1. MYSTICISM DEFINED

The study of mysticism has occupied an important place in almost all of the great religious traditions. In recent years, however, the term “mysticism” has been used so loosely in everyday language that its traditional meaning is in danger of becoming lost. Bookstores typically link mysticism with the occult, and frequently display books on mysticism in the “occultism” section. Such psychic phenomena as visions, levitation, trances, and altered states of consciousness are frequently dubbed “mystical.” Walter Principe recently reported the following newspaper item.

Last May the Toronto Star’s headline-writer announced: ‘Scientist offers electronic way to mysticism’—this to entice readers to an article about a ‘meditation machine’ or revolving bed that is ‘intended’, says the photo-caption, ‘to help people enjoy the spiritual experiences formerly available only to religious mystics.’

With such imprecision in the use of the term mysticism abounding, it is important that any scholarly discussion begin with a precise definition of the subject.

In his book entitled Mysticism and Philosophy, Walter Stace points out that the very word “mysticism” is an unfortunate one. “It suggests mist, and therefore foggy, confused, or vague thinking. It also suggests mystery and miracle-mongering, and therefore hocus-pocus.” But when an examination is made of the experiences reported by the great mystics, something which is much different emerges. Rather than being “misty” or “confused” mystical experiences are typically described as clear illuminations, having all the qualities of direct sensory perception. Stace, in fact, suggests that it is helpful to think of mystical experience as in some respects parallel to ordinary sense experience, that is, as a perception of a spiritual presence which is greater than man. Defining it as a perception, says Stace, allows one to avoid Russell’s error of describing mysticism as only an emotion, and therefore as simply subjective. The question raised is this: Does mystical experience, like sense experience, point to any objective reality, or is it a merely subjective psychological phenomenon? This question is, of course, one which is formulated by a philosopher for philosophical reasons, but it is a question which necessarily raises psychological issues. Is the psychological process of the mystical experience in some way analogous to sense perception? Or is it as Rudolf Otto (following Immanuel Kant) suggests something that begins amid all the sensory data of the natural world, and indeed cannot exist without such data, and yet does not arise out of...
of them but is merely occasioned by them. Otto, of course, prefers an analogy to aesthetic experience as the best way of evoking a sense of the mystical. He also seems to suggest the existence of a separate psychological faculty specially suited for the reception of numinous stimuli emanating from the wholly other (the numen).

Frederick Copleston recently pointed out a paradox which is characteristic of mystical experience. "In the case of mysticism a man may be conscious of the fact that the experience described transcends the range of his own experience; and yet at the same time his reading and effort of understanding may be for him the occasion of a personal awareness of God." On this point virtually all scholars agree. Mysticism is characterized by the experience of an unseen reality, a spiritual presence, a numen, or an absolute that is transcendent in that "it is identifiable neither with the empirical world as it appears to us in everyday experience and in natural science nor with the finite self considered as such...." It is this very transcendent character of mystical experience that causes scholars to reject psychic phenomena such as imaginative visions, voices, ecstasies, raptures, and so on as not mystical in and of themselves. As Father Copleston puts it, "we all know that some people see things or hear voices without even a prima facie connection with the divine. And of course there are also pathological psychological states resembling ecstasy which can be accounted for by purely naturalistic explanations."

Mystical experience, by contrast, is transcendent of both the sensory experience of the empirical world, and any all-encompassing identification with a finite ego of the sort which typifies pathological states.

Other than a general agreement that mystical experience is transcendent in nature and must not be confused with extraordinary psychic accomplishments and certain pathological states, there seems to be little consensus about the psychological processes involved. There is Stace's suggestion that something like sense perception is the process involved. Otto, however, rejects the perception analogy as too narrow and instead, in an analogy from aesthetics, invokes a special mental faculty which would function amid the data of feeling perception and cognition, and yet somehow be independent of all of these. William James makes the very general suggestion that mystical experience of the transcendent occurs through the psychological processes of the subconscious self. In the midst of this confusion and disagreement about the psychological processes involved, it may prove helpful to examine comparatively the thought of the Western psychologist Carl Jung and the yoga psychologist Patañjali in relation to mystical experience.

II. MYSTICISM IN THE ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CARL JUNG

Writing his "Late Thought," Carl Jung puts down his own personal religious experience as clearly as may be found anywhere in his writings. There is no doubt that Jung's experience was highly mystical. All around himself Jung
felt the forces of good and evil moving, but, in the end, the only thing that really mattered was the degree to which the individuated self could transcend these opposing forces.

It seems to have been Jung's view that as an isolated ego, a person would never succeed in reuniting the opposing forces. Those forces within the personality would simply overpower one's ego, and chaos would ensue. What saves us from this fate, said Jung, is the fact that deep within each of us is the God-image which is the psychological foundation of our psyche. The God-image or archetype is inherent in the collective unconscious as the primal stratum or foundational matrix. The experiencing of the God archetype has a unifying effect upon the whole personality. Especially noticeable is the way in which the opposing tensions are brought together by the guiding influence of the God archetype over the individual ego. In Jung's view mysticism plays a large role in this whole process of unifying and balancing the opposing forces within experience. (In this context the term "mysticism" is being used, as just defined by Copleston, to mean the process of identifying with something more than the finite ego.)

Mystical experiences, Jung felt, may have a powerful effect upon a person. The forces involved arise from the unconscious and transcend the finite ego so that,

He cannot grasp, comprehend, dominate them; nor can he free himself or escape from them, and therefore feels them as overpowering. Recognizing that they do not spring from his conscious personality, he calls them mana, daimon or God.14

Although these forces are nothing other than aspects of the unconscious, to call them merely "the unconscious," while empirically correct, would not be satisfactory for most people. The mythic terms "mana," "daimon," or "God," even though simply synonyms for the unconscious, prove to be especially effective in the production of mystical experience. The personification of the unconscious in such concepts enables an involvement of a wide range of emotions (for example, hate and love, fear and reverence). In this way, says Jung, the whole person is challenged and engaged.

Only then can he become whole and only then can 'God be born'; that is, enter into human reality and associate with man in the form of 'man'. By this act of incarnation man—that is, his ego—is inwardly replaced by 'God', and God becomes outwardly man, in keeping with the saying of Jesus: 'Who sees me, sees the Father'.15

For Jung the basic psychic process involved in the mystical experience is clearly the replacing of the conscious ego with the more powerful, numinous, forces of the unconscious—called by the Western Christian, "God." As to the content of these overpowering forces of the unconscious—the content of this "God" concept—Jung is most explicit. The monotheism of Western religion and the all-encompassing absolute implied must be taken seriously. Within the One
God must be found room for all of the opposites encountered in experience, including even the opposites of good and evil. Only then, says Jung, will the unavoidable internal contradictions in the image of the Creator-God be reconciled in the unity and wholeness of the self. “In the experience of the self it is no longer the opposites “God” and “man” that are reconciled, as it was before, but rather the opposites within the God-image itself.”

Good and evil stand encompassed, held in tension, and transcended within the one absolute.

What is of interest for this discussion of mysticism is not so much the theological argument assumed (and which Jung worked out in detail in his _Answer to Job_), but rather the psychological dynamics indicated. Jung’s analysis shows mystical experience to occur when the finite, conscious ego is inwardly replaced by God, with God being understood as a personification of the numerous qualities of the unconscious. And here Jung is not making a metaphysical claim that God either exists or does not exist. Jung is simply observing that the processes involved in our experience of God are those of the unconscious. To put it simply, if we assume that God exists then the way he acts upon us in overpowering mystical experiences is through the psychological processes of the unconscious—particularly via the God archetype.

A good illustration of this process is offered by Jung in his essay _The Holy Men of India_. There Jung describes mysticism as the shifting of the center of gravity from the ego to the Self, from man to God. This, observes Jung, is the goal of _The Exercitia Spiritualia_ of Ignatius Loyola—to subordinate “self-possession” (possession by an ego) as much as possible to possession by Christ. Just as Christ manifests the reconciliation of the opposites within God’s nature, so also does the person who surrenders his life to Christ overcome the conflict of the opposites within and achieves unity in God. As Jung puts it,

God is the union of the opposites, the uniting of the torn asunder, the conflict is redeemed in the Cross. So Przywara says: ‘God appears in the cross’, that is he manifests himself as the crucified Christ. The man who wishes to reach this unity in God, to make God real in himself, can only attain this through the Imitatio Christi, that is he must take up his cross and accept the conflict of the world and stand in the center of the opposites.

For the Christian, God appears empirically in the suffering of the world, in the pain produced by the conflict between the opposites. One who would identify with God, therefore, does not seek to escape from the suffering of the world’s conflicts, but rather gives up one’s ego and identifies with Christ. By attempting to unite mystically with Christ, says Jung, “I enter the body of Christ through his scars, and my ego is absorbed into the body of Christ. Then like St. Paul, I no longer live but Christ lives in me.” Jung takes special care to ensure that the preceding statement is not to be understood in the form “I am Christ” but rather, as Paul puts it in _Galatians_ 2:20, “... it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...” In terms of psychological dynamics, the finite ego has been subordinated to the self.
A detailed description of the arising of the self in Jungian theory is rather complex and difficult. It is Jung's view that each of us share in three different levels of consciousness: the conscious level of the ego; the dreams, memories, and repressions which comprise the personal unconscious; and the predispositions to universal human reactions, the archetypes, which compose the collective unconscious. It is of course the notion of the archetypes and the collective unconscious which is the trademark of Jung's thought. And it is the idea of a "master archetype," namely, the "self" or "God" archetype that is fundamental for Jung's analysis of mysticism.

Of all the archetypes, it is the "self" or "God" archetype which has the power to encompass all aspects of life in a way that is integrated and mature. To be comprehensive, both conscious stimuli from the external environment and internal impulses from within the personal and collective unconscious must be included. If one remains fixated on the conscious ego, its limited internal and external awareness will result in only a small portion of the stimuli available from all three levels of consciousness being included. In most ordinary experience there is only experience of the conscious level of ego awareness. Being grounded in the collective experience of mankind, and being present within the unconscious of each person, the archetypes are the psychological mechanisms which enable us to get out from the too narrow encapsulation of our conscious egos.

The archetypes are constantly trying to "raise up" or "reveal" some of the basic wisdom of mankind. But this requires the action of the thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting functions of the psyche. First there is the encounter of some external stimuli, for example, the seeing of an ordinary wooden cross on a building in a Christian culture. Initially the cross has no mystical significance and functions only at the ego conscious level as a secular sign to designate the building as a church. But over the years as one matures, the cross image gradually acquires more significance and is carried, by the process of intuition, deeply into the psyche until the level of the collective unconscious is reached. There the God archetype, which has all the while been struggling upward to reveal itself, resonates sympathetically with the cross image and its Christian content of the crucified Christ. With the help of the other psychic functions (thinking, sensing, and feeling) the God archetype is given further individuation, using both the person's own creativity and the materials presented by a particular cultural tradition until the mystical revelation occurs.

Jung observes that initial indications often appear in dreams, when the symbol being created first reaches the level of the personal subconscious. One becomes vaguely aware, perhaps for the first time, that the cross image is something much more than merely a sign to indicate that a building is a church. Rather than the church building, the cross and the figure of Christ simply being seen as routine parts of everyday life to be manipulated by the ego for its own purposes, the cross is now sensed as being numinous—as having a
power and meaning about it which causes the conscious ego to pale by comparison. As the Cross symbol becomes more complete, and the God archetype achieves full individuation at the level of conscious awareness, there occurs what Jung describes as a shift in the center of gravity within the psyche from the ego to the self. This is the mystical moment of illumination when the ego becomes aware of the larger and deeper collective dimension of consciousness and reality. In religious terms it may be variously described as a sudden or a gradual awakening. But the key is that whereas previously things were experienced in a narrow egocentric way, now it is a sense of profound identity with the universal "self" which dominates. One is simultaneously united on the various levels within the psyche and taken out beyond the finite limitations of the ego. Thus, the mystical character of Jung’s "self"-realization experience.

Although the cross and the crucified Christ are expected symbols of mystical self-realization in Christian cultures, Jung found the mandala to be the most universal. As an image, it is the mandala’s characteristic of having an individualized center, yet expanding outward with the potential to include everything, that makes it a suitable symbol for mystical experience. Jung puts it as follows:

The mandala’s basic motif is the premonition of a center of personality, a kind of central point within the psyche, to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy. . . . This center is not felt or thought of as the ego, but if one may so express it, as the self. Although the center is represented by an innermost point, it is surrounded by a periphery containing everything that belongs to the self—the paired opposites that make up the total personality. This totality comprises consciousness first of all, then the personal unconscious, and finally an indefinitely large segment of the collective unconscious whose archetypes are common to all mankind.22

Two things about the mandala symbol impressed Jung. First, it occurred as a symbol for meditation in almost all great religions, and, in addition, it appeared independently in the dreams of his modern patients. Second, the mandala symbol wonderfully conveyed the sense of development around the center—but development that included all sides and left nothing out. For Jung the mandala was a pictorial representation of the circumambulation process of development which he took to be basic to the personality.23

Even though Jung felt that there were very definite differences between the mystical experiences of Eastern and Western religions, the psychological processes involved seemed very similar. Whereas in the East the mandala served as a symbol both to clarify the nature of the deity philosophically and to aid in the development of that divine nature within one’s own personality, so also the presentation and evoking of the proper relationship between God and man in Christian religion was expressed in the symbol of Christ or the cross.24 In both cases the senses of completeness, union and unity, were highlighted, and these were universally reported as characteristics of mystical experience. In his Commentary on the Secret of the Golden Flower, Jung supported this contention of the commoness of mystical experience. He analyzed
a mystical experience reported by Edward Maitland, the biographer of Anna Kingsford, and found in it the same sense of symbolic unity contained in the ancient Taoist Chinese text.  

While both Eastern and Western mysticism bear witness to the sense of transcendent unity that such philosophers as Walter Stace have called “the core of mysticism,” Jung is very careful to make clear the subtle psychological differences in the way that unity is experienced.  

Between the Christian and the Buddhist mandala there is a subtle but enormous difference. The Christian during contemplation would never say, “I am Christ” but will confess with Paul, “Not I, but Christ liveth in me” [The Buddhist] sutra, however, says: “Thou wilt know that thou art the Buddha.”  

At bottom both statements express a fundamental sense of unity, but in Jung’s view, the way the unity is experienced is altogether different. The Buddhist statement “Thou art the Buddha” or the Hindu Upanisadic teaching “I am Brahman” requires complete removal of the individual ego or ahamkara. The Western statement “Christ liveth in me” implies not a destruction of the ego but rather an invasion or possession by God so that the individual ego continues to exist only now as servant of the Lord. In mysticism, as in the other areas of psychological functioning, Jung simply would not accept the claim of Eastern thought that there could be conscious experience without a finite ego as the experiencer. As Jung saw it, the transcendent unity of the self needs the individual ego in order to be known, and the finite ego needs to be superceded by the transcendent self, if integration and enlightenment is to occur. From Jung’s perspective a complementary relationship between the ego and the self, between the individual and the divine is the necessary foundation for mystical experience. The mystical sense of the unity of the observer with all things requires an ego-observer as a basic prerequisite for that experience.  

III. MYSTICISM IN THE YOGA PSYCHOLOGY OF PATAÑJALI

Patañjali’s yoga psychology approaches mysticism as a case of intuition or supersensuous perception (pratibhā) from which distorting subjective emotions have been purged. It will be recalled that the Western philosopher Stace defines mysticism in just such a perceptual way so as to avoid Russell’s criticism that mystical experience is merely subjective emotion and as such has no direct touch with reality. Patañjali’s claim is exactly the opposite. According to his yoga psychology, mystical experience is a case of the direct supersensuous perception of reality, with various levels of mystical impurity being caused by obscuring emotions not yet purged from the perception. It is worth noting at the outset that in yoga theory a major cause of obscuring emotion is the individual ego (ahamkāra)—the very aspect of the psyche that Jung felt to be essential.  

Yoga psychology, following the Sāṅkhya theory of Indian philosophy,
conceives of consciousness as composed of three aspects or substantive qualities (guna): sattva (brightness, illumination, intelligence), rajas (emotion, movement), and tamas (dullness, inertia). Although each of these gunas keeps its own separate identity, no individual guna ever exists independently. Rather, the three gunas are always necessarily found together like three strands of a rope. However, the proportionate composition of consciousness assigned to each of the gunas is constantly changing. Only the predominant guna will be easily recognized in a particular thought or perception. The other two gunas will be present but subordinate, and therefore their presence will have to be determined by inference. If a "psychological cross-section" were taken through an ordinary state of consciousness, there would be a dominance of tamas and rajas especially in its evolved forms of ego, sense organs, and their everyday experiences. In our routine states of consciousness there is a noticeable lack of sattva or pure discriminative awareness. However, in mystical experience the proportionate composition of consciousness by the gunas is reversed with sattva becoming dominant. At its height a pure sattva experience would be like the direct transparent viewing of reality with no emotional (rajas) or bodily (tamas) distortion intervening. This is technically termed nirvicārāsamādhi in Indian mysticism, and is defined as a supernormal perception that transcends the ordinary categories of time, space, causality, and has the capacity to directly "grasp" or "see" the real nature of things. It is this mystical experience of pure sattva intuition that is given detailed psychological analysis in sūtras I:41–51 of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras.

Patañjali begins his analysis with a general description of the mystical state of mind, which in Sanskrit is technically termed samādhi. In samādhi the mind (citta) is so intensely focused upon the object of meditation that the ordinary sense of the observer being separated from the object of study is overcome. There is a sense of being one with the object. As Patañjali puts it, it is as if the mind has become a transparent crystal that clearly reflects or transforms itself into the shape of the object being studied. Vyāsa clarifies the intended meaning as follows: "As the crystal becomes coloured by the colour of the object placed beside it, and then shines according to the form of the object, so the mind is coloured by the colour of the object presented to it and then appears in the form of the object." The ability of the mind to function in a crystallike fashion requires a sattva dominance within consciousness.

The object referred to in this description may be any finite aspect of reality. The purpose of the object is simply to give the beginner a point of focus for his concentration, consequently it helps the process if the object exhibits a natural attractiveness to the student. One of the main tasks of the spiritual teacher or guru is to guide the student in selecting an object of meditation—the one that will be the most helpful. Since in Eastern thought it is generally held that the divine or absolute, whether it be conceptualized as Brahman, Buddha,
Tao, or in some other form, is inherent in all of reality, therefore any aspect of reality may be suitably selected as an object for meditation. It may be some part of nature such as a flowing stream, it may be an image of Brahman such as Lord Śiva or Mother Kālī, it may be the example set by the master Yogi Īśvara, or, at the most esoteric level, it may be nothing other than the flow of consciousness itself—mind (citta) taking itself as the object of its own meditation.32 The process is not unlike that proposed by Jung where some object, such as a cross, provides the starting point for the subsequent individuation of the archetype into a symbol. However, it is immediately apparent that while both Patañjali and Jung begin with an object as a point of focus, Jung never leaves the object—it simply becomes transformed in one’s experience from a surface sign to a deeply meaningful and in some sense universal symbol which mediates and integrates reality. Patañjali’s yoga, however, expects that the finite object, which is a limited symbol and therefore only partially able to mediate or manifest reality, must in the end be transcended. Only then can reality be fully “seen.” It is this final state of unlimited congruence with reality (objectless samādhi) that is held by Patañjali to be the highest mystical state. And it is just such an attainment which Jung refuses to accept as possible, because it would require that the knowing ego, as one of the finite objects within consciousness, be transcended. In Jung’s view this results in a mystical state with no knower to experience it, and therefore it is simply psychologically impossible. With this objection in mind let us now examine Patañjali’s description of the four levels of increasingly pure object samādhi and the final state of objectless samādhi (or the direct unlimited oneness with reality).

Of the four states of object samādhi, the lowest or most impure is called savitarka. It is impure, says Patañjali in Yoga Sūtra 1:42, because the sattva “reflection” of the object is obscured by a mixing up within consciousness of the following ingredients: (1) the word (śabda) used in conventional speech to label that object; (2) the conceptual meaning (artha) of that object; and (3) the direct perception (jñāna) of the object itself. Vyāsa explains that this mixed-up experience of the object has a twofold cause. On the one hand there is the distortion caused by the habitual way in which word labels have been used to classify objects in this and previous lives. This has the mixing-up effect (vikalpa) within consciousness of causing our experience to be dominated by the conventional word labels of our language and culture (for example, saying “child,” with the connotation “just another child”) rather than by the perception of the object that is uniquely occurring at that moment (for example, “a brown-eyed child of a quiet, reflective mood with unfathomable beauty, dignity, and potential”). The other causes of vikalpa or confusion are the cognitive inferences based upon the conceptual meaning which the perception of the object evokes in our mind (for example, “a child is a gift of God to be treasured and loved” or “a child is a constant source of emotional frustration
and a continuous drain upon the bank account”). Such cognitive inferences are either accepted from the traditional systems of thought of one’s culture or belief (for example, a Christian view, or a materialistic view) or may be made up by one’s own imaginative thinking. For most of us then even when we manage to block out external distractions and concentrate sufficiently so as to become “caught up into oneness” with the object of our meditation, the kind of samādhi achieved is one that is obscured by the habitual way in which we give the object in view a word label (“stereotype it”) and give it a biased or slanted coloring in our thinking.

In the second half of Vyāsa’s commentary on Yoga Sūtra I:42, the second level of object samādhi is defined as one in which the habitual patterns of past word usage and the biased patterns of inferential thinking are purged from the mind. Only then is the sattvā or crystalline aspect of consciousness freed from the rajas or emotional obscuration so that “the object makes its appearance in the mind in its own distinct nature (unmixed up with word and meaning).” The technical term for this state is nirvitarkasamādhi and may be translated as “distinct mystical perception.” And it is this purified state of perception, says Vyāsa, that becomes the seed or basis for new verbal or inferential knowledge, namely, the truths taught by the mystics (yogins)—the truths they have learned from this higher form (nirvitarka) of perception. Vacaspati Miśra, in his gloss, points out that the yogi or mystic himself has no need to verbalize such truths, since he has it as a primary experience (for example, when you are hearing the greatness of the music there is no need to try to verbalize that greatness in words). But because of his compassion for others, the mystic speaks these truths, realizing however that the very speaking of them will necessarily add rajas or emotional distortion due to the usage of words and imagination.

Whereas the two lower levels of object samādhi are based upon the gross or outer form of the object, the two higher levels are directed toward the inner essence—what might today be called the atomic or microcosmic structure of the object. Descriptions of such states are offered in Yoga Sūtras 1:43 and 44, although the distinctions become so subtle as to virtually deify conceptualization. The third level is called savicārasamādhi. In savicāra experience the flow of consciousness so completely identifies with the object alone that the mind is as it were “devoid of its own nature.” I take Vyāsa to mean by this that there is a complete loss of ego consciousness. This does not mean one lapses into some sort of stupor. On the contrary, what is implied is that one is so “caught-up” in the object that there is no room left for a separate awareness of one’s own ego as the thing that is having the experience. One has forgotten oneself. The object in all its vividness of both external characteristics and internal qualities totally commands one’s attention. The only distinguishing characteristics given to the experience are provided by the object itself. In the savicāra state awareness of the object includes both its gross form and its
microcosm or inner essence, but is limited in space and time to the present. The yogin's knowledge ("knowing by becoming one with") of the object is complete, but it is knowledge only as of the present moment in space and time.

Nirvicāra or the final stage of object samādhi differs only from savicāra in that in the nirvicāra the limitation to the present moment in space and time is overcome. Now the yogin is so completely one with the object that he is one with all its past states, as well as its present moment, and shares fully in the various possibilities of the future. The last limitations of space and time are transcended. According to Vyāsa a mystical state reaches the nirvicāra level when it is, as it were, void of its own nature and becomes the object itself. This is the highest level of knowledge of a finite object which may be reached. An example of such a nirvicāra state might be the knowledge that a lover of a particular person realizes when the other person is so completely known that, as we put it, "they are like an open book." In the Christian tradition, one might identify the knowledge Amos had of Israel, Jesus had of the Samaritan woman at the well, or St. Francis of the animals. Mystical experience of this sort is far from being "misty," "vague," or "mysterius." It is as vivid and immediate as is possible for one who habitually lives at the lower levels of awareness to imagine. Its psychological nature would seem to, as Stace suggested, approximate that of sense perception—only on a supernormal level. And from the perspective of Patañjali's Yoga Psychology, the two highest levels of object samādhi are characterized by a complete self-forgetting or egolessness. The mystic consciousness has so fully become one with the object that it no longer appears as an object of consciousness. The duality of subject and object is overcome, leaving only the steady transformation of pure sattva consciousness into the form of the object allowing the thing-itself (svarūpa) to shine forth in itself alone.

The highest level of mystical realization in Patañjali's yoga is reached when even the limitation of focusing on a finite object is left behind. Yoga Sūtras I:50 and 51 describe the establishment of "seedless" or objectless samādhi. No longer does the yogin meditate on an object, not even such an exalted object as the Lord himself. Now consciousness turns in upon itself and becomes one with its own self-luminous nature. According to both Sāṅkhya theory and Yoga psychology, in this state there is only pure knowing consciousness. The lower "filtering organs" of ego (ahāṅkāra), mind and sense organs with their component rajas or emotion have been dropped off or transcended. There remains only the pristine existence of reality itself which is revealed to be nothing other than the pure discriminative consciousness of the true self (puruṣa).

In agreement with the authors previously discussed, Patañjali, although very familiar with psychic powers (siddhīs) such as levitation, warns against confusing such attainments with true mystical experiences. Special powers may be produced by drugs, by fasting or as side effects of true spiritual medita-
tion. Consequently the yogin or mystic must be constantly on guard against the temptation to use such powers, as will naturally come to him, for his own fame and fortune. To do that, says Patañjali, would be tantamount to falling off a high cliff after having struggled hard to scale the heights. The distance that the fallen yogin would crash down would exceed the upward progress he had achieved.

IV. THE PSYCHOLOGIES OF JUNG AND PATAÑJALI COMPARED

The preceding review of Jungian psychology and Patañjali’s yoga shows both points of agreement and difference. Both authors agree with the definition of mystical experience presented by the philosophers in section I as being characterized by a loss of the sense of finite ego and a corresponding increased identification with a transcendent spiritual reality. But there was definite disagreement about the degree of ego loss which occurs and about the kind of psychological process which is mainly responsible for the mystic’s identification with the larger transcendent reality.

With regard to the degree of ego loss involved, it was Jung’s view that in mystical experience there was a replacing of the conscious ego with the more powerful numinous forces of the unconscious arising from the God or self archetype. As he put it there is a shifting of the center of gravity within the personality from ego to self, from man to God. This shift of the center resulted in more of the sum total of reality being experienced and included within the personality. The mystical experience is comprehensive of both conscious stimuli from the external environment and internal impulses from within the personal and collective unconscious. This breadth of awareness means that one participates in the conflicts of the opposing forces which constitute the world. In the Christian context this is expressed as the suffering of Christ and is symbolized by the Cross. The ego loss envisaged by Jung is the loss required so that one could say with Paul, “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” The ego has not been totally lost or discarded but merely made into a servant of the Lord.

Jung correctly recognized that there was a fundamental disagreement between himself and Patañjali over the degree of ego loss involved in mystical experience. Whereas in Jung’s view the mystic experience of reality required the continued existence of an ego in order to be known, for Patañjali’s yoga the ego was nothing more than a limiting and distorting emotional obscuration which had to be removed if the real was to be fully known. In the two lower states of savitarka- and nirvitarka-samādhi the presence of ego and its habitually limiting ways of perceiving and thinking rendered the mystical experience impure. However in the higher states of savicāra- and nirvicāra-samādhi, the mind by virtue of being completely devoid of its own ego is able to be perfectly transparent to the object being mediated upon. Such complete and direct experience of some objective aspect of reality requires that the mystic
not allow his own ego and mental processes to get in the way. Although Patañjali, with his requirement for a complete negation of ego, has already gone well beyond Jung's more limited Western point of view, the ultimate state has still to be reached according to yoga. In addition to the limiting factor of the individual ego being removed, the full mystic experience requires that reality be experienced in its completeness and not in just the limited form of a finite object as one point of meditation. For the Eastern point of view even if the object of one's meditation be an incarnation of the divine, the Lord himself, something of the fullness of reality will have been “dropped off” to enable the limited incarnation to take place. Thus, for Patañjali, it is the objectless samādhi in which consciousness becomes one with its own self-luminous nature, that is the highest mystical experience. It is such an experience that is indicated by phrases such as “I am Brahman” or “I am Buddha,” and that differs so radically from the Christian “Christ lives in me.”

With regard to the kind of psychological processes involved, Jung seems to follow the lead of Rudolf Otto and William James whereas Patañjali is much closer to the approach suggested by Walter Stace. In Jung’s analysis, mystical experience, although it may begin with intuition, necessarily also involves the other psychological processes of feeling, thinking, and sensing. For Patañjali, the processes of emotion and thinking had to be purged until only pure perception remained. Jung, to a large extent, followed Otto’s suggestion of an analogy to aesthetic experience. Patañjali, like Stace, appealed to the model of sense perception. Jung followed James in pointing to the unconscious as the locus of mystical experience, for yoga the opposite condition of complete consciousness is identified as the mystical.

In the face of the earlier comparative psychological study, we find ourselves left with what is perhaps a new and expanded version of Stace’s question, “Does mystical experience point to an objective reality or is it merely a subjective phenomenon?” Now the psychological question must be added, “Can there be mystical experience without an individual ego?” Or put another way, “Is unlimited consciousness of the fullness of reality psychologically possible?”

NOTES

3. Ibid., pp. 13–18.
7. Spiritual presence” is Arnold Toynbee’s term which Walter Stace adopted in his Mysticism and Philosophy, op. cit., p. 5.
10. Religion and Philosophy, op. cit., p. 75.
11. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 337.
16. Ibid., p. 338.
18. Ibid., p. 581.
20. Ibid., p. 123.
23. Another image which Jung sometimes used in the same way as the mandala was that of the tree. This is especially seen in his 1945 Festschrift article entitled "The Philosophical Tree," written in honor of Gustay Senn, Professor of Botany, University of Basel. In it Jung says, "If a mandala may be described as a symbol of the self seen in cross section, then the tree would represent a profile view of it: the self depicted as a process of growth." C.W. 13, p. 253.
31. Yoga Sūtra II: 18, bhāṣya.
33. Yoga Sūtra I:41.
34. Ibid., bhāṣya.
35. This is the "seedless" or "objectless" samādhi described by Patañjali in Yoga Sūtra I:51.
36. Yoga Sūtra I:42, bhāṣya.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid., tīkā.
42. Yoga Sūtra I:43, tīkā.
43. Yoga Sūtra I:51, bhāṣya.
44. Chapter III of the Yoga Sūtras gives a complete list of the psychic powers and how to attain them.