in its own cultural heritage. As examples of authentic spiritual practices which have been forgotten by the modern West, Jung points frequently to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola,<sup>86</sup> but with deepest interest to Western medieval alchemy.<sup>87</sup> And in addition to helping the West recover these most valuable aspects of its own tradition, contact with the East also has the effect of directing the attention of modern Western man to the importance of his inner nature and its intuitive function. As Jung clearly demonstrates in his last essay, *Approaching the Unconscious*, scientific as well as artistic and religious creativity may directly depend on sensitivity to the intuitive process of the unconscious.<sup>88</sup> Even in his own day Jung looked upon the growing interest in Eastern yoga as a sign that the West was beginning to relate to the intuitive elements within itself. Were he alive today Jung would probably judge the even greater fascination with the East in the same optimistic way. But he would surely repeat again and again his warning to the West that denial of its own historical foundations and its contemporary scientific advances would be sheer folly and the best way to bring about yet another uprooting of consciousness.<sup>89</sup>

You cannot be a good Christian and redeem yourself, nor can you be a Buddha and worship God. It is much better to accept the conflict. . . .

. . . we must get at Eastern values from within and not from without, seeking them in ourselves, in the unconscious. . . .<sup>90</sup>

Jung believed that the science of modern psychology would provide the necessary means for the contemporary West to seek within successfully.<sup>91</sup>

Notes and References

1. *Patañjali-Yogadarsanam* (Varanasi: Bhāratiya Vidhyā Prakāśana, 1963). A readable English translation is by Rama Prasada entitled *Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras* (Allahabad: Bhuvaneswari Asrama, 1924), although the version offered by J.H. Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series (vol. 17) entitled *The Yoga-System of Patañjali* is probably more generally available.
2. C.G. Jung, "Psychological Types." *Collected Works* (hereafter C.W.), volume 6 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971; first published 1921), p. 196.
3. Barbara Hannah, "Notes on Lectures given at the Erdgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zurich, by Prof. C.G. Jung." Unpublished manuscript, 1938–1939. (Hereafter referred to as E.T.H. Lectures.)
4. *Ibid.*, Lecture II.
5. For Jung's Commentaries on "The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation" and "The Tibetan Book of the Dead," see C.W. 11, *Psychology and Religion: West and East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).
6. For Jung's Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, see C.W. 13, "Alchemical Studies" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).
7. The "Psychology of Eastern Meditation" is found in C.W. 11.
8. Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 3.
9. T.H. Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhist Nirvāna* (London: Mouton, 1965), pp. 16–19.
10. The period of Jung's life referred to is approximately 1914–1940. The turbulence and struggle is especially evident in Chapter Six, "Confrontation with the Unconscious" in Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. by Aniela Jaffé (New York: Vintage, 1965).
11. *Ibid.*
12. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, op. cit., p. 10.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
14. C.G. Jung: *Letters* ed. by G. Adler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, vol. I, 1973), p. 195.
15. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, op. cit., p. 197. This "establishing of ties with something and someone" through finding parallels really allows Jung's method to be called "historical." Jung states his method most clearly in the 1957 "Preface" which he wrote for *Psyche and Symbol* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1958, p. xiii): ". . . we must ask whether our experiences are the only ones on record and, if not, where can we find comparable events. There is no difficulty in finding them; plenty of parallels exist, for instance, in the Far East . . ."
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 182–183.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
18. *Ibid.*
19. 'The Secret of the Golden Flower,' in "Alchemical Studies," C.W. 13, p. 7.
20. *Ibid.*

21. Ibid, p. 9.
22. Ibid.
23. "Psychological Commentary on The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," C.W. II, p. 492.
24. E.T.H. Lectures by Professor C.G. Jung, Oct. 1938-June 1939, pp. 121-122.
25. "The Psychology of Eastern Meditation," C.W. II, p. 570.
26. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, pp. 195-198; and "The Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13.
27. E.A. Bennet, *What Jung Really Said* (London: Macdonald, 1966), pp. 68-69.
28. "Two Essays on Analytical Psychology," C.W. 7, pp. 149 fn. 8, and 171 ff.
29. See, for example, the letter to "Pater X", 17 Jan., 1942 in C.G. Jung: *Letters*, vol. I, edited by G. Adler (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 310.
30. E.T.H. Lectures, pp. 11, 13, 42.
31. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 177.
32. Ibid., p. 284.
33. Richard I. Evans, *Conversations with Carl Jung and Reactions from Ernest Jones* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1964), pp. 48-9.
34. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 200.
35. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, p. 10.
36. John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1970), pp. 83-88. In one of his letters Jung makes clear that in his view man is not perfectible, but will inevitably have to cope with the problem of suffering. Walter Uhsadel reports Jung as saying, "The Oriental wants to get rid of suffering by casting it off. Western man tries to suppress suffering with drugs. But suffering has to be overcome, and the only way to overcome it is to endure it." (C.G. Jung: *Letters*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 236.)
37. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, p. 11.
38. Ibid., pp. 241-2.
39. Ibid., p. 242.
40. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 201.
41. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, pp. 16 ff.
42. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 234.
43. Ibid., p. 235
44. Ibid.
45. For example, see *Rg Veda X: 120*. English translation can be found in *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* ed. by S. Radhakrishnan and C.A. Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 23.
46. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, p. 194.
47. Ibid.
48. In this context Jung uses the term "salvation." This term seems to me so loaded with a Western Christian meaning that I find it unsuitable for expressing the quite different Eastern concepts of *moksa* or *nirvāṇa*. I find the English terms "release," "liberation," or "freedom" much better in conveying the Eastern concept of escaping the bondage of the pairs of opposites in everyday life (*samsāra*).

49. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, pp. 195-97.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
54. C.G. Jung: *Letters*, vol. I, op. cit., p. 247.
55. *Ibid.*
56. As quoted by Jung in his "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, pp. 214-15.
57. "The Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13, p. 12.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
59. "Psychological Types," C.W. 6, pp. 136-146.
60. "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W., p. 13.
61. *Ibid.*
62. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
63. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, pp. 196-197.
64. "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W., 13, p. 21.
65. For Jung's own description of the above process, see "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13, pp. 22-28.
66. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 338.
67. "Psychological Commentary on The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," C.W. 11, p. 495.
68. See, for example, H. Zimmer's *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. by J. Campbell (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962).
69. E. Obermiller, *History of Buddhism by Bu-ston* (Heidelberg: O. Harrassowitz, 1931).
70. L.G. Thompson, *The Chinese Way in Religion* (Belmont, California: Dickinson, 1973), pp. 63-76.
71. D.T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Pantheon, 1959).
72. See, for example, the hermaphrodite images in Jung's "Paracelus as a Spiritual Phenomenon," C.W. 13, pp. 152 ff.
73. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 338.
74. *Ibid.*
75. "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13, p. 50.
76. "Mysterium Coniunctionis," C.W. 14, p. 498.
77. "On the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," C.W. 11, p. 488.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 506.
79. Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (Richmond Hill: Simon & Schuster, 1972).
80. Theodore Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends* (New York: Anchor Books, 1973).
81. "On the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," C.W. 11, p. 480.
82. For example, during a visit to India the author's experience of the Philosophy and Psychology Departments of the Banaras Hindu University showed them to be faithful copies of similar departments in any modern Western university. The philosophers were quite caught up in linguistic analysis and had little time for the Upaniṣads; the psychologists were busy with American Behaviorism and had no interest in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*.
83. "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13, p. 7.



84. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
85. "On the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," C.W. 11, p. 483.
86. See the references listed in the Index of C.W. 11.
87. See especially volumes 13, 14 and 15 of Jung's C.W.
88. In *Man and His Symbols*, ed. by C.G. Jung (New York: Dell, 1964).
89. "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13, p. 49.
90. "On the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation," C.W. 11, pp. 483-484.
91. "On the Secret of the Golden Flower," C.W. 13, p. 43.