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M.Litt. (Psych) Part A

THE SELF: EAST AND WEST

Reading Course
with
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Theories of the self proposed by William James and George Herbert Mead are examined and compared with those found in yoga psychology. Yoga definitions of self, and the potential levels of identity known to yoga, are described in detail. The perspective of yoga psychology on mind and the unconscious is described with reference to issues raised by western psychological theories. Finally, an assessment is made of the strengths and limitations of yoga as a psychology of the self.

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The question common to both yoga and psychology is 'Who am I?' All of yoga psychology is dedicated to answering this question, and innumerable contributions to yoga theory and practice have been made over thousands of years. In western psychology, William James and G.H. Mead are the pioneer theorists of the self, and their work has laid the foundations of social psychology. There is an area of common ground in the theories of James, Mead and yoga, and there are also ways in which these western and eastern perspectives on the self extend and complement each other.

Yoga: definitions

The word **yoga** is derived from the Sanskrit root **yuj**, to link together, to unite, to yoke. Yoga implies both integration and union. It is union in that is promotes recognition of the self as pure awareness, one with the pure awareness that informs all creation. In the process, it integrates the various dimensions of the empirical self by eliminating the dissipations and automatisms characteristic of everyday consciousness (Eliade, 1975:10).

The essence of yoga is psychological and not religious. As Hall and Lindzey (1978) point out:

> Most Asian religions have at their core a psychology little known to the masses of adherents to the faith, but quite familiar to the appropriate 'professionals' be they yogis, monks or priests.

We can understand yoga, then, as the psychology at the core of Hinduism.

The common features of eastern psychologies (Hall & Lindzey, 1978) are: a phenomenological method; idealism (positing an ideal model of being, attainable by those who undertake the relevant discipline); and an empirical method of introspective meditation.

All these features are to be found in yoga psychology, which is defined by Patanjali (Yogasutra 1:2-3) as halting the fluctuations of consciousness so that we are firmly based in pure awareness, which is our essential nature. 'Essential nature' is what psychology refers to as the self. The chief concerns of yoga psychology are thus those that chiefly occupied James and Mead: mind and self:

> They call it yoga which is the method [of] the utter transcendence of mind, and it is of two types. Self-knowledge is one type; restraint of prana [bioenergy] is another... my conviction is that the path of self enquiry is easy for all, because self-knowledge is the ever-present truth. —Yoga Vashishta, 6:1

Centrality to Indian thought

Yoga is one of the **sad darshana**, the six systems of Indian thought. **Sad** means six, **darshana** (root: **drs**, to see) is viewpoint, vision, philosophy. The six viewpoints are yoga, samkhya, vaisesika, nyaya, purva-mimamsa and vedanta (Ramachandra Rao, 1962). Vaisesika and nyaya are systems of cosmology and logic respectively. They are atheistic, academic disciplines and correspond to what is generally known as philosophy in the western sense (Worthington,1982:80). Purva-mimamsa is theistic dualism, chiefly propounded by Ramanuja, emphasising the religious values of devotion and faith (Chetimattam, 1971).

The chief sources of psychological theory in yoga are samkhya and vedanta. **Samkhya** means 'that which explains the whole'. It analyses the evolution of the entire universe from two ultimate principles: **purusha**, consciousness, and **prakriti**, energy (Worthington, 1982). Its primary texts are the Samkhya-karika and Tattvakaumudi (Ramachandra Rao, 1962).

The Vedas are the ancient Hindu texts of mythology, poetry and ritual. **Vedanta** means, literally, the end and essence of the Vedas (Chinmaya, 1982). Its primary texts are the Upanishads, derived from **upa**, near, **ni**, to sit, and **sad**, truth (Ramachandra Rao, 1962). They epitomize an aural tradition transmitted at 'the knee of listening' and are compilations of esoteric

teachings on the philosophy, psychology and practices related to the self. The upanishadic teachings were systematised by Shankara (c.800 AD) who propounded a system of radical non-dualism (**advaita**). Among the many texts that Shankara bequeathed the tradition, Atmabodha (the awakening of the self) summarises the vedantic teaching on the self.

Yoga differs from the other darshana in that it is not a speculative or metaphysical tradition. It insists on the concrete, on personal validation through experiential knowledge. Its discourse is entirely concerned with elucidating the body of practices for self-discovery that are its core. Yoga has therefore represented the experimental method of Indian thought, and has been used through the ages by adherents of various philosophies as a means of investigating and validating their own theories (Worthington, 1982). Eliade (1975:195) places great emphasis on this point:

> Yoga constitutes a specific dimension of the Indian spirit... One always finds a form of yoga whenever there is a question of **experiencing the sacred** or arriving at complete **mastery of oneself**...

Patanjali and the yogasutra

There are various forms of yoga, felt to be suitable for people of different temperaments: **bhakti yoga** for the devotional, **jnana yoga** for the intellectual, **karma yoga** for the dynamic, and others. However, all draw on the **raja yoga** (king of yogas), the classical yoga expounded by Patanjali in the Yogasutra.

Patanjali did not invent yoga, but codified an ancient tradition of oral teaching and practice. The Yogasutra consists of 196 aphorisms, divided into four chapters which deal with **samadhi** (fusion consciousness), **sadhana** (meditative discipline), **vibhuti** (powers, parapsychological phenomena), and **kaivalya** (lit: unique and only, that is, self-realization).

Patanjali discusses a wide range of practical techniques, and the characteristics of a range of meditative states. However, the core methodology he describes consists of eight stages, and is popularly known as ' the eightfold path'. The elements of this system are **yama** and **niyama** (ethical observances), **asana** (posture), **pranayama** (energy enhancement through the breath), **pratyahara** (sense withdrawal, 'switching off'), **dharana** (concentration, focusing), **dhyana** (meditation) and **samadhi** (fusion consciousness).

The first five stages to pratyahara stabilize body and mind and overcome external distractions. The last three, from dharana to samadhi, eliminate disturbances of thought and psychic manifestations, so that the mind ceases to obscure the self, which is revealed as pure awareness (Satyananda, 1976: ix).

Value and meaning

Dorothy Lee (1959) explains that we experience value when our activity is permeated with satisfaction, when we find meaning in our life. She describes the value in ordinary activities experienced by the Arapesh and the Oglala, based on an expanded sense of self (1959: 174):

> ... [it is] the openness of the self which makes the experience of value possible... In societies where the individual is ideally at one with, in harmony with society, nature and the universe, we find the self has tremendous value.

Yoga psychology not only places tremendous value on the self, but maintains that the self is the source of value. In coming to know our own selves, yoga maintains, we become aware of the expansiveness of the self, and of our relatedness to others and with the universe. In this expanded sense of self is fulfilment, satisfaction, meaning. Shankara tells us (Atmabodha, 67):

It makes everything shine.

YOGA: A PSYCHOLOGY OF THE SELF

Purusha

Atman

Cosmic self: brahman

Transcendent and immanent

Ignorance: not bliss, but suffering

Self-knowledge

Yoga psychology is first and foremost a psychology of the self. The basic tenet of yoga psychology is that the self is a transcendent, autonomous consciousness that is not only the core of, but also the cause of, our existence. It encompasses two major theories of self, drawn from samkhya and vedanta. The practical means for testing these theories is offered in the **Yogasutra** of Patanjali.

Purusha

In samkhya the self is known as **purusha**, literally, conscious person. This principle of consciousness, intelligence or spirit is said to function as a light in a dark room, making awareness and experience possible. It occurs uniformly as a background for all sensations, images and thoughts.

The purusha is not an object; it does not create (**aprasava dharmin**); it is capable of discrimination; it is individual (**asananya**). In samkhya, the self is not an agent (**akarta**). It is unique (**kevala**), impartial (**madhyastha**), the impassive witness (**sakshin**) of all experience. Purusha is eternal (**nitya**), pure (**shuddha**), illuminated (**buddha**) and **mukta**, free from conditioning (Samkhya-sutra 1:19). In short, it is and it knows (Eliade, 1969:16):

> Beyond the sense objects are the senses; beyond these is the mind; beyond the mind is the intellect and beyond the intellect is the sense of individuality. Beyond this is unmanifest energy. Beyond this is purusha; beyond purusha there is nothing. That is the end, that is the highest goal. —Kathopanishad 1:3:10-11

Atman

In vedanta, a person's essential self is known as **atman**, from the root **at**: pervading. It is the principle which pervades the body and gives it life, and in this sense is cognate with the Greek **atmos** vapour, smoke (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:20). It also has the sense of that which constantly accompanies (**yacca asya santato bahvam**).

This central core of human existence is said to be ineffable, indescribable, 'from which all speech, with mind, turns back' (Taittiriya Up. 2:2:4). It is said to be unspeakable, not because it is too sublime or too complex for words, but because it is too simple, too obvious, too close to be caught in the net of symbols and signs (Wilber,1983:290). Nevertheless, many attempts have been made to explicate its character or, as Alan Watts (1973) would have it, to 'eff the ineffable'.

All descriptions fall back on the language of myth and poetry. Some have been negative, such as the famous 'not this, not that': **neti, neti** (Brihadaranyaka Up. 3:9:26). Others have more positively affirmed its transcendent qualities (Kaivalya Up. 2:6.):

> The unthinkable, unmanifest, one of endless forms; ever auspicious; immortal; origin of creation; one without a beginning, middle or end; all pervading; the knowledge-bliss; the formless; the wonderful.

Like purusha, it is a hidden dynamic principle, a power in the background that is not directly seen but inferred. It is the pure witness of experience (Brihadaranyaka Up. 3:7:23):

> It is thy self, the ruler within, the immortal; unseen, but seeing; unheard but hearing; unperceived, but perceiving; unknown but knowing. There is no seer other than the self... there is no other knower. This is thy self, the ruler within, the immortal.

The self is by no means physical and occupies no space, yet 'with its seat in the heart it occupies the whole body' (Mundaka Up. 2:2:7). Its description as the size of a grain of barley (Chandogya Up. 14:3) or of the thumb (Kathopanishad 2:4:12) is meant only to drive home its great subtlety associated with great capacities (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:21).

The atman is succinctly defined in vedanta (Atmabodha 21: Aparokshanubhuti, 101) as **satchidananda**: **sat**, eternally existing (i.e. beyond time) and real; **chit**: awareness, **ananda**: bliss.

Sat (from **asti**, to be) has connotations of both being and reality. The real is that whose negation is not possible. Shankara argued that this criterion can only be satisfied by consciousness, because denial of consciousness presupposes the consciousness that denies. The real is that which remains unchanged in all states of consciousness, the common factor in experience (Kathopanishad 2:4:3; Bhagavad Gita 2:20):

> The intelligent atman is not born, nor does it die. It is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient. It is not slain although the body is slain.

Chit is awareness. It stands for the perfect intelligence and consciousness which illumines all things and also illumines and expresses itself as the full, the perfect and absolute 'I know' (Chetimattan, 1971:197):

> That atman by which one cognizes forms, taste, smell, sounds and sexual joy. What is there unknowable to that atman in this world? —Kathopanishad 2:4:3

A fullness without any lack or defect is **ananda,** the perfect bliss of self-attainment. Ananda is a state in which all dualities are dissolved, and it suggests balance, harmony and wholeness:

> The innermost essence in all beings, atman, is not contaminated by the external sorrows of the world. —Kathopanishad 2:5:11

Cosmic self: brahman

Samkhya argues that there are in the world as many selves as there are human beings. It takes as proof of this proposition that people are born and die at different times, that they do not always act simultaneously, and that they show different qualities and propensities. From this perspective, each individual self is a unique consciousness that has no essential connection with other selves. As eternal, free consciousness, we are each unique, but isolated; there is no community of spirit.

According to Vedanta this concept is erroneous, and the plurality of selves is an illusion. The innermost self of any individual is of the same essential character and quality as the innermost self of all others. This is not to say that there are no individual differences, that all selves are the same. The oral tradition argues that we recognize physical bodies as having varying appearances, strengths and weakness, but essentially they are of the same nature: mostly water and organic carbons. So the individual selves carry the signs of their individual experience, but are of the same essence: pure awareness. Each individual self is a spark of the one, universal consciousness, known as **brahman**.

> What is that through which, if it is known, everything else is known? —Mundaka Up. 3:2:3

The answer is brahman. The term **brahman** needs to be distinguished from its confusing homonyms, **Brahma** and **brahmin**. **Brahma** is God the Creator, that is, the deity in Hindu mythology who personifies the forces of creation. **Brahmin**, as in brahmin priest or brahmin caste, is technically one who knows brahman, that is, one who has realized the unitive consciousness underlying all existence. **Brahman** (root: **barh**, to swell) means both the greatest, the one without a second, and that which bursts forth into the manifested world (Mundakopanishad 2:13):

> This is true: as from the flaming fire issue forth by the thousands sparks from the same form, so from the immortal brahman proceed diverse individual consciousnesses and they find their way back to it.

Transcendent and immanent

The nature of the self and its relationship with other selves is encapsulated in the four great scriptural statements, the **mahavakyani**.

The primary recognition of the sages is that the basis of the universe is pure awareness. Brahman is pure awareness: **prajnanam brahma** (Aitirya Up. 3:5:3). Further, the individual self is of the same essence as the essence of the universe. This atman is brahman: **ayam atma brahma** (Brihadaranyaka up. 2:5:19). Therefore I am pure awareness: **aham brahmasmi** (Brihadaranyaka Up. 1:4:10). You too are pure awareness. Thou art that: **tat twam asi** (Chandogya Up. 6:8:7).

In sum, the mahavakyani indicate that 'all is brahman', that everything - even the material elements of our universe - is consciousness. 'Brahman resides even in the stone' (Kularnava Tantra). The initial response to these assertions, claims Wilber (1983:295) is rejection:

> It fires up in overly imaginative minds such fancies as uniform, all-pervading, featureless but divine goo; the instantaneous evaporation of all diversity and multiplicity, leaving behind an immaculate but amorphous, All-knowing, All-merciful, celestial Vacuum.

Wilber continues (1983:299) that what the mahavakyani indicate is not only the transcendence but also the immanence of pure awareness. It is 'simultaneously present everywhere and everywhen in its entirety'. Shankara (in Wilber, 1983) tells us that pure awareness is not something we have to develop, it is what we are:

> As Brahman constitutes a person's self, it is not something to be attained by that person... as it is omnipresent it is part of its nature that it is ever present to everyone.

Our problem, says yoga psychology, is that we don't recognize this.

Ignorance: not bliss, but suffering

While samkhya and vedanta disagree on the possibility of mutual relations between selves, they do agree that ignorance of the nature of the self is the source of human misery:

> The understander of understanding cannot be understood. It is your self in everything. All else is sorrowful. —Brihadaranyaka Up 3:4:2

Patanjali declares (Yogasutra 2:15) that to the discerning person all is pain. **Dukha**, suffering, includes physical pain but is primarily psychological suffering, arising from our attachment to the transitory elements of existence. Watts (1962:66) suggests we translate dukha as the frustration that comes from attempting the impossible. Or, if we take its connotations of sourness, it is the souring of life by our grasping attitude towards it. In any case, dukha is the antithesis of the fulfilment generated by recognition of the nature of the self as pure awareness, beyond time.

Thus in yoga psychology, the misery of human life is not attributed to divine punishment or original sin (Eliade, 1975) but to ignorance, **avidya**. Patanjali (Yogasutra 2:5) defines avidya as mistaking the transitory for the eternal, the impure for the pure, suffering for happiness and the non-self (anatman) for the self (atman).

Ignorance of the self arises from identification with the activity of the senses, emotions, thoughts and desires and from regarding these ever changing elements as the true self, which is the constant in all experience. Suffering comes from thinking that we are our thoughts and feelings.

Self-knowledge

If the problem is ignorance, the solution is knowledge. (Yogasutra 2:26; Svetasvatara Up 3:8):

> Unfluctuating awareness of the real is the means of avoiding avidya. Only by knowing the self can one go beyond suffering. No other path of escape is known.

Yoga psychology recognizes various kinds of knowledge based on sense perception (**pratyaksha**), inference (**anumana**), and testimony (**agama**) (Yogasutra 1:7). However, the knowledge required to dispel ignorance of the self is of a different order altogether. It is experiential knowledge, direct and immediate experience, **aparoksha**.

This knowledge is more than analytical categorizing, it is total understanding. It is this totality of experience that is implied in the various Sanskrit words for transcendent knowledge: **jnana, prajna, vidya**. Further, there is a sense in which knowing is being. If one truly knows

something, one embodies it, makes it real. This is the import of realization, **anubhava**: the knower and the known become one.

The end to suffering, frustration or sourness in life is **atmajnana**, direct experience of the self as pure awareness, based on total realization in meditation (Yogasutra 2:10-11):

> The causes of unhappiness can be annihilated by resolving them back to the source and removing the associated mental states through meditation.

The significance of self-knowledge to our understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe is such that the Svetasvatara Upanishad (1:2) declares, 'save for that, nothing is worth knowing'.

It is upon this knowledge of the self, and upon this quality of knowing, that yoga psychology is based. It is not a speculative tradition but one that insists on validation through individual experience, and all the practices of yoga are designed to facilitate that validation. It is this insistence on direct personal experience that removes yoga from the realm of philosophy and characterises it clearly as a psychology.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SELF: JAMES

The empirical self: me

The pure self: I

Intimations of something more

Does consciousness exist?

Potential forms of consciousness

The emphasis on direct experience is common to yoga and to the radical empiricism advocated by William James (in Mc Dermott, 1967:195):

> To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit to its constructions any element not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced.

Nevertheless, James, our first and perhaps most profound psychologist of the self, dismisses 'the Hindoo doctrine of the brahman or atman' (in McDermott, 1967: 159-60) as not psychological, but mystical:

> ...it not only revels in formulas that defy understanding, but it accredits itself by appealing to states of illumination not vouchsafed to ordinary men.

In its place, he presents a 'duplex' view of the self as comprised of the self as known, or the **me**, and the self as knower, the **I** or pure ego (1891/1962:189).

The empirical self: me

While indicating that the self is, broadly, the sum of all that we can call ours, James (1890/1952: Ch.10) describes the **me** or empirical self as consisting of three hierarchical dimensions: the material self, the social self and spiritual self.

The **material self** originates in the body, and extends to include one's family, possessions, and those creations in which we have invested time and energy. The **social self** is the reputation and social status accorded us by the rest of society:

> A man's fame, good or bad, and his honour or dishonour, are names for one of his social selves.

James asserts (1890/1952:189) that we have many social selves, with each social group to which we belong eliciting a different aspect of ourselves:

> We may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares.

Unlike Mead, who posits a universal generalised other, James does recognize that some reflections of self are more influential than others when he points out (1890/1952:190) that 'the most peculiar social self which one is apt to have is in the mind of the person one is in love with'.

James defines the spiritual self (1890/1952:191) as 'a man's inner or subjective being, his psychic faculties or dispositions'. Elaborating on this most enduring and intimate part of the self, he identifies it with the ability to argue and discriminate, with will, with moral sensibility and conscience. In short, with our intellectual capacities. What James calls our spiritual self is perhaps more accurately termed the intellectual self, or even, mind.

The identification of the self with thought is made explicit by identifying the self with the whole stream of consciousness (1890/1952:192). Yet James is certain that there is an element of consciousness that is even more truly individual and subjective, a 'centre within the circle, a sanctuary within the citadel'. He accords this element a special status, referring to it (1890/1952:192) as 'this self of all the other selves'.

In trying to pin down this illusive core self, James finds it is associated with the perception of sensation, and the process by which sensations generate action, 'a sort of junction at which sensory ideas terminate and from which motor ideas proceed'.

He recognizes two further dimensions to this subjective core. It is the active element in consciousness, a 'spiritual something' which is the source of effort, attention and will. It is that which 'welcomes and rejects', that is, an aspect of the mind which is capable of discernment and judgement.

On the other hand, this central core also acts as a focus that organises other elements of the stream (1890/1952:192). It is a constant that 'becomes opposed to them as the permanent is opposed to the changing and inconstant'.

From the yogic perspective, James provides here an excellent phenomenal account of the various functions of mind: **manas**, the sensory-motor mind, **buddhi**, discerning judgement, and **ahamkara**, the I-maker that acts as a reference point for experience.

Yoga psychology would also be in sympathy with James' perspective on the interface between mind and body. James observes (1890/1952:212) that they are linked through the emotions of

self-seeking and self-esteem, and he is also sensitive to the correlation between thought and bodily sensation:

> Our entire feeling of spiritual activity... is really a feeling of bodily activities whose exact nature is by most men overlooked.

The pure self: I

The 'pure self or inner principle of personal unity' (1890/1952:220) James calls the **I**. In distinguishing the **I** from the **me**, he defines the **I** (1891/1962:207) as that which **is** conscious, while the **me** is only one of the things it is conscious of. Elsewhere (1890/1952:258) James describes the functions of the **I** as remembering, emphasizing and appropriating segments of the flow of thought. Yet the **I** itself is here described as successive parts of the stream of consciousness.

With the spiritual dimension of the **me** and the **I** both being identified with the stream of consciousness, it becomes difficult to differentiate the two. James acknowledges (1890/1952:213) that he finds the going tough when he speaks of:

> the struggle with that pure principle of personal identity... which we have always shied from and treated as a difficulty to be postponed.

James' difficulties with the I are compounded in his assertion that the I is both a thought and not an aggregate:

> This **me** is an empirical aggregate of things objectively known. The **I** which knows them cannot itself be an aggregate... It is a **thought**, at each moment different from that of the last moment but appropriative of the latter, together with all that the latter called its own.

James seems to be contradicting himself here. If the I is a thought, renewing and replacing itself in a constant stream, how can it not be an aggregate?

Intimations of something more

James regards it as inappropriate for psychology to consider the **I** as transcendent principle or a metaphysical entity like the soul, yet in his search for the origins of our sense of personal identity, he admits to 'an obscurer feeling of something more' (1890/1952:97).

One possible window onto that 'something more' is the observation of the thought process with particular attention to the transition between thoughts. This kind of observation is the basis of the Buddhist practice of **vipassana**, insight meditation, and the yogic meditation called **antar mouna**, inner silence (Satyananda, 1975). James himself suggests this focus for introspection in his discussion of the 'transitive parts; of the stream of thought (1890/1952:156-9). He brings to our attention the special quality of these transitional moments:

> The transition between the thought of one object and the thought of another is no more a break in the thought than a joint in a bamboo is a break in the wood. It is a part of the **consciousness** as much as the joint is a part of the bamboo.

James comments (1890/1952:158-159) that this form of introspection is difficult, but warns us against the blunders of failing to register the transitive parts of the stream, or assuming that because we have no name for them that such moments do not exist.

In yoga the observation of the transition between thoughts is practiced until the pace of thinking slows sufficiently to admit a 'space' between thoughts that allows us to become aware, at least momentarily, of the pure awareness 'between' and 'behind' thoughts. The nature of the 'something more' that James suggests gradually becomes more apparent, and our identification with thought as our unique essence is eroded.

Despite the fact that he exhibits introspective skills of which a yogi or a buddhist would be proud, James does not go this far.

The stumbling block would seem to be his wish to establish psychology as a 'natural science' and to shore it up against the 'waters of metaphysical criticism [that] leak [in] at every joint' (1891/1962:463), together with his longstanding antipathy to monism.

<u>Does consciousness exist?</u>

James makes the assumption that a monistic universe was a totally determined one (Allen,1970:14). In such an 'iron block' universe:

> the future has no ambiguous possibilities hidden in its womb: the part we call the present is compatible with only one totality.

James' preference (Allen, 1970:15) is for the diversity of an indeterminate, pluralistic universe where:

> the parts have a certain amount of loose play on one another... actualities seem to float in a wider sea of possibilities.

From the yoga perspective, James' assumption of an 'undifferentiated monistic mush' (Wilber, 1983) is unwarranted. Unity does not preclude diversity (Yoga Vashishta, 6:1):

> Even as a single sound produced amongst hills echoes and re-echoes into diversity, one cosmic consciousness experiences multiplicity in itself... [it] sees diversity within itself even as a dreamer dreams of diverse objects within himself.

Nevertheless, James, in his discussion of the self steadfastly avoids any proposition even remotely suggestive of the metaphysical (1890/1952:236):

> It is conceivable (although far from clearly so) that in the last metaphysical resort all those streams of thought may be thought by one universal All-thinker. But in this metaphysical notion there is no profit for psychology... the idea of Him seems even to exert a positively paralyzing effect on the mind.

James denies consciousness as an entity but asserts 'emphatically' that it does stand for a function - the function of knowing (1976:4). Abandoning the term 'consciousness' James proposes instead 'pure experience' as the one and only primal stuff and material of the world (1976:4):

> Then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter. The relation itself is part of pure experience; one of its 'terms' becomes the subject or bearer of knowledge, the knower; and the other becomes the object known.

What James is proposing here is precisely what yoga psychology means when it asserts 'sarvam brahman', that the basis of the universe is pure awareness, realized when the knower and the known become one.

Potential forms of consciousness

Although in the Principles James is at pains to avoid any suggestion of consciousness beyond the mind, in Varieties (1902/1982:388) he speaks of his own experiments in this direction and makes his famous statement on states of consciousness:

> ...our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded...they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give the map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality.

James continues (1902/1982:388) that the keynote of such states is reconciliation. We are reminded here of the yogic assertion that moving beyond duality brings an end to suffering:

> It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictions and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity.

James also suggests that non-ordinary states of consciousness may be more inclusive than our usual waking state (1902/1982: 428), providing 'windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world'. The process seems to be one of expansion of awareness (1902/1982:416):

> We pass into mystical states from our ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time from an unrest to a rest.

These concepts of progressively more inclusive states of consciousness recognized through the expansion of awareness are encapsulated in yoga psychology's description of the **panchakosha**, the dimensions of the self or the 'spectrum of consciousness' (Wilber, 1985).

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL SELF: YOGA

Dimensions of the empirical self

Psychological dimensions

Identification is the key

A variable boundary

Levels of identity

Self: no self

Paralleling the Jamesian notion of a multidimensional self, yoga psychology describes not three, but five dimensions of the person. These dimensions constitute the empirical self, **jiva**, and are exterior to the **atman**, the core self of pure awareness.

Jiva is defined as 'the self contaminated by ignorance' (Atmabodha: 5). Ignorance, that is, of the core self of pure awareness. Jiva is based on limiting identification with one or more of the 'sheaths' of the core self.

Dimensions of the empirical self

The five dimensions of the jiva are referred to as **panchakosha**: **pancha**: five, **kosha**, sheath, covering. They are called sheaths in the ancient writings because they obscure or cover the self, and because the more refined and powerful are conceptualised as existing within. Diagrammatically they are represented as concentric circles with their common centre being the pure conscious self, the atman. The inner self of awareness acts on, and interacts with the world through these various dimensions of being. Kosha then, is better understood as 'phase of activity' or 'functional field' (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:18), a formulation not dissimilar to James' 'fields of consciousness' (James, 1902/1982:231).

The five modes of expression and activity of the self are **annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya** and **anandamaya**. **Maya** means composed of (as opposed to maya, illusion) and these different dimensions of existence are said to be composed of food, energy, mind, intuition, and bliss.

The body: The most obvious and concrete dimension of personal existence is the physical body, called **annamaya kosha** because it is built from, and sustained by, food (**anna**: grain, food). It is the physical basis for a person's functions, and exists as a material structure to facilitate individuation (Taittiriya Up 2:1):

> This body of humans is composed of the essence of food and is the physical sheath of the self.

In contrast to the view that it is body chemistry which generates consciousness, yoga maintains that the blissful conscious self is not only the essence of our being, but also the source of our

being. Everything that we think we are, including the body, is generated from the self (Mundaka Up 2:1:2-3):

> Self-resplendent, formless, unoriginated and pure, that all-pervading purusha is both within and without, before both life-force and mind... from the conscious self are born life-force, mind, all the sense organs and the elements which support all material existence.

Energy: Yoga accepts the understanding of the physical body generated by western anatomy and physiology, but asserts that the physical sheath is underpinned and maintained by a network of energy flows that constitute the energy body or **pranamaya kosha**. **Prana** is life-force, and is a generic term for all the kinds of bioenergy that infuse the human constitution. Etymologically it signifies the invigorating power which is incessantly active in life, the vital principle in the living body which provides the potential for experience and action.

While prana is obtainable from food and water, it is derived by humans primarily from the breath. Prana is not the breath, but the energy carried on and extracted from the breath. This vital energy flows through a network of 72,000 currents called **nadi** (flow) in yoga and ayurveda, and **ching** (vessel, meridian) in Chinese medicine. It is the 'web that has no weaver' (Kaptchuk, 1983) that activates the body and fuels the mind. While it is this dimension of the person that is the prime focus of yoga therapy, ayurveda, and acupuncture, the activity of prana is not limited to energizing the body.

Prana is also the energy basis of mind and perception. The senses are totally dependent on prana (Prasna Up. 2:4) and chitta, the capacity for mental activity, is also pervaded by prana (Prasna Up 2:2). Every fibre of senses, mind and consciousness is shot through with the action of prana (Aurobindo, 1955:620). Prana is the life energy that powers psychological processes and which has 'entered this bodily self to the very hairs and nails' (Kaustiki Up, 4:20).

From this we can see that the mind-body dichotomy that has bedevilled western thinking is not an issue in yoga psychology. Body and mind are both energy, with the body being such a slow energy that it appears solid, while mind operates at a higher speed so that its material nature is less apparent:

> Quite other than this physical sheath which consists of food and interior to it is the

> energy sheath which consists of prana. Through this vital sheath the senses perform their office. From this dimension men and beasts derive life, for prana is the life of all things and is called 'the life of all'. —Taittiriya Up. 2:2

Mind: **Manomaya kosha** (**man:** capacity to think) is the dimension of mind, the thinking capacity in a person. Perceptual processes and ideation of all types are included in this phase of activity. As we shall see later, in yoga psychology mind may be both conscious and unconscious.

Intuition: More subtle than this is **vijnanamaya kosha**. The intelligence in a person is **vijnana**, not in the sense of IQ, but in the ability to discern, to make decisions and judgments. Vijnana also manifests as intuition and consists of holistic ways of patterning experience.

Anandamaya kosha is the dimension of blissful awareness closest to the true self:

> Other than the sheath that consists of vital breath is the sheath that consists of mind. Quite other than this is the sheath of intelligence. Beyond this is the sheath that consists of bliss. Beyond all sheaths is the atman. —Taittiriya Up.2:3-6

Psychological dimensions

Although sometimes referred to as the gross, subtle and causal bodies the kosha are not regarded as concrete sheaths, except for the physical body and to a lesser extent the energy network which is not seen but is felt. The dimensions of the empirical self are psychological dimensions, states of awareness and identification. (Chetimattam, 1971:15; Wilber, 1983:164). Moving towards the core self, each successive field of consciousness is able to observe and control the ones exterior to it.

The physical body and its energy network are the dimensions of material existence (Aurobindo: 1951:620). They embody our physical and psychological vitality, senses and sensuality, the will to live and instinct for self preservation. Together they represent our ordinary waking awareness (**jagrat-awastha**) with its primitive identification with an ego encapsulated in a physical body.

The third dimension, manomaya kosha is sometimes called the 'lower mind' with its constant flow of thought, sequential and analytical thinking, doubt, dichotomy and duality. This

dimension of the self is active in the waking state, but its field of activity is more characteristically that of **swapna**, dreaming. In yoga psychology, the dream state encompasses not only the vivid productions of REM sleep, but also daydreaming, reverie, fantasy, imagination and conscious visualization. In yoga psychology mistakenly identifying mind and thought as the true self is like mistaking a dream for reality.

Vijnanamaya kosha is experienced as intuition. Its mode of functioning is holistic, and it reframes individual issues in wider contexts of relationship, resulting in the resolution of personal problems, sudden insights and creative inspiration. Mystical experiences, dream visions, ESP, clairvoyance and other parapsychological phenomena are also manifestations of vijnanamaya kosha which has been described by western psychologists as the transpersonal band of experience (Welwood, 1979; Wilber, 1981).

The anandamaya kosha, the bliss dimension, is experienced by everyone in a state of deep, dreamless sleep (**shushupti**) and, by some, in deep meditation. During deep sleep the senses and mind, which are responsible for our daily transaction with our environment, are no longer active, and there is no experiencer of any kind: no perceptions, no desires, no dreams. Consciousness is drawn back into itself, dualities and distinctions are harmonized so completely that this state is experienced as one of profound relaxation, serenity and completeness.

These dimensions of the empirical self are interpenetrating and interacting. They are not discreet or isolated, except insofar as we tend to identify with the more obvious dimensions.

<u>Identification is the key</u>

Yoga psychology recognizes the key psychological mechanism underlying our definition of self as **yogena,** identification (Atmabodha: 15):

> Through identification with the five sheaths the immaculate atman appears to take on their qualities just as clear crystal takes on the colour of its background.

What we regard as our self is that aspect of our existence with which we identify most strongly.

William James (1890/1952:187) also emphasises the role of identification in defining the self:

> One great splitting of the whole universe into two halves is made by each of us; **and for each of us almost all of the interest attaches to one of the halves**... When I say that we all call the two halves by the same names, and that those names are 'me' and 'not-me' respectively, it will be seen at once what I mean.

James continues that 'each of us dichotomizes the kosmos in a different place' and our identity depends entirely on where we draw the boundary between self and not-self. Identification with the 'me' may be a 'moral riddle', he asserts, ' but it is a fundamental psychological fact'.

A variable boundary

Yoga psychology is based on the recognition that the boundary between self and not-self is variable. It may shift spontaneously, or it may be moved through **sadhana**, meditative discipline. James also recognises this variable boundary, and the dimensions of the 'me' that he describes may be understood to represent progressive demarcations that arise from shifts in identification. As our identification with the elements of our being that we call 'me' changes, so we redraw the boundary between self and not-self.

In describing the constituents of the empirical self, James initially draws the boundary at the skin-boundary surrounding the body, which Wilber (1981:6) maintains is one of the most fundamentally accepted self/not-self boundaries. Everything within this skin boundary is 'me', while everything outside it may be 'mine' - and James includes family, property and material possessions - but it is not 'me'.

While the body is recognized as the 'innermost part of the material self' (James, 1890/1952:188), further investigation of our feelings towards the body raises the query (1890/1952:188) of whether we **are** a body, or **have** a body. 'And our bodies themselves, are they simply ours, or are they **us**? In dealing with this issue James points out that the boundary between the self and the rest of the cosmos is flexible and variable:

> We see then that we are dealing with a fluctuating material. The same object being sometimes treated as a part of me, at other times as simply mine, and then again as if I had nothing to do with it at all.

Following James' argument, Wilber (1981:6) describes the ways in which the self/no-self boundary is commonly drawn in western culture. He stresses that there is a well established

boundary drawn by most people within the body. Consequently, we tend not to identify with our total organism, but with just a facet of it. This facet generally felt to be the real self is known as mind, psyche, ego or personality. Wilber argues that the mind-body split and its attendant dualism is a fundamental perspective of western civilization, and that even the term 'psych-ology' for overall human behaviour reflects the prejudice that we are basically a mind and not a body.

A further boundary may be drawn, Wilber contends (1981:7-8) within the psyche. For various reasons, we can refuse to admit that some of the facets of our own psyche are actually ours. In psychological terms these aspects of the self are alienated, repressed, split off or projected. They are relegated to the unconscious, and constitute what Jung calls the 'shadow'.

Wilber makes explicit what is implicit in James' multidimensional formulation of the self: that there are several types of self/cosmos boundary, each one representing a level of identity available to the individual.

Levels of identity

In yoga psychology, the possible answers to 'who am I?' are described in terms of the five kosha. The successive identifications of the self with each of the kosha is illustrated in a story from the Chandogya Upanishad (Sections 7-12):

> Indra, kind of the gods, and Virochana, king of the demons, approached the sage Prajapati for experience of that essence in a person which is not subject to old age and decay, is free from anger, which is absolute, unchangeable and totally fulfilling. After they had completed thirty-two years of celibate meditation and service, Prajapati in the enigmatic way of sages said to them: tat twam asi, thou art that.
>
> Looking at themselves in a mirror, Indra and Vairochana concluded that Prajapati had meant the body is the self. Vairochana returned to his palace and declared to his subjects: "Through serving and respecting the self, one attains both the worlds, this as well as yonder. The sage Prajapati has said: 'tat twam asi, the body is the self'." Thereafter Vairochana and his subjects devoted themselves to eating well, drinking well, dressing well, making love well and generally pleasuring the body.
>
> Indra did likewise, but before long realized that his body was far from changeable. He began to question his interpretation of the sage's edict and returned for further meditation and instruction. After another thirty-two years, Prajapati again informed him 'tat twam asi''. This time Indra took the sage's pronouncement as confirmation of his discovery

that thought was the essence of his being.

Indra returned to his palace, but after some time began to realize that the mind and emotions were far from unchanging and absolute. Indra returned to Prajapati, again and again, each time identifying with a more subtle dimension of self and rejecting that too, until he finally attained realization of the core self of pure awareness, the atman.

The Upanishad quaintly makes the point that the kosha are the potential levels of identity by which we define the self. The person who identifies with the body is a demon and lives the life of a hedonist. The person who identifies with thought and emotion regards the mind as the self. Those who expand their boundary of self to include the pure awareness that infuses all other levels of identity live as gods on earth.

From the yoga perspective discovery of the self is a progressive shift in the identifications defining the self, a shift arising from expanded awareness of our potential. In western psychology personal development is usually understood as acquiring new knowledge or new skills. Yoga psychology emphasises that growth consists of letting go false or limiting ideas with which one has identified (Rama, Ballantyne, Ajaya, 1976).

Personal growth - 'spiritual' growth - is pushing back the boundary between self and cosmos. This is an individual, open-ended process that may lead us to conclude, ultimately, with samkhya, that the self is pure awareness, separate and unique. Or perhaps, with the vedantins, we will discover that the boundary can be pushed even further to reveal that the conscious essence which is the individual self is part of a more inclusive consciousness - cosmic consciousness, brahman - in which case the boundary between self and cosmos disappears.

Yoga does not insist on which of these two perspectives on the self we will find most relevant - we can only decide this on the basis of our own direct experience. Yoga psychology provides a map for our exploration of the further reaches of the self, and yoga practices - especially meditation - provide the means to explore, then encompass more inclusive dimensions of the self.

It is fundamental to yoga psychology that letting go of limiting identification cannot come about

though belief or intellectual conviction. It is a matter of **knowledge** in the yogic sense: total understanding based on direct personal experience. This is why yoga is so dependent on meditation (Rawlinson, 1981:256). It is in the practice of meditation that we learn to observe the variable boundary of the self, and to see directly how our awareness of the world is altered when this boundary alters.

Recalling that in yoga knowing has connotations of being, from the yogic perspective only that which I know directly is a part of my being. Anything that I know indirectly lies on the cosmos side of the self/cosmos boundary, and this can include thoughts, feelings or experiences that I have suppressed or otherwise excluded from awareness (Wilber, 1981:7-8). The fundamental division in yoga psychology then is not between what pertains to me (and is known directly) and what pertains to the rest of the world or cosmos (and is known indirectly):

> Rather the boundary is between what is known directly (and therefore pertains to me) and what is known indirectly (and therefore pertains to the world). (Rawlinson, 1981:257)

By extending and expanding our direct experience through meditation we extend and expand our definition of self. Through meditative expansion of awareness, there is the potential to see through the illusion (maya) of many separate selves. The boundary between the individual self, atman, and cosmic self, brahman, disappears:

> The yogi of perfect realization and enlightenment sees through his eye of wisdom the entire universe as his own self, and regards everything as his own self and nothing else. – Atmabodha: 47

> When, to the knower, all beings have become one in his own atman, how shall he be deluded thereafter? What grief can there be to he who everywhere sees oneness? — Ishavasya Up. 6:7

<u>Self: no self</u>

It is here, where the boundary disappears, that we find the reconciliation of yoga and the buddhist doctrine of the no-self (anatman). The buddhist teaching is that there is no self, but it is important to realize that the self the buddhists are referring to is the jiva, the phenomenal self or ego self. As William James describes (1890/1952:193), whenever we focus on the phenomenal self it disappears into experience. Yoga and buddhism are in agreement here.

However, the experience of pure awareness may be stated negatively or positively (Wilber, 1981:13). Buddhism negates the reality of the separate self. Yoga expands the self, affirming its unity with all other selves. Buddhism emphasises the unreality of the figure, says Watts (1973:56) and yoga emphasises the unity of the field. 'However pundits may argue the fine points, it comes to the same thing in practical experience'.

G.H. MEAD ON SELF AND MIND

Mead on mind

Mead on the self

The I and the me

Mind and self: mutually supporting

Some difficulties

The yoga perspective

Path of renunciation

Western psychology tends to identify self with mind, and nowhere is this more explicit or better articulated than in the work of George Herbert Mead. For Mead, mind and self are twin emergents of social process (Meltzer, 1972:11) and one cannot be understood without the other.

Mead on mind

Mead's theory of mind - mental activity - grew from his understanding of social gestures (Schellenberg, 1978:46). A gesture is 'that part of an act which represents the entire act; it is the initial, overt phase of the act which epitomizes it' (Meltzer, 1972:6). The example given is that of shaking a fist at someone. It was Mead's contention that human beings communicate on the basis of the intentions or meanings of gesture, and that the gesture itself becomes increasingly abbreviated. When, by convention, the gesture is so shortened that it ceases to possess any of the characteristics of the original act it signifies, it becomes a **significant symbol**.

Significant symbols depend on interpretations and meanings shared with other people in the form of common understandings and expectations. They become the foundation of language, and also the basis of mind and thought, for according to Mead, mind only becomes possible through an internalized conversation of gestures (Schellenberg, 1978:49). From Mead's perspective, mind is precisely that process which manifests whenever the individual is interacting with him/herself using significant symbols, mostly linguistic symbols. 'What the individual actually does in minded behaviour is carry on an internal conversation' (Meltzer, 1972:14).

As the starting point for his elaboration of mind Mead takes our relationship to the environment (Meltzer,1972:12). Mead points out that perception involves selective attention to the environment. Perception then is not a physiological reflex, but a form of mental activity - a viewpoint also maintained in yoga psychology. Mental processes include delaying, organizing and selecting a response to the environment. This implies that the individual **constructs** his or her actions (Meltzer,1972:13) but it also implies that we construct how we actually see and experience the world.

Further, for Mead, human beings do not just respond to stimuli, but form objects. That is, objects

in the environment are not perceived simply in their own right, but in relation to our possible plans of action. Meltzer explains (1972:15) that perception of any object has telescoped in it the possible outcomes of our action towards that object. Moreover, objects are largely shared objects, encapsulating socially agreed definitions (Meltzer, 1972:15). This implies that there are thus at least two filters on how we see the world: the potential outcomes of our intent, and social definitions of reality. Finally, for an object to be an object it must be pointed out and 'imaged' to oneself (Meltzer, 1972:15). We respond not to the original object but to an image of it.

These elements of Mead's theory of interaction between mind and objects have important implications for the self.

Mead on the self

In Mead's view the transformation of social acts into significant symbols, principally in the form of language, gives rise not only to mind, but also to the self. Significant symbols facilitate communication with others, and also provide a standpoint from which we can view ourselves reflexively. Mead pointed out that a person may act socially towards him/herself just as towards others. One knows oneself, one praises, blames, encourages, punishes oneself.

That is, we become objects to our own perception and the self as object is formed in the same way as other objects - through the internalization of shared attitudes and meanings (Meltzer, 1972:8-9):

> It is through language (significant symbols) that the child acquires the meanings and definitions of those around him. By learning the symbols of his groups, he comes to internalize their definitions of events and things, including their definitions of his own conduct.

The development of self, in Mead's theory, is only complete when the child is able to extract a composite role from the discrete roles of particular persons, to construct a generalized role or standpoint - the generalized other - from which to view his or her behaviour (Meltzer, 1972:10). Mead (1934:155 in Schellenberg, 1978) asserts that:

> only in so far as he takes the attitudes of the organized social group to which he belongs does he develop a complete self.

Following from Mead's exposition the attributes of the self are that, firstly, it is presented to us by others rather than directly felt or expressed from within. Secondly, since objects are distinguished by imaging, what we respond to as our self is actually a self-image.

As we shall see, yoga psychology agrees with Mead's analysis on these points, but rather than accepting it as a conclusion, takes it as the starting point for further exploration of the self.

The I and the me

For Mead, the self is not an immutable psychic structure, but a **process** involving two analytically separable but experientially inseparable phases. One phase embodies whatever is spontaneous or biologically propelled. This Mead terms the 'I' or 'self as subject'. The other arises whenever this activity is signified, defined and regarded from the standpoint of another. In Mead's terms, this is the 'Me', the 'self as object'.

The subjective self, the I, is the initial spontaneous, unorganized aspect of human experience. The me is composed of the meanings common to the group. The I is said to be creative, the me to be goal-directed and conforming. In short, the I gives propulsion while the me gives direction to behaviour (Meltzer, 1972:10).

Mind and self: mutually supporting

The interaction between the two poles of the self - the I and the me - generates the internal dialogue that is mind (Meltzer,1972:14):

> It is this conversation with ourselves, between the representation of the other (in the form of the me) and our impulses (in the form of the I) that constitutes the mind.

However, self not only generates mind, but mind reinforces the sense of self.

The constant use of the symbols which make up the flow of our thoughts reinforces those symbols as a means of designating and interpreting objects. Thus the inner dialogue Mead calls mind is constantly reaffirming the construction we make of the world, and among the objects designated by mind is the self. The self, then, is constantly recreated by mind.

A phenomenological description is offered by James (1890/1952:193) of how the self is reinforced by what he calls the stream of consciousness and Mead calls the inner dialogue:

> First of all, I am aware of a constant play of furtherances and hindrances in my thinking, of checks and releases, tendencies which run with desire, and tendencies which run the other way. Among the matters I think of, some range themselves on the side of the thought's interests, whilst others play an unfriendly part thereto. The mutual inconsistencies and agreements, reinforcements and obstructions which obtain amongst these objective matters reverberate backwards and produces what seem to be incessant reactions of my spontaneity upon them, welcoming or opposing, appropriating or disowning, striving with or against, saying yes or no. This palpitating inward life is, in me, that central nucleus [of the self].

In recognition of the link between mind and the phenomenal self, yoga psychology offers a variety of techniques for 'stopping thoughts' to go beyond the mind to discover a more expansive self of which mind is not the creator, but the tool.

Some difficulties

Meltzer (1972) divides criticisms of Mead's work into three categories: unclear conceptualizations, omissions, and methodological issues.

The major methodological difficulty with Mead's work is that it has been difficult to verify experimentally. Perhaps because many have found Mead's exposition highly congruent with everyday experience (Meltzer, 1972:21) and the symbolic interactionist perspective has been so influential in the social sciences, Mead's description of mind remains unchallenged, but also unverified (Howell, 1989:5).

While providing an analysis of the development of behaviour, Mead provides no basis for explaining specific behaviours. A further omission is any examination of the possibility of subconscious or unconscious mental processes - for Mead, all mind is conscious. Finally, the generation of emotion and its role in social interaction generally, and in defining the self specifically, is not at addressed in Mead's work except insofar as it is implied in the impulse-self.

Mead manages to avoid total social determinism, but only just, through his concept of the I. This and other concepts surrounding the self are ambiguous. The concept 'self' is not precisely

defined, and inconsistency in the use of 'self' and 'self-consciousness' as synonyms further clouds the issue (Meltzer, 1972).

The generalized other assumes a single, universal set of social attitudes instead of a variety of such composite attitudes, at different levels of generality.

The concept of the 'I' is a loosely defined residual category that becomes accountable for any and all factors relating to individual differences and the unpredictability of human behaviours (Kolbe, 1972). Mead clearly specifies the 'me', but does not indicate the limits of the 'I' which is effectively understood as the not-me (Meltzer, 1972).

While Mead's 'I' is said to be impulsive in character the exact nature of the impulses is not explained. It is unclear whether impulses are biological or socially derived. Kolbe (1972:257) comments that Mead himself attached no explicit biological significance to the I, but also failed to differentiate between individual differences arising from the interaction of biological and social factors, and those which lie entirely within the field of social interaction.

The yoga perspective

These difficulties notwithstanding, yoga psychology is very much in sympathy with Mead's insights into the relationship of mind and self, while also agreeing with Alfred North Whitehead that 'each human being is a more complex structure than any social system to which he belongs'.

From the yoga perspective, relating to the world through the conventional categories that are the stuff of mind prevents us from experiencing the true essence of things uncontaminated by our concepts about them (Fontana, 1986). For this reason mind is associated in yoga psychology with **maya**, illusion.

Maya is derived from the root **matr**, to measure, to form, to build. From the same root come metre, matrix and material (Watts, 1962:59). Yoga psychology does not assert, as is often misunderstood, that the physical world is illusion. In the words of the Yoga Vashista, 'the world is as real as the blueness of the sky'. It is not the physical world that is illusion, but our

confusion of our measures and constructs with the world so measured and constructed. Watts (1973:49) explains that:

> ...it is clear that maya refers to social institutions - to language and logic and their constructs - and the way in which they modify our feeling of the world.

In more traditional terms, the Satyayani Upanishad (verse 3) asserts:

> The mind alone is mundane life, hence it should be purified with effort. As the mind is, so does one become.

Yoga psychology therefore urges us to experience what we really are instead of what we think ourselves to be. To this end, it provides us with a methodology for stopping the inner dialogue, best articulated by Patanjali in his Yogasutra. Another traditional means of discovering the unconditioned self is the renunciation of all social definitions of the self.

Path of renunciation

The path of renunciation is called **sannyasa**, from **sam**: perfect, **nyasa**: setting aside, abandoning, surrender (Avadhuta Up. 6):

> Not by rituals, not be begetting children, but by renunciation alone a few have attained immortality.

The social structure of traditional India was comprised of four castes (**varna**) and four orders or stages of life (**ashrama**). The four castes were (and are) **brahmin** (priestly), **kshatriya** (military), **vaishya** (mercantile), and **shudra** (labouring). A person's life was divided into the stages of **brahmacharya**, celibate student life; **grihastha**, married life with full social responsibilities; **vanaprastha**, retirement for the pursuit of self-knowledge; and **sannyasa**, total renunciation. Together caste and ashrama defined a person's status and roles in society, and were the primary constituents of the social self. The sannyasa upanishads assert that this socially generated identity is not the true essence of the person (Narada Parivrajaka Up. 6:18-19):

> O Narada, the castes and orders have been superimposed on the self by the delusion of ordinary people; this is not done by the knower of the self.

Sannyas involves the setting aside of all social definitions of self, and all social responsibilities and roles that reinforce those definitions (Narada Parivrajaka Up. 6:7):

> In receptions, ritual worship, religious processions and festivities, in assemblies of people, the knower of yoga desiring final liberation shall never be present.

Sannyasa also entails abandoning all symbols of caste and status, and traditionally was marked by discarding clothes or adopting the ochre robe of the criminal outcaste (literally, one beyond the caste system, therefore without legal identity and regarded as a 'human animal rather than a human person' (Watts, 1973:50). Sannyas is also beyond traditional religious ritual and its accompanying social ramifications (Aruneya Up. 1):

> Renounce your sons, brothers, relatives [social status], the tuft, the sacred thread [caste symbols], the sacrifices, the rules, study of the Veda [religious ritual], the worlds and the whole universe. Retain only the staff and the loin cloth.

A sannyasi (renunciate) abandons personal history (Narada Parivrajaka Up. 4:2):

> A good ascetic shall never answer the enquiry on his name, lineage etc, the place where he was born, the duration of his stay there, study of the scripture, family, age, conduct or vows he observes.

Sannyasins also set aside their reliance on the good opinion of others that James (1890/1952:189) indicates is the hallmark of the social self (Narada Parivrajaka Up. 13:40):

> One in quest of liberation should always recoil from honours as from poison; one should always welcome disregard as one would nectar.

The aim of all this is to see what is left when the socially given is set aside. In short, the path of renunciation for those who choose it amounts to renouncing the socially derived 'me' to discover the 'I'; to experience the difference between **having** a self and **being** oneself.

YOGA ON MIND

The inner instrument

Thought: manas

Perception

Extrasensory perception

Memory

Discernment

Mind in action

Ego and the phenomenal self

Ego and egolessness

Both James and Mead, the seminal theorists of the self in social psychology, identify the self with mind. It is the contention of yoga psychology that self lays beyond the mind (Kena Up. 1:6):

> That which we do not comprehend with the mind, and by which, they say, mind is encompassed, know that to be brahman.

Patanjali (Yogasutra 4:19) clearly states the yogic viewpoint when he points out that the mind cannot be the source of awareness, because the mind itself can be perceived as an object.

It is also a basic tenet in yoga that these assertions only have value when they are personally validated though observation of one's own mental processes in meditation. The attitude of the yoga practitioner to the mind is summarised by Swami Rama et. al (1976:65): 'he regards it warily yet studies it devotedly'.

The inner instrument

Yoga psychology explicates the mind, not in terms of structures, but in terms of processes - an orientation it shares with James and Mead. These processes constitute the field of the self called manomaya kosha, the sheath of the mind. The yoga term for mind is **antarkarana**, which means literally 'inner instrument'. Its capacities are said to be thought, memory, discernment and ego (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:43).

Thought: manas

What we commonly call thought, yogis call **manas**. From the root **man**, to think, manas is defined in the Aitareya-aranyaka as 'that faculty in an organised body which thinks' (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:24). Manas consists of the flow of thought, comprising sensation, memory and association (Aurobindo, 1955:637). Its constitution is physical, with the intake of food contributing to its quality and efficiency (Chandogya Up. 4:5:1;7:6:2). However, it is not limited to any specific organ location in the body, but acts though the sense organs.

Manas is outward in its orientation and is responsible for perception. It registers sense perceptions and coordinates them with motor responses. The former employs the five perceptual senses, and the latter the five capacities for action, all of which are subordinate to

manas.

The characteristics of manas are desire, doubt and imagination (Vijnabhikshu in Ramachandra Rao,1962:42). The main function of manas is said to be **sankalpa**, which means literally 'constructing well'. Thus, in addition to coordinating sensory-motor functions, manas structures our view of the world.

Manas corresponds to James stream of consciousness (1890/1952:Ch.9). We are also reminded here of Mead's observation that we do not respond reflexively to our environment, but construct our own reality through the intervention of mind (Meltzer, 1972:13).

Perception

In yoga psychology perception is a function of manas, acting through the sense organs. The Sanskrit for sense is **indriya**, from the root **indr**, to be powerful. Indriya can best be understood as capacity or faculty.

Indriya are divided into two classes: **jnanendriya** (**jnana**: knowledge) the capacities for perception; and **karmendriya** (**karma**: action) the capabilities for action. Each faculty acts through a specific physical organ in the body. The five organs of perception are: eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, which are capable of vision, audition, olfaction, gustation and kinaesthesis. The five organs of action are voice, hands, feet, anus and genitals with the capacity for expression, prehension, locomotion, elimination and reproduction.

The ten indriya are commonly regarded as the 'gates' of the 'city' in which consciousness dwells (i.e. the body), or the 'doors of perception' (Kathopanishad, 2:5:1). Manas is the gatekeeper or doorkeeper. The senses act by grasping (**graha**) or seizing hold of objects in the environment. During perception the mind reaches out through the doors of perception and takes the form of the object perceived. This recalls James observation (1890/1952:192) of the 'spiritual something... which seems to go out to meet these qualities and contents [in the environment]'. The senses are called **bahyendariya** (**bahir**: outer) or outward organs, because they involve actual contact with the world outside the body. The senses are also said to be bonds, because

they bind consciousness to the world.

Manas is sometimes spoken of as the 'eleventh indriya', possessing both powers of perception and action (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:42). This depiction conveys the yogic understanding that it is not the sense organ itself that perceives an external object. Rather it is the relevant portion of the mind that does so. Thus seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting are mental events (Aurobindo, 1955:636).

Yoga psychology maintains that perception is only a representation of the 'real' world. Firstly, in ordinary states of consciousness we cannot be directly aware of material objects and happenings. We are only aware of the essences of sense perception (**tanmatra**) which create within us the representation and idea of material objects. Secondly, the senses are selective in their operation because of the influence of unconscious impressions on manas, resulting in distorted perceptions. As does Mead, yoga psychology also recognizes that perception is influenced by language.

Our perception is said ordinarily to be a confusion of **shabda**, **artha,** and **jnana** (Yogasutra, 1:42; Satyananda, 1976:172). Artha represents the object proper, the 'thing in itself'. The word we use to name an object, and the meanings or ideas the name evokes are shabda. Jnana, in this context, is the process of association and discursive reasoning that is sparked off in response to these meanings and ideas. The word-label and the word-meaning bring both social convention and personal emotional responses to shape perception. This analysis of perception is in sympathy with the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis of linguistic relativity which holds that the structure of language influences the manner in which the users of that language will perceive, comprehend, and act toward reality (Meltzer, 1972).

Extrasensory perception

However, Patanjali (Yogasutra 3:34) holds up the possibility of another mode of perception that becomes possible when unconscious conditioning has been witnessed and defused in meditation. This supranormal level of perception is called **pratibha**. Pratibha is translated as intuition, but Taimini (1961:334) emphasises the transcendent quality of perception without use of the mind

or senses.

Patanjali is here describing extrasensory perception. Pratibha is the basis of all parapsychological phenomena (Yogasutra 3:16-33). The further implication is that these capacities are potential in everyone, and therefore they are not **para**-psychological, but ought definitely be among the mainstream concerns of psychology.

The quality of pratibha is direct and definite, and the object in all its aspects and qualities stands fully revealed in a single flash. Pratibha occurs when consciousness is at least temporarily cleared of past impressions and associations, so that the object of perception 'shines' directly in consciousness (Yogasutra 1:43):

> When the doors of perception are cleansed, everything appears as it is - infinite. (Blake)

Memory

Underlying and impinging on the activities of the antarkarana is **chitta** (root: **chit**, awareness). Chitta is sometimes translated as memory (Rama et al., 1976) but is far more fundamental and expansive than memory. Chitta is essential mental consciousness, the basis for psychological consciousness of life and psychological action in life (Aurobindo, 1955:620). It is woven from prana, vital energy, which unifies chitta and **deha**, mind and body.

Chitta has two aspects, or modes of functioning. It is the passive mode of chitta which is memory (**smriti**). Memory is 'not allowing experience to escape from the mind ' (Yogasutra, 1:11). It registers all the experiences of our lifetime (and according to many yogic texts, even earlier lives. See Yogasutra 4:9). Smriti is a faithful and impartial recorder - nothing is added to memory, and it does not go beyond the limits of past experience (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:48).

The oral tradition in yoga cites as evidence for this capacity for total recall, or 'perfect memory' the spontaneous life review witnessed during many near death experiences; the recall of repressed or forgotten material in trance states (such as hypnosis); and, more commonly, the reappearance in our dreams of people and events we did not know we had forgotten (Satyananda, 1979:23).

Smriti is the aspect of chitta which may be regarded in western psychological parlance as subliminal or preconscious. It lies just below the level of conscious awareness, from whence its contents may enter the stream of consciousness that is mind in response to present-time perception and association.

Discernment

Manas, the flow of thought, has no ability to evaluate or to make decisions. It accumulates information and responds to it on the basis of habit or instinct. The capacity for judgement and decision making is **buddhi**, from the root **budh**, to know. Buddhi is that component of mind most reflective of the pure awareness which is the core self, and manifests as intelligence, reason and intuition. Buddhi is our capacity for holistic thinking, and is the link between the discursive mind and the broader awareness of vijnanamaya kosha.

While, strictly speaking, buddhi does not evolve in develop-mental stages (Rama et. al, 1976:92) Aurobindo describes various manifestations of buddhi as it matures in meditation. In its least developed state, our capacity for judgement and decision-making is fairly primitive and is strongly influenced by memories, emotion and instinct. A more mature buddhi involves an intellectual framework that permits purposeful and rational organization of activities, a stable concept of reality and a coherent philosophy of life. Aesthetic values and ethical standards derive from this level of functioning of buddhi (Rama et al, 1976) which combines intellect and conscience.

Buddhi has the potential to go beyond reason and conscience to enable us to discern the truth behind appearances, to discern the real from the unreal. Specifically, it is the capacity for 'awareness of awareness', the ability to observe the stream of consciousness and to expand the boundary of our identification beyond mind towards the pure consciousness of the real self. It is this that gives buddhi its character of forward impetus in our personal growth. It is our natural wisdom, which Carl Rogers calls 'the organismic valuing process' (Welwood, 1979). Buddhi is our guide and inspiration for growth towards recognition of the atman.

Mind in action

The interaction of the various processes that make up the antarkarana is summarised by Vacaspatimisra (in Ramachandra Rao, 1962:43):

> The individual first employs his **outward senses**, considers the sense data with **manas**, then refers them to **ahamkara**, and finally decides what to do through **buddhi**.

This framework brings to mind some of Mead's observations on mind and self. The interaction of manas and buddhi corresponds to the internal dialogue between Mead's 'I' and 'me', with manas representing the source of impulse, both conscious and unconscious, and buddhi representing the aspect of self that governs appropriate action. In yoga psychology, as in symbolic interactionism, the sense of self (ahamkara) is intimately intertwined with the processes of mind.

Ego and phenomenal self

The sense of agency behind thought is **ahamkara**. **Aham** is I, **kara** is doer or maker. Ahamkara is the element of mind that generates a sense of separate, individual existence, a sense of self. Ahamkara generates feelings of distinctness and uniqueness and provides a fixed frame of reference for perceptions and thoughts, which it infuses with subjectivity. 'When manas functions, a rose is seen. When ahamkara adds its influence, I see a rose' (Rama et al., 1976:70). From ahamkara arises identification of 'me' and 'mine'.

Ahamkara has similarities to Mead's socially generated self-image, and to James (1890/1952:259) formulation of the 'I' as that section of experience which appropriates experience.

Ego and egolessness

The chief character of ahamkara is **abhimana**, self-assertion, and therefore ahamkara is usually translated as ego. A major point of contention between yoga and western psychology concerns the nature and significance of the ego.

Through assertion of our individual wishes, needs, feelings and ideas we test both the reactions of others towards us and our internal responses to these actions (Fontana, 1987). Self-assertion

is part of the social process described by Mead (Schellenberg, 1978; Meltzer, 1972) of constructing the image of a separate, individual self that seeks to maintain its separate identity in response to the various challenges presented by the environment. It is to this self that we refer when we speak of the importance of self-esteem, self acceptance and self-knowledge (Fontana, 1987).

In psychoanalytic terms this centre of individuality is called the ego, a psychological structure responsible for effective coping and functioning in the world. Western psychology emphasises the need for a strong ego, balancing impulses, conflicts and environmental demands without anxiety or withdrawal (Welwood & Wilber, 1979).

Yoga psychology shares this view, emphasising the need for self-acceptance, that is, the need to befriend the mind (Satyananda, 1982:257) in order to develop an integrated perspective on our emotions as a basis for self management. The position of yoga psychology on the healthy ego is summed up by Rajneesh (in Fontana, 1987):

> Give god your ego, but make sure it's a **good** ego!

However, in this context, more is not better. From the yogic perspective problems arise when self-assertion becomes excessive and leads to **identification** with thoughts, feelings and perception as our own special essence. It also leads to clinging to those aspects of experience that maintain this sense of unique personality.

Such a view leads us to value everything from the egocentric standpoint of personal desire, and to invest enormous amounts of psychological energy in the maintenance and gratification of a static, fixed self-image against the current of changing, flowing experience.

The attempt to maintain a consistent self-image involves holding on to some elements of experience at the expense of others. It takes place on many levels, from the grosser kinds of trying to secure material possessions, to holding onto ideas, feelings, beliefs and habitual ways of relating to the world (Welwood & Wilber, 1979). Even so-called spiritual experience can be subverted to the service of the ego, generating what Trungpa (1973) calls 'spiritual materialism'.

James describes this process (1890/1952:219) in his search for the inner principle of personal unity:

> This [identifying section of the stream] is what collects - 'owns' some of the past facts which it surveys and disowns the rest - and so makes a unity that is actualized and anchored... It appropriates to itself, it is the actual focus of accretion, the hook from which the chain of past selves dangles...

From the yoga perspective, this process generates an impoverished sense of self, and obstructs recognition of the self as pure experience. When yoga psychology stresses the necessity to transcend the ego to attain knowledge of the true self, it is referring to this process of mistaken and limiting identity.

Yoga is adamant that the phenomenal ego self generated by ahamkara is not the real self, that this sense of self based on thought is illusory. Looking further into the identification process for the solid self it promises, James also finds that it vanishes into thought and sensation (1890/1952:193):

> But when I ...grapple with particulars, coming to the closest possible quarters with the facts, it is difficult for me to detect in this activity [the flow of thought] any purely spiritual element at all. Whenever my introspective glance succeeds in turning round quickly enough to catch one of these manifestations of spontaneity in the act, all it can ever feel distinctly is some bodily process, for the most part taking place in the head.

It is important to recognize then, that what yoga psychology means by ego is not what western psychology generally means by that term. Yoga psychology does not advocate the destruction of the psychoanalytic or Jungian notion of a healthy ego. Rather, it is concerned with transcending or letting go of this limiting identification - the belief that I am my thoughts and opinions. That is, to be aware of the relativity of the phenomenal ego-self to permit ways of being that are more expansive, open and fulfilling (Welwood & Wilber, 1979).

YOGA AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

Instinct

Archetype

Obstructions

Unconscious dynamism

Karma

Breaking the cycle: meditation

Differing views on the unconscious

In his Principles (1890/1952:167) James concept of a 'fringe' to the stream of consciousness kept open the possibility of realms of mental activity other than the immediately conscious. The discovery of the subconscious and unconscious he later describes (1902/82:233) as the most important step forward in psychology in his time:

> ...there is not only the consciousness of the ordinary field, with its usual centre and margin, but an addition thereto in the shape of a set of memories, thoughts, and feelings which are extra-marginal and outside the primary consciousness altogether, but yet must be classed as conscious facts of some sort, able to reveal their presence by unmistakable signs.

In yoga psychology the reactive/formative mode of chitta is normally unconscious, and because of its instinctive and emotional tendencies, Aurobindo (1955:621) refers to it as the emotional mind. Patanjali (Yogasutra, Ch.4) also describes the processes of the unconscious and its dynamic nature.

Instinct

Among the impressions stored in the chitta are innate tendencies and instincts called **vasana** (root: **vas**, to stay). Vasana are **anadi**, beginningless (Yogasutra 4:10). That is, they exist from birth or before, and are inseparable from incarnation or embodiment. Vasana are also explained as latent desires (Satyananda, 1982:160) that prompt us to action for their satisfaction.

Archetype

All 'mental actions' (manasika karma), thoughts, perceptions, desires and other elements of the stream of consciousness leave their impression in the chitta. These impressions are called **samskara**, which etymologically signifies 'improving something already existing' (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:48). This distinguishes samskara from smriti (memory) to which nothing is added. Samskara are not simply memories, but the essence of the impact of past experience. Samskara adds to the memory of an experience the emotional impact of that experience, and the stronger the emotional response the greater the energy invested in the samskara.

There is a cyclical relationship between samskara and future action, in that no impression can occur without there being some kind of mental activity, and no activity is completely free from

the influence of past impressions. It is perhaps with this in mind that Feuerstein (1980:67) translates samskara as 'subliminal activators'. However, they are more traditionally described as seeds (**bija)**, sprouting in consciousness as thought and action. Samskara then, are not merely inert memory traces, they are dormant potential energies which may be activated by current life experience.

In fact, past experience in the form of samskara predisposes us to certain kinds of response to present experience. Samskara play a part in selective perception and also in our interpretation and options for action. We tend to perceive and interpret events in ways that are biased by samskara, which may be regarded as a kind of 'perceptual set', or in psychoanalytic terms, 'complex'. That is, samskara represent the unique set of personal meanings a situation has for us. These meanings determine to a large extent what is perceived and how it is perceived. Responding on the basis of samskara tends to reinforce that samskara and give it greater influence (Rama et al., 1976:183), so that we establish patterns of perceptual and emotional reaction to life events. These patterns of reaction manifest as habits, or more strongly, as personality traits.

The yogic concept of samskara recalls the Jungian concept of archetypes, a similarity recognized by Jung himself (Coward, 1985:42):

> Jung found great encouragement in the discovery that in eastern yoga the basic psychological processes - the samskara - are a clear parallel to the seed forms or archetypes which he saw as composing the unconscious.

Samskara and archetype are similar, but not identical, however, as Coward (1985:68) points out. Firstly, in yoga psychology samskara are both individual and collective, in that they are developed through personal history in this lifetime, and earlier ones, and inherited from forebears. For Jung, archetypes could never be individual, and could only be collective predispositions passed on by one's ancestors.

Secondly, in yoga psychology the samskara are obstructions which must be cleared to facilitate recognition of the self. For Jung, it is through immersion in and shaping of archetypal experiences that self-knowledge results. A third difference is that yoga claims that the

conditioning represented by samskara can be removed by transcending, or seeing through, ego. For Jung, the notion of egolessness was anathema, and consciousness was inconceivable without an ego.

Obstructions

The activities of mind, both conscious and unconscious, are said to be of two types (Yogasutra 1:5), afflicted (**klista**) and unafflicted **(aklista**). Perceptions, interpretations and behaviours that facilitate self exploration and the ultimate recognition of the self as pure awareness are unafflicted. More common are the afflicted, those that obstruct this recognition and bind us to continued psychological suffering. These obstructions are called **klesha** and fall into five categories (Yogasutra 2:3), **avidya** (ignorance), **asmita** (personality), **raga** (desire), **dwesha** (aversion), and **abhinevesha** (clinging).

The klesha have their origin in avidya, primary ignorance of the true nature of the self. Personality (asmita) is the tendency to personalise the impersonal (Yogasutra 2:6). It is the tendency, influenced by ahamkara the I-maker, to mistake as one's true self the phenomenal ego-self that arises from the relatively impersonal processes of mind.

Desire (raga) is generated by pleasurable experience and the desire to prolong or repeat that experience (Yogasutra 2:7). Dwesha, revulsion, is its opposite, the aversion generated by painful experience and the organization of our lives around avoiding future unpleasantness or pain (Yogasutra 2:8).

Abhinivesha is clinging to life, or conversely, fear of death (Yogasutra 2:9). However it is extended to all forms of clinging and attachment, of which clinging to life is the strongest. Like the other klesha it has its origin in ignorance of the transcendent nature of the self, which prevent us from recognizing death - not as an end - but as yet another transformation of consciousness. Even the wise - the seers of the self - are subject to clinging and fear of death, albeit in attenuated (**tanavastha**) form, indicating just how strong this tendency is in human nature.

The klesha cause suffering by generating the pairs of opposites (**dwanda**): self-other, mine-

yours, pleasure-pain, happiness-unhappiness. Our efforts to attain or avoid one pole of these dichotomies pushes or pulls us back to the other, so that our open receptivity to life is distorted by bouncing back and forth between the polarities. Therefore, dichotomy, duality and the klesha that generate them are to be traced back to their origin in ignorance of the self (Yogasutra 2:10) which is then transcended through meditation (Yogasutra 2:11).

Unconscious dynamism

Together vasana, samskara and klesha constitute the motivational dynamics of human thought and action (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:49). In relation to this unconscious motivating power, and the inherent dynamism of the chitta (**chitshakti: shakti**, energy), characterization of the unconscious in yoga psychology is reminiscent of the Freudian perspective. Vasana, samskara and klesha are not just impressions or tendencies, but dynamic energies competing with each other for opportunities of expression. A commentary on the Yogasutra (Vyasabhasya 2:4, in Ramachandra Rao, 1962:49) elucidates this in almost psychoanalytic terms: 'When you are in love, you cannot be angry'.

Coward (1985:31) identifies the concept of chitshakti with Jung's exposition of libido as a neutral energy that can be channelled into many different expressions of desire and creativity:

> The influence of the East on Jung is very evident here in that throughout his analysis of the different ways in which the neutral energy of libido has be canalized, Indian Vedic and Upanishadic symbols often dominate the text.

In yoga psychology, dynamism is characteristic not only of the unconscious, but also of the conscious mind. The term **vritti** (Yogasutra 1:2) means vortex or whirlpool and is characteristic of both conscious and unconscious activity.

Karma

Vasana, samskara and klesha are also the means by which social conditioning (**upadhi)** is achieved and perpetuated. Castillo (1985:395) discusses the interaction of these unconscious processes in terms of automatization, which results from the imposition of unconscious preset structures on raw stimuli, and the restructuring of sensory stimuli to fit preset forms and meanings.

This unconscious conditioning is the basis of karma (Satyananda, 1982:162; Taimini, 1961:392-5). **Karma** simply means action, and yoga recognizes that we cannot live without performing some karma, even if our only acts are breathing, digesting and sleeping (Bhagavad Gita 3:5).

The link between the forces of the unconscious and action lies in the dynamism of the former - their impulse towards consciousness and action. We act, not from choice, but because we are driven from within. It is this driven quality that gives the term karma it connotations of action predetermined by past action.

Karma has nothing to do with popular misconceptions of retribution or reward. It is not a religious notion but is purely a psychological concept that reflects the conditioned nature of what we assume are autonomous actions. Karma encapsulates the recognition that we do not perceive life events on their own merits, and respond spontaneously. Rather, our options for response are limited, even determined, by the way we perceive and interpret events in accord with the emotional and cognitive biases generated by past experience. Karma represents 'ways of seeing'. We are bound to certain actions because the way we understand a situation does not permit any other response. 'Good karma' consists of tendencies to action that facilitate our eventual recognition of the true nature of the self. 'Bad karma' consists of tendencies that obstruct that recognition.

Our karma can be accumulated, says yoga psychology, through experience in past lives (**purvajanma karma**); from the personal history of this lifetime (**sanchita karma**); or inherited (**gotra karma)** though language, mores, racial and national affiliation and culture. To the extent that karma can be ethnic and cultural (Eliade, 1969a:42) this concept in yoga psychology reflects the influence of society on personal behaviour in a manner congruent with Mead's perspective on the social genesis of mind.

Breaking the cycle: meditation

Yoga psychology demonstrates that the vast majority of our thinking is neither original or nor intended, but is a conditioned response to sense stimuli, memory and association, and so much of our action is not under conscious control but is unconsciously propelled.

Consequently, yoga emphasises the need for 'de-conditioning', burning the seeds of samskara, and the various practices of yoga meditation are the various means to this end. The **jnana yoga** tradition stresses meditation on the mahavakyani, the scriptural affirmations of the nature of the self (Atmabodha: 30):

> By a process of negation of the conditionings, with the help of the scriptural statement 'neti, neti', the oneness of atman and brahman as indicated by the mahavakyani must be realized.

Kriya yoga is described by Patanjali as a means of 'scorching' the seeds of samskara so that they cannot generate more karma. Meditation is described here (Yogasutra 2:1) as **tapas**, the purifying fire that burns to impotence the seed potentials of conditioned behaviour (Satyananda, 1976:91). However, it is only with the full development of meditation to the highest level of **samadhi**, fusion consciousness, that samskara are completely eradicated.

Differing views on the unconscious

With the exception of the transpersonal psychologists, meditation has met with considerable resistance in western psychology, mostly because of divergent views on the significance of the ego and the unconsciousness.

The unconscious is a powerful and often central concept in western psychology (Welwood, 1979). It elucidates a broad range of experience and behaviour and has been useful in explaining various pathologies. However, Welwood (1979) claims that it has become an umbrella term that appears to explain phenomena for which there is no other explanation, and he claims it is an 'ungrounded' concept which encourages the impression of understanding where it is actually lacking.

Psychoanalysis views the unconscious as a structure, rather like a 'black box' of the mind, and the conscious and the unconscious are seen as fundamentally separate principles. The unconscious is typically seen as 'other' - as alien, and potentially threatening (Welwood, 1979). Further, the unconscious is not only unknown, but unknowable. We can never see directly the forces that drive us, which constitute what Welwood (1979:152) describes as an ' untamed heart of darkness inside us'.

In this context, meditation is perceived as dangerous, risking the dissolution of the ego by the disintegrative forces of the unconscious, or risking disengagement from life - serene, but a withdrawal nonetheless.

Yoga psychology sees the unconscious as a process, rather than a structure, and there is no strict dualism between conscious and unconscious. Chitta is both conscious as recollected memory, and the dynamic unconscious. The unconscious is not 'other', it is the reactive mode of chitta as complement to the passive mode that generates memory. Conscious and unconscious are two aspects of the same capacity and process. This is made explicit in the Yogasutra (1:2) where Patanjali uses the term chitta to refer to both conscious and unconscious processes, to the totality of the psyche (Ramachandra Rao, 1962:47).

The unconscious, from the yoga perspective, is commonly unknown, but is not unknowable. The practices of **hatha yoga**, such as **asana** (postures), **pranayama** (regulated breathing), and **bandha** (locks, contractions), bring under conscious control bodily functions that are usually unconscious. The vast array of meditation practices is intended to make conscious the unconscious.

Thought, emotion and other psychological processes are themselves meditated upon to illuminate the ways in which unconscious processes influence, and are actually part of, our everyday experience. During the practice of deep meditation (**dhyana**), impressions embedded in the chitta 'bubble up' from the unconscious and momentarily pass through conscious awareness, sometimes in relatively literal representation, sometimes in symbolic form. In this way conditioning comes to be seen for what it is, and the forgotten thoughts, actions and reactions that drive the unconscious become known.

Yoga and western psychology also differ in their attitudes to unconscious material that does reach conscious awareness. Most western schools of psychotherapy attempt to actively draw unconscious material into consciousness, then hold on to it while it is explored, analyzed, interpreted or expressed (Russell, 1986). By contrast, yoga meditation practices do not actively pursue unconscious material.

The mechanics of meditation are such that unconscious material does rise, spontaneously. However, in yoga psychology the samskaras and other unconscious impressions and drives are understood as distorting experience and obscuring recognition of the pure awareness that is the self. Hence it is the very essence of meditation that one practices detachment from the tendencies to clinging and avoidance, attraction-repulsion, raga-dwesha, that reinforce conditioning.

Therefore, the meditator observes - witnesses - whatever comes into awareness without attempting to eliminate it, or to hold on to it, without getting hooked into it yet again in the name of analysis. Given the inherent dynamism of thought and samskara, gradually these impressions pass away. Meditation is only secondarily concerned with specific content, with the specific thoughts or emotions that surface during the practice. The primary focus is the process, **seeing through** the conditioning, **seeing through** patterns of reaction. Samskara are not analyzed, but placed in perspective by the more holistic awareness 'behind' and 'beyond' the mind.

This insight is carried beyond formal meditation into witnessing everyday activity to further eliminate conditioning and the karma that arises from it. Buddhists call this **mindfulness** and yogis call it **karma yoga** (Bhagavad Gita,Ch.3). Karma yoga involves complete absorption in the task at hand as a standpoint for observing and minimizing the inner chatter that usually dominates awareness. Thoughts continue to float into awareness, and against our focus on what we are doing we can observe their transitory and erratic quality. Our focus on the work or other activity in progress acts as a kind of anchor that counteracts the tendency for our awareness to drift off into discursive association. Occasionally we achieve a total immersion in our activity that halts the inner dialogue and allows an experience of pure awareness in action, what Csikszentmilhalvi (in Castillo, 1985) refers to as a 'flow experience'. It is for this reason that karma yoga is referred to as 'meditation in action'. Welwood (1979:58) points out that our everyday attention is usually passive, and easily 'hijacked' by successive thoughts and emotions:

> Meditation [and karma yoga] by contrast is the development of an **active** attention to one's experiencing, which may bring to light patterns of being-in-the-world previously overlooked.

By being fully present to ordinary activity, every activity becomes a means of transcendence.

Karma yoga and **dhyana yoga** (meditation) reinforce each other as means of letting go of the limiting identifications that are the usual, unconscious, basis of experience. This allows the positive aspects of the unconscious to become conscious, for it is the yoga contention that the unconscious is not only limiting (through conditioning) but is also creative and liberating.

The more expansive dimensions of the self beyond mind, and the pure awareness of the core self, are also unconscious in that they not usually directly experienced, recognized or known. These dimensions, the dimensions of intuition and bliss (vijnanamaya and anandamaya kosha) are characterised by holistic ways of patterning experience and modes of relating that emphasise connectedness. They are more intuitive and more spontaneous that our usual dualistic, logical thinking, and reflect ways in which the whole organism is attuned to patterns and currents in the universe. Welwood (1979) refers to these dimensions of the unconscious as the 'transpersonal ground' which may be experienced as a sense of relatedness between the self and the world, but in which a subtle sense of separateness still persists.

Beyond this again is atman, the core of pure awareness that is undifferentiated into any duality. This pure awareness may be directly experienced whenever samskara are cleared, even temporarily, allowing us to extend beyond the mind the boundary that divides the self from the not-self.

YOGA PSYCHOLOGY IN PERSPECTIVE

Limitations of yoga psychology

Why misidentification?

The contribution of yoga

Testability and testing

Yoga psychology and the psychologies of James and Mead have a number of features in common. All three take a phenomenological approach, providing descriptive theories of internal states, as opposed to the positivist focus on external behaviour. Each one provides a detailed description of mind in terms of processes, rather than structures. For Mead, mind and self are inseparable, and this is de facto true for James too, since he identifies the 'nucleus of the self' with the stream of consciousness. Yoga psychology studies the mind because it obscures the self, but is also the means by which we may come to recognize the self (Rama et al., 1976).

The most obvious link between these psychologies is their concern with personal identity, the nature of the self. The strength of the expositions provided by James and Mead lies chiefly in their insights into the phenomenal ego-self, the 'me'. On the nature of the 'I', however, they are ambiguous and even contradictory. Yoga, on the other hand, has little to say about the 'me' - it is almost taken for granted. Yoga psychology is more concerned with the 'I' and offers a detailed exposition of the self as pure awareness. In this context, yoga psychology and western theories of the self are seen to be complementary.

Limitations of yoga psychology

Precisely because it gives less attention to the 'me', yoga psychology does not account for individual differences nor does it offer a theory of personality. This is a deficiency it shares with James and Mead.

Personality: From the yoga perspective, personality (asmita) is exterior to the self, and therefore less significant. Moreover, it is the position of yoga psychology that personality is not really personal. That is, it is shaped by processes of mind that are common to human beings generally, and are therefore impersonal.

It is possible to extract a broad delineation of personality types from the three gunas (Bhagavad Gita,Ch.14). The **guna**-s are the different qualities of nature that account for the diversity in creation. They are **sattva**, light and intelligence; **rajas**, activity and energy; and **tamas**, darkness and inertia. All three are present in every aspect of creation, but in different proportions.

The gunas have their psychological correlates (Eliade, 1969:23). When sattva predominates, the mind is calm, clear and virtuous. When rajas predominates, the mind is agitated and unstable. When dominated by tamas, it is confused, and swayed by instinct. The resulting personality characterises are described in the Bhagavad Gita (4:17):

> Knowledge arises from sattva, greed from rajas, heedlessness, delusion and ignorance from tamas.

Vyasa's commentary on the Yogasutra recognises five possible states of mind (Satyananda, 1976, 7-8). They are unstable, confused, oscillating (between unstable and focused), focused and totally restrained. By combining the three gunas and the five states of mind we can arrive at a depiction of personality type. However, it is only a broad typology and not a developed theory of personality or individual differences.

Emotions: Yoga psychology, like James and Mead, has little to say about emotion. James deals with emotions briefly, and depicts them as bodily sensations generated by perception (1890/1952:743). Mead does not mention emotions at all.

From the yoga perspective, the importance we place on emotions is excessive because of our identification with the psycho-emotional flux of mind. The yogic attitude to emotions could also perhaps be linked to the nature of traditional Indian society, where strong emotions are channelled into social customs and religious ritual.

The Yoga Vashishta (section 5) recommends the practice of **vichara**, enquiry, for understanding the emotions and placing them in perspective:

> One should enquire in one's own mind 'What are these moods and feelings that arise within me?' By such enquiry your mind expands. When you realize your true nature by such enquiry, you are not disturbed by exultation and depression.

Patanjali (Yogasutra 1:33) recommends maintaining peace of mind by cultivating the emotions of friendliness towards happy people, compassion towards the miserable, gladness towards virtue and indifference to vice.

More detailed recognition of the emotions is provided in **tantra yoga**. Tantra yoga emphasises

the enhancement and channelling of energy, including emotional energy, and many of its practices are built around the energy structures of the pranamaya kosha. In particular, tantric practices make use of the system of energy centres along the spine known as **chakra**. Each chakra has a sphere of influence in the physical body, and correlates with certain psychological issues (Satyananda, 1984).

The base centre, **muladhara**, is concerned with security, fear and self-preservation. The second centre, **swadhisthana**, at the tip of the tail bone, is related to sexuality and all its related emotions. **Manipura**, the centre behind the navel, is concerned with status and social prestige, with dominance and submission. The concerns of the fourth chakra, **anahata**, the heart centre, are those of balancing our masculine-feminine polarities, and its emotions are love and compassion. **Vishuddhi**, behind the throat, is the centre of expression of feeling and creativity. It also balances head and heart. **Ajna** chakra, popularly known as the third eye centre, relates to issues of psychic power, charisma and self-actualization.

This depiction of emotional and psychological concerns associated with the chakras brings to mind Maslow's (1971) hierarchy of needs. Maslow maintained that full personal development depended on satisfaction of physiological needs, and needs for safety, love and belonging, esteem and self-esteem, and self-actualization. Wilber (1983:290) agrees that the two are closely correlated, but makes the point that Maslow's hierarchy is one of transitional stages in self development, while the chakra system is one of basic structures of consciousness.

Ram Dass (1974:31-2) relates the emotional concerns of the chakras to western psychological perspectives. He maintains that the Freudian perspective best explains the concerns of the second chakra, swadhisthana, with its emphasis on sexuality. The issues of manipura centre around power relationships, and are best dealt with by Adler, while the concerns of Jungian psychology are those of anahata chakra.

Neither these western psychologies nor yoga psychology provide an all-inclusive analysis of the transition from emotion to enlightenment. Yet eastern and western perspectives are complimentary, and considerable work has been done to merge them, at both theoretical and

practical levels (Welwood, 1979, 1983; Wilber, 1985;1989).

Why misidentification?

The most significant shortcoming of yoga psychology is that it does not explain how it is that we are seduced into illusion in the first place. It does not provide an account of how we make the false identification with the ego-self, and resist recognition of the self as pure awareness. James (in Mc Dermott, 1967:267) makes an inimitable summary of this argument:

> It does not account for finite consciousness... If the world known to the Absolute be perfect, why should it be known otherwise, in myriads of inferior finite editions also? The perfect edition is surely enough.

Indian mythology explains creation as the play (**lila**) of consciousness. The infinite plays at being finite. It creates the drama of creation for its own entertainment. As poetically appealing as this may be, a psychology that does not take human misery seriously is unlikely to win much sympathy. Samkhya invokes the tradition of noble silence on this issue (Eliade, 1975:30) maintaining that investigation of the first cause of ignorance is a waste of the effort that should be devoted to freeing ourselves from it.

The contribution of yoga

Yoga presents an alternative perspective on a number of psychological concerns. It provides a theory of perception, similar to Mead's. It also presents a theory of extrasensory perception and practices for development of this capacity, placing these issues firmly within the mainstream of psychological concern.

Yoga generates a systematic analysis of mind, both conscious and unconscious, and explicates the relationship of mind and self. The possibility of unconscious processes is omitted from Mead's work entirely. James (1902/1982) discusses the existence of the unconscious, but does not elaborate on its possible dynamics, nor its relationship to the conscious mind and everyday activity. These two issues are covered at length in yoga psychology.

Yoga not only takes a holistic perspective on the mind-body relationship, but describes how the two are linked by prana and the various structures of the pranamaya kosha. While James is

sensitive to mind-body connections, and discusses (1890/1952) the correlation between thought and physical sensation in relation to emotion and to the self, Mead is silent on this issue.

Yoga's main contributions are in areas relatively neglected by western psychology. Watts (1973:1) points out that eastern psychological knowledge, including yoga, is primarily concerned with the further growth of healthy, socially adjusted people. On the other hand, western psychology, with the exception of Maslow and the transpersonal psychologists, has been primarily concerned with psychopathology.

Yoga psychology places a high value on intuitive and holistic modes of functioning, and provides practical means to access these dimensions of self. They have been less valued, even closed off, by our rational, technological culture (Ornstein, 1977).

More than any other area, our perspectives on the self are broadened by yoga psychology. The panchakosha delineate various potential levels of identity, including dimensions of the self so far unacknowledged by western self theorists. The yogic concepts of purusha, atman and brahman bring human religious and spiritual aspirations within the purview of psychology. Yoga suggests that our spiritual needs are fulfilled by exploration of the further dimensions of self, and recognition of the self as pure awareness.

In relation to the self, the practices of yoga are most significant. While James practiced introspection of a high order, he does not provide any practical means by which we can develop our own introspective skills. The various practices of yoga meet this need. Yoga practices constitute an experimental method by which one may attempt to validate the theories of the self propounded by yoga and western psychology both. Although it was William James (1902/1982) who first introduced to psychological discourse the concept of altered states of consciousness,, western psychology has yet to match the sophistication of yoga psychology in delineating these states and gaining access to them.

Testability and testing

Yoga psychology is a theory of the self which, by its own criteria, is of value only when it can

be tested and verified. Meditation may be described as the methodology of yoga psychology in that it is a means of obtaining experiential knowledge of the mind and the self. The preference for western psychology, however, is for procedures and findings that are publicly observable and replicable, and introspection has been out of favour since the advent of behaviourism.

Ram Dass (1974:51) defends meditation as a means of validation even though it does not meet the criterion of public knowledge:

> There are ways of training yourself to do this, once you stop being afraid to do it, and it is a body of knowledge ...[that] still fulfils certain criteria.

Dealing with this issue of public observation, Tart (1972:1205) points out that public observation refers, in fact, to a limited and specially trained public, a selected audience of scientific specialists. He maintains that, in principle, consensual validation of internal phenomena by a trained observer is quite possible. Tart further suggests that oriental psychologies such as yoga could be regarded as 'state specific sciences'. That is, they represent a body of knowledge obtained by analysis, experimentation and communication in a specific state of consciousness. In the case of yoga, in meditative states. The problem here, as with introspection generally, is that of self-deception. The meditative methodology of eastern psychologies is operated in the service of a priori belief systems. The belief system may then mould the altered state of consciousness to create specific experiences which reinforce or validate the belief system (Tart, 1972:1207).

Using the conventional experimental method of western science, however, over 1,000 research papers on meditation had been published by the early 1980's (Jarrell, 1985) and more are added every year.

These researches have centered on three major areas: physiological changes, personality changes and therapy (West, 1986:248).

Experienced meditators have been shown to be more relaxed and less neurotic even when not meditating (West, 1979; Williams, Francis & Durham,1976). They tend to have higher stress thresholds and to recover more rapidly from stressful experiences than do non-meditators

(Goleman & Schwartz, 1976). Compared to non-meditators, meditators are less depressed, less irritable, more self-actualizing and happier (Hjelle, 1974). They are more empathic, and more responsive in counselling situations (Leung, 1973; Lesh, 1970). They are also more spontaneous, have greater capacity for intimate contact, are more accepting of self and have higher self regard (Seeman, Nidich & Banta,1972). Longterm meditators exhibit less death anxiety (Garfield, 1975).

The use of meditation and other yoga practices as therapy for a wide range of stress-related disorders from asthma and hypertension to insomnia and anxiety neurosis, is also well documented (Vivekananda Kendra, 1982; Karmananda, 1983; Crisan, 1984).

However, while reviewing the research on meditation, West (1986) points out a number of shortcomings. Much of this research has centered on outcomes that are easily demonstrated in the short-term, such as physiological parameters and gross personality change. The therapy research has tended to follow the conventional medical model, and does not take account of the 'psychic physiology' of yoga and other oriental disciplines. There has also been an almost exclusive emphasis on novice practitioners, and the use of only one kind of meditation technique.

The result, claims West (1986:245), is that our understanding of meditation has been as much restricted by, as developed by, research to date.

Rather than research questions being generated from psychological theories of the self (east and west), they have been determined by available procedures and methods. A similar problem is faced in parapsychology. There seems to be a limit to how far we can explore these areas with the research perspectives and methods to which we are currently committed.

Tart (1972) suggests that what is needed is a new paradigm for research and analysis. A decade later, a further contribution to this discourse (Wilber, 1983) was subtitled, 'a quest for the new paradigm'. Nearly twenty years later, the problem is still with us. One of the challenges of yoga psychology then, is for western psychologists to refine meditative introspection as a research

tool, or to develop new strategies that will elucidate and validate yoga's claims regarding the farther dimensions and true nature of the self.

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