

## JUNG, YOGA AND AFFECTIVE NEUROSCIENCE: TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE OF THE SACRED<sup>1</sup>

Leanne Whitney PhD

**ABSTRACT:** Materialist and fundamentalist reductive ideologies obscure our capacity to directly experience the numinous. Thus, importantly, given the weight of the observable and measurable in orthodox science, and oftentimes a dismissal of both the soul and the subjective, a viable means of reconciling science and religious experience has continued to elude us. As a counter-measure to this obscuration, Jungian-oriented depth psychology has developed as an empirical science of the unconscious, researching both subject and object and offering theories and practices that foster the psychospiritual development of the personality. Despite cultural and epochal differences, comparable evidence to Jung's process of psychospiritual development can be found in the Eastern liberatory tradition of Patañjali's Classical Yoga. However, given the elevated presence of neuroscience, no psychology, and especially no psychology that supports the soul, seems likely to survive much longer without finding an alliance with the objective measures of brain science. When considering the radically empirical measures of Jung and Patañjali, affective neuroscience may offer us a contemporary and objective means of languaging the bridge between the transcendent and immanent and fostering a contemporary science of the sacred.

**KEYWORDS:** Jung; Yoga; Religious experience; Affective neuroscience; Depth psychology; Philosophy of science

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor's note: *Foundations of Mind*, the independent research group that has provided the papers for this special edition, has never taken either corporate or state money and is financed entirely by donations. Authors keep copyright without paying. The typical fee for this charged by open-access journals such as those published by PLOS, is around \$2k. If you value this project, and wish to see further such proceedings from this group, we ask you to consider donating to *Foundations of Mind* – as little as \$5 per download, through their website: <http://www.foundationsofmind.org/donate>. This will ensure there will be further published proceedings on the foundations of mind like this one for you and others to enjoy free.

Materialist and fundamentalist reductive ideologies obscure our capacity to directly experience the numinous. Nevertheless, take a spiritual pilgrimage anywhere in the world and most likely you'll also come across a Pepsi or a Coca-Cola can. Even the pyramids of Giza can be seen through the windows of a Pizza Hut. Western culture, and the materialism and reductionism it sustains, has infiltrated the globe. This far-reaching infiltration of capitalism and consumerism feeds into, and off of, materialist and fundamentalist reductive ideologies. Unless we completely confront the pathogenic nature of extreme reductionism, it will remain one of the core conundrums of Western society and orthodox science, and it will obfuscate any advancement in cultivating a contemporary science of the sacred.

Because the methods of orthodox science are firmly grounded in the philosophic idea of the subject–object split, orthodox science concerns itself with the objectifiable and measurable and in the most extreme cases, dismisses the subjective altogether. Where orthodox Hindu philosophies such as Classical Yoga perceive any absolute subject–object distinction as false appearance, materialist science wholeheartedly believes the distinction to be real. As a result, the general Western public more often than not assumes the subject–object distinction without question. There is an awesome power to this official narrative as it continues to self-reinforce and construct the lens through which many, if not most, Westerners view the world.

When it comes to our shared experience of this lived world, the lens we look through is vital to our wellbeing. Therefore, although the reductionism utilized in most disciplines can provide information of value, as it undeniably does in affective neuroscience, it is important to understand that the information we cull from particular scientific domains can also become distorted when we do not actively acknowledge how it was reduced from the totality of the lived world.

While orthodox science currently has enormous sway over the Western worldview, certain scientific disciplines such as psychiatry are directly involved in our care. For our ability to thrive within this shared experience of the lived world, and to cultivate a shared experience of the sacred, the degree to which the psychiatric establishment is bound up in the orthodox scientific model, capitalism, and materialism is of great concern. The diagnostic terms in the DSM, the psychiatric bible of diagnostics, are arrived at through peer consensus—not the lab—thereby rendering psychiatry a system that describes behavior where a very small number of individuals have the power to decide what is “normal.” From those behavioral markers this select group then chooses outliers to their “normal” and thus manufacture disease. Easy to understand models and quick fixes are then packaged in slick and extremely well funded marketing campaigns (McHenry, 2006).

Although there are neural signatures for depression, psychiatry's claims that

depression and anxiety are solely biologic and genetic are unproven. Depression cannot be explained in neural terms alone. Brain changes viewed in brain scans suggest correlation to symptoms no doubt, but do not prove brain disease. Conflating correlation with causation is both dangerous and naïve. Our so-called science is being manipulated to serve biomedicine. Although some people with depression have found alleviation of symptoms from medication, the brain is taking the blame for a whole host of imbalances that may in fact be created by the prevailing worldview and world order. The fact of the matter is there remains no consistent body of evidence: The manner in which the most common anti-depressants, serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), work is still unknown (McHenry, 2006).

Because there is significant correlation between social and environmental conditions and the pervasiveness of mental distress, there is cause to question the social basis of our distress (Tweedy, 2017). In other words, it is possible that social and economic contexts in general, and capitalism in particular, are responsible, or largely responsible, for the pervasive spread of mental illness. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge when governments and pharmaceutical companies fund studies that look at genetics and physical biomarkers instead of the environmental causes of distress. Apparently there is little political will to unite increasing mental distress with structural inequalities even if the association is robust (Watts, 2017). If we are to reconcile science and religious experience and formulate a contemporary science of the sacred, we must first wake up to the insidious social patterns and conditions that are binding us.

There are significant repercussions inherent in the rise of capitalism such as stress to social bonding, the oppressor–oppressed dynamic, social marginalization, and the panic, grief, and fear that ensue when humans are stripped from their innate knowledge of Being. Mixing medical research with commercial interests in support of predatory capitalism only deepens the morass of a worldview that conflates matter and reality and privileges exteroceptive thinking. To get out of the quagmire we must face into the fact that we have taken spiritual energy and objectified it. Nonetheless, given the elevated presence of neuroscience, no psychology, and especially no psychology that supports the soul, seems likely to survive much longer without finding an alliance with the objective measures of brain science. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in our research of numinous experiences—which are seemingly inner truths defying objective measure—it is essential that we find a means of languaging the bridge between the transcendent and the immanent and aligning with the collective aspects of Reality. In order to formulate a contemporary science of the sacred, it seems imperative that we neglect neither the subjective nor the seemingly objective.

Currently orthodox science views numinous experience as a function (or

dysfunction) of brain process. Contrast this view with that of the world's great religious traditions which tend to regard numinous experience either as a manifestation of the deities and prophets of their tradition, or as Reality itself. If experience and environment are instrumental to either mental health or dis-ease, in contradistinction to biology, this war of worldviews is one of the most critical problems of our time. Therefore, if orthodox science deems itself capable of regarding (or disregarding) religious experience as "simply" brain process, then, at minimum, when it comes to psychology and psychiatry, questioning the reliability of the scientific worldview is mandatory.

Jungian-oriented depth psychology has long endeavored to face head on the disease that arises from scientific materialism as well as religious fundamentalism and to create a space within the scientific discourse to understand numinous experience. Since the beginning of the last century, Jungian psychology has developed as an empirical science of the *unconscious*, where the unconscious, within the discipline, is defined as an objective aspect of psyche containing the secret, hidden, and repressed material the conscious mind is not aware of. Jungian psychology researches both subject and object, and offers theories and practices that foster the psychospiritual development of the personality. Before discussing the alliance of Jungian psychospiritual development with the ideas of Patañjali's Yoga and affective neuroscience, I would first like to go back and look at the time and atmosphere surrounding the generation of Jungian depth psychology as it assists in developing the argument of why Jung remains relevant in the 21st century—for depth psychology was clearly formed during a time of great upheaval in Western thought and culture and was deeply interwoven with the turmoil (Shamdasani, 2003).

Jung's birth year, 1875, was towards the end of the Victorian era and the beginning of the new Darwinian science. The Victorian era (1830–1900) came on the heels of the Industrial Revolution (1760–1850) and the Enlightenment (1685–1815), a major turning point in our collective history and a time when human beings experienced enormous changes in their relationship to agriculture, manufacturing, technology, wealth, and society. The majority of our daily labor shifted from the fields to the factory. Inside the factory, we were unable to watch the sun move through the sky. No longer immersed in, and mirrored by, nature's daily routine, many became dispirited in their new environments.

Reducing humans to cogs on the factory's wheel, the Industrial Revolution created a crisis. As a response to their predicament, Victorians constructed the "haven in a heartless world," the middle class family which located the true self in a private or family related context (Zaretsky, 2004). In a world rendered heartless by the means of

commercial development and commodification, and through the move away from agricultural communities where people were close to the land and the cycles of nature, discomfort and dis-ease were being felt, if not clearly understood.

Additionally, in the European world of the late 1800s, there was a strong emphasis on male domination—whereby ambition, aggression, and toughness were praised (Ellenberger, 1970). Males and masculine energy were shaping the world; women and feminine energy were inferior. The air was one of authoritarianism. Society had many classes ranging from aristocracy and high bourgeoisie to the working class and the abject poor. Internationally, the white man dominated and colonized. “When attention was drawn to the rapid disappearance of primitive populations in various parts of the world, it was often explained as a sad but necessary consequence of progress or the struggle for life” (Ellenberger, 1970, p. 256).

Situated within this same historical background, Sigmund Freud was another early pioneer of depth psychology alongside several other researchers involved in neurology and/or psychology. Together their groundbreaking work unearthed invisible systems of life in the shape of painful memories leading a parasitic existence outside the primary field of awareness. In European women in particular, hysteria was one prevalent manifestation of the contradictions that lay within the contemporary claim of understanding self-mastery and autonomy. Feeling overwhelmed by their efforts at self-control, hysterics encapsulated the cultural tensions that were characteristic of this time of upheaval in post-Enlightenment Era Europe with its roots in Descartes dualism and doubt, and the belief that “reason” should be the primary source of authority.

In Freud’s view, hysterics, through splitting consciousness, were defending against feeling the depth of a traumatic wound. Through Freud’s work with Anna O, considered the first psychoanalytical case, it became clear that symptoms of illness can arise through the damming-up of affect. Freud (1925/1989) observed that affect “had got on the wrong lines” and had “become strangulated there;” and once it was “directed on the normal path” it could be discharged (p. 13). In other words, our symptoms serve a purpose and point to a deeper psychophysical process.

Through uncovering the hidden meaning of these psychophysical processes, depth psychology has long demonstrated the vitality of the world behind our eyes. Through close observation of the secret, hidden, and repressed, the discipline of depth psychology has made enormous gains in understanding not only the human mind, but also human being. Right from its inception, depth psychology has shown that the so-called unconscious in fact has a language, or several languages, that need new methods of interpretation.

Through depth psychological research and its healing methods, we are shown how

body and mind are not separate, but one whole being-in-itself. Within the field, Freud and Jung began this discovery process. The work has continued and in some cases has been radically pioneered by many others, including Marion Woodman (1993) and Mara Sidoli (2001). As psychologist Alice Miller (1998) has explained, in regards to her research on early childhood wounding,

The truth about our childhood is stored up in our body, and although we can repress it, we can never alter it. Our intellect can be deceived, our feelings manipulated, our perceptions confused and our bodies tricked with medication. But someday the body will present its bill, for it is as incorruptible as a child who, still whole in spirit, will accept no compromises or excuses, and it will not stop tormenting us until we stop evading the truth. (p. 315)

Through its symptoms the body shows us where we are psychophysically out of alignment with our true nature.

Jung credited Freud for giving the unconscious its prominence in empirical psychology, yet Freud's orientation towards the personal, which went hand in hand with the individualism of the nineteenth century, did not satisfy Jung. Freud's view left no room for objective impersonal facts. In his research with schizophrenics, Jung frequently found reversion to archaic forms of association, and it was this objective fact that first gave Jung the idea of an unconscious which consists not only of morally incompatible wishes and conscious contents that have gotten lost, but also consists of the mythological motifs of human imagination. In Jung's view, Freud had not penetrated into the deeper layer of the unconscious that is common to all humanity.

In tandem with Jung's dissatisfaction with the personalism emphasized by Freud was Jung's frustration with the reductive causalism of Freud's view. From Jung's perspective, Freud's view was oriented backwards, only concerning itself with where things come from, and not where things are going. By focusing on the teleological significance to psychological disturbances, Jung's work emphasized the compensatory function of the unconscious processes, holding that the unconscious is mainly composed of undeveloped and unknown parts of the personality that aim for integration in the wholeness of the individual.

The idea of the independence of the unconscious distinguished Jung's views radically from those of Freud. Furthermore, although both men sought to understand the unconscious as an objective psyche, Jung's orientation was spiritual while Freud's was atheistic. Their disagreements caused a schism that eventually led to their parting ways. Hence the religious–science relation lies at the root of the Enlightenment Era and all the succeeding epochs, as well as at the root of the divergence between Freud and Jung. Instead of cultivating the capacity to view their differences from a unified space, there existed competition around who could best map the terrain. This

competitive discord still festers in the world of psychology in general, and between Jungian-oriented and Freudian-oriented depth psychology in particular.

After his break with Freud, while working to find empirical evidence of the psyche's religious function, Jung studied a variety of subjects, including alchemy, quantum physics, numbers, and mystical teachings. In Eastern liberatory traditions, in particular orthodox and nonorthodox Hindu philosophy, he found comparable evidence to what he termed individuation, the central process of human development and the spiritual evolution of the personality. Consequently, he found Eastern philosophy and psychology, including Patañjali's Classical Yoga, to be of tremendous value to his psychological research and his attempts to reconcile science and religious experience.

Composed around the 2nd to 5th century of the Common Era, Patañjali's *Yōga Sūtra* is both a classic of Eastern and world thought, formulating one of six orthodox Hindu philosophies situated within the Upaniṣadic and Brahmanic tradition. Notably, Brahmanism adheres to the metaphysical concept of *brahman*. Although often rendered as Self, *brahman* eludes a simple English translation and is also variously described as God, the Absolute, ultimate reality, pure consciousness, the ground of being, and being-consciousness-bliss. The term is a gerund, more akin to a verb than a noun, and is derived from the root 'braha,' which means to grow, open up, to let emerge (Boss, 1965). What is crucial to understand about *brahman* is that it does not allow for any metaphysical splitting of reality. For the purposes of this article, the translation of *brahman* as pure consciousness is most suitable.

As a discriminatory science of knowledge, Patañjali's Yoga guides practitioners to directly experience the localized expression of pure consciousness, *purusa*. For Patañjali, *purusa* is the ontic reality, self-illuminating, singular, eternal, and absolute. Even though Patañjali only refers to *purusa*, and not to *brahman*, in the *Yōga Sūtra*, the subsequent commentators on his text correlate *brahman* and *purusa* "as if this is a perfectly natural thing to do" (Bryant, 2009, p. 363).

However, although Patañjali did employ the dualistic metaphysics of *purusa* and *prakṛti* (nature or the creative and active aspect of reality), he may have done so for provisional, descriptive, and practical purposes (Whicher, 1998). While this is not a view taken by all scholars (Burley, 2007), the metaphysical dualism in Classical Yoga can be seen as falsifiable (Chapple, 1996; Whicher, 1998). The orientation in this study is the nondual lens of Classical Yoga.

Jung was one of the first Westerners to see the value in Eastern systems of thought and he believed that a fruitful relationship between Western and Eastern concepts of mind could be realized. Even so, due to cultural differences there were significant challenges in this dialogical endeavor for Jung, and those challenges by and large

remain today. A portion of the challenge lies in the approach to the numinous. Jung grew up in the Swiss Reformed Church, a modern Christian reformed branch of Protestantism, and he was highly influenced by Christianity. For the Abrahamic religions and a multitude of Western philosophers, God is ontically inaccessible. In sharp contrast, God is directly accessible according to orthodox Hindu philosophy.

Overall, Jung accurately assessed Yoga as a unity between the subject and object, and the cosmic and individual. In his 1936 text *Yoga and the West*, Jung (1936/1989) stated, “When the doing of the individual is at the same time a cosmic happening, the elation of the body (innervation) becomes one with the elation of the spirit (the universal idea), and from this there arises a living whole” (para. 866).

Regardless of the accuracy detailed in this quote, Jung eventually dismissed the doctrine of Classical Yoga as Eastern intuition overreaching itself. However, it appears that Jung did not fully comprehend Patañjali’s mobilization of a radically empirical scientific methodology that utilizes the re-collection of all projections and the total involution of thought forms (Whitney, 2018).

Concentration leading to meditative absorption, or the coming together of the subject and object, is the cornerstone of Patañjali’s path. Means of stabilizing and stilling the mind include: Concentration on the breath; concentration, mediation and absorption into the heart center; or concentrating on a mind that is unattached and free from desires. The major thrust of Patañjali’s text is to teach yogis how to clear the distortions from the perceptual instrument of the mind, thereby fostering nondual experience.

Through the Classical Yoga lens, consciousness has two orientations, which I have designated as A and B. When we experience the world through orientation A, pure consciousness is abiding in its essential nature; and when we have experience through orientation B, consciousness assumes the modifications of the mind and its contents. Orientation B can be understood as the appropriation of pure consciousness which generates grasping, the subject–object split, and suffering. Nevertheless, Patañjali explained that while the mind creates a dualistic worldly experience, or the appearance of that experience, the mind also facilitates its own liberation. It contains the seed of its own transcendence.

Patañjali described some of the functioning and activity of the mind through the concept of *samskāras*, mental imprints left behind by our past actions, which in turn condition future action. Throughout Patañjali’s text there is an implied link between *samskāras* and affect. Jung developed a very similar concept, which he called complexes, and overtly spoke to studying the affect associated with these complexes as one possible means of empirically entering the psyche.



Complexes are core patterns of emotions, memories, and wishes in the unconscious, which are organized around a common theme. This particular psychic situation has a very strong emotional accent and is incompatible with our normal egoic orientation. Furthermore, complexes have a powerful inner coherence, and in some sense their own wholeness. Complexes originate with a trauma, emotional shock, or moral conflict, which splits off a bit of the psyche. They can be individual or collective (Singer & Kimbles, 2004). For example, if we are abandoned in childhood we may have a mother complex, or if we are born in the West we may carry the cultural complex associated with Descartes doubt. Complexes surface in the present without any assistance from the conscious mind and can be controlled by the conscious mind only to a limited extent.

In Jung's view, at the heart, or affective core, of our complexes lie archetypes. As uniform autonomous elements of the unconscious psyche and *a priori* structural forms, archetypes are pre-existent to consciousness and condition it, in contradistinction to being conditioned by it. For Jung (1945/1980), "They represent the unalterable structure of a psychic world whose 'reality' is attested by the determining effects it has upon the conscious mind" (para. 451).

Jung further explained archetypes to be modes of psychic behavior, equivalent to the pattern of behavior in biology. Jung felt archetypal forms are grounded on the instincts, and are the psychic expressions or manifestations of instinct. Just as instinct is a highly significant descriptor for all other animals, Jung stressed that the fact that our conscious activity is rooted in, and derives its dynamism and ideational forms from, instinct is highly significant for human psychology. Jung (1946/1972) asserted, "The archetype as an image of instinct is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives; it is the sea to which all rivers wend their way, the prize which the hero wrests from the fight with the dragon" (para. 415).

In Jung's work, the whole range of psychic phenomena, the unity of the personality as a whole, is represented by his concept of the archetype of the Self, the subject of one's total psyche. The Self represents the whole human, which in addition to ego-consciousness also includes the unconscious. To Jung, the Self seems to be completely outside the personal sphere, yet is the God within us. For him, the Self is the archetype of the God-image.

Keeping what he feels to be the epistemically accessible and the ontically inaccessible apart from each other, for Jung (1916/1953) the Self is a psychological concept and no more, "a construct that serves to express an unknowable essence which we cannot grasp" because it is transcendent, unavailable to our typical modes of comprehension (para. 399). In Jung's view, the possibility of our ever being able to

---

reach even approximate consciousness of the Self is slim because there is an indeterminate and indeterminable amount of material in the unconscious which belongs to the Self's totality.

In his attempts to stay within the underlying beliefs of empirical science, Jung quite emphatically made no metaphysical claims. But as British philosopher Alan Watts (1971) pointed out, "Unconscious metaphysics tend to be bad metaphysics" (p. 26). Whether scientists are aware of it or not, their theories always rely on metaphysical ideas.

Perhaps because Jung did not pronounce metaphysical acknowledgements outright, his body of work does not present a clear distinction between epistemological and ontological arguments. For example, due to Jung's evasion of metaphysics, he makes an unacknowledged assertion of an unconscious that is ontically real (Whitney, 2016). This vagueness is where Jung's psychology, and the psychospiritual development he wishes to guide people towards, becomes unstable. In contrast, Classical Yoga is grounded in a well-defined metaphysical schematic and is a much stronger psychology for it.

Patañjali's overall vision—his discernment between two orientations of consciousness and his methodology for psychophysical healing and the psychospiritual development of the personality—is exceptionally congruent and cohesive in respect to the differentiation between ontic reality and epistemic states. Jung's confusion of the ontic and epistemic is his greatest blind spot in regards to, and in comparison to, Patañjalian thought (Whitney, 2018). For instance, where Jung thought his ideas of the Self mapped to Patañjali's Self, they do not. In brief, Jung's Self has both conscious and unconscious elements; whereas Patañjali's Self is pure consciousness.

For Patañjali, as for all philosophic ideas within the Brahmanic tradition, there can be no metaphysical splitting of reality. Hence, because consciousness is equated with reality and being in that tradition, there is no unconscious that is ontic. Our very Being can never go unconscious. To tease this apart just a bit more: For Jung, consciousness is neither self-illuminating nor an abiding principle of awareness underlying all transitory mental states. Jung understands consciousness as mental activity. It is fundamentally linguistic and conceptual in nature. Patañjali, on the other hand, acknowledged that consciousness has both a conceptual and a linguistic nature as well as a non-conceptual and non-linguistic nature. In fact, the decisive point of Classical Yoga is that resting in the true nature of pure consciousness is beyond conception. For Jung, non-conceptual consciousness falls into the schema of the unconscious.

This point of Yoga philosophy cannot be overemphasized: ontological questions must not be muddled with epistemic issues. Patañjali's epistemology, where the stilling of the mind is pivotal in order to directly experience pure consciousness and

discriminate between orientations A and B, is either avoided or missed by Jung altogether. Jung never spoke of stilling the mind in his *Collected Works*, while Patañjali's methodology, and therefore his whole psychology, hinges on it. For Jung the orienting image remains. The object and objectification persist, which is why, at least in part, Jung never managed to come to terms clinically with the unconscious.

Hence there are some significant differences between Jung and Patañjali in their approaches to the psychospiritual development of the personality. In addition to the differences though, there are also important areas of similarity, including affect as an empirical means of entering the psyche, synchronicity, and the mind-body unity. For Patañjali, distractions of the mind, or distorted thoughts, have corresponding physical features. In several sūtras he is explicit on this point. Distress, despair, trembling in the body, and disturbed breathing accompany, and therefore point to, our distracted and distorted thoughts. These are moments when we are split off from the ground of Being. The process of Classical Yoga works directly with the distracted and distorted thoughts that lead us away from being absorbed in the ground so to speak. Through the right application of effort in the practice of Patañjali Yoga, psychological experience can be steadied, leading beyond the tension of seemingly opposing forces, whereupon we are able to take a comfortable seat in the body. Although Patañjali's model goes much further than Jung's in its release of suffering, what is important, when considering utilizing both bodies of work in developing a contemporary science of religious experience, is that both Jung and Patañjali mobilize the release of affect as a means of healing and psychospiritual development. Furthermore, the return of the repressed, and all the affect that accompanies it, is just as unavoidable in Patañjali's Classical Yoga as it is in depth psychology.

To state the above idea differently and develop it further: Through comparing the mind-body connection as it is approached in depth psychology and Classical Yoga, it appears quite strongly that individually learning to interpret the deeper levels of bodily process shows us, through direct experience, that our bodies exhibit non-conceptual consciousness. In other words, the psychosomatic work within the depth psychological tradition points in a direction that shows signs of confirming that the term "unconscious," is a "representation" and not ontically real.

Contemporary research in neuropsychanalysis supports this idea. Neuropsychologist Marks Solms (2013) has stated,

The brainstem mechanisms derived from the autonomic body are associated with affective consciousness, and the cortical mechanisms derived from the sensorimotor body are associated with cognitive consciousness...the upper brainstem is intrinsically conscious whereas the cortex is not; it derives its consciousness from the brainstem. (p. 5)

A more clear understanding of consciousness, therefore, may have less to do with reflective cognition than with instinct—and perhaps, in particular, with the drive towards (or away from) religious experience. The research of psychobiologist Jack Panksepp may also corroborate this idea. Panksepp (2011) has stated,

The realm of phenomenal consciousness (qualia) rather than “awareness” is the critical issue whether there is nothing relevant in mind while so-called “dynamically unconscious” processes are operating in the brain. Concepts such as “conscious awareness” are one step above phenomenal experiences and can easily lead to confusions about what is or is not experienced during dynamically “unconscious” emotional information processing. (p. 5)

Panksepp (2011) goes on to say that affective phenomenal shifts must be explicitly evaluated for with the most sensitive measures. Otherwise we fall into the trap of calling certain experiences unconscious when in fact they are not being processed in so-called higher order “awareness” (p.5).

In formulating a contemporary science of the sacred, it may be highly fruitful to look at the research results of Solms (2015) and Panksepp (1999, 2011) through the psychospiritual lenses of Jung and Patañjali. Because affective consciousness defies our attempts to bind or appropriate what moves into our field of awareness—from what Jung would have called the unconscious and from what I am proposing is actually pure consciousness, as orthodox Hindu philosophy states—the biological identity that Solms and Panksepp find near the core of the brain can also be seen as a seat of the nonduality of (and by extension therefore is the religious instinct of) the Self. Thus, affective neuroscience can offer Jungian-oriented depth psychology and Yoga philosophy contemporary objective measures to their psychospiritual theories.

Research in affective neuroscience has named seven innate primary process subcortical emotional systems in mammalian brains: SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, sexual LUST, maternal CARE, PANIC–GRIEF, and joyful PLAY (Panksepp, 1998). Several of the systems figure prominently in social bonding. The research reveals that emotions didn’t evolve as mere epiphenomena: they evolved to do something. Positive and negative affects code for survival and destruction respectively. In full alignment with the complexes of Jung and the *samskaras* of Patañjali, these neural systems promote memory construction that strengthens learned behaviors.

In moving towards a contemporary science of the sacred, studying GRIEF, the individual and cultural complexes associated with its affect, as well as the archetype(s) at GRIEF’s affective core, may be a particularly fruitful area of research. Earlier, I briefly alluded to the repercussions inherent in the rise of capitalism—stress to social bonding, the oppressor–oppressed dynamic, social marginalization, and the panic,

grief, and fear which ensue when human beings become objectified and more akin to human doings, or perhaps even worse, human havings. GRIEF is built into our system as a guidepost. It is a marker of separation and dissociation. Researching GRIEF from Patañjali's soteriological point of view could be helpful, as Patañjali implies grief and sorrow to be the nadir of affect. This suggests that until duality is overcome in its entirety it will keep reappearing at minimum in the affect of grief.

The absolute object is the absolute subject from the point of view of pure consciousness. If our science can focus in on the psychological links between the inner and the seemingly outer world—where the inner is pure seeing and the outer is anything that appears in the mirror—we might be able to research the phenomenology of suffering from the point of view of the psychospiritual development of the personality in general and the view of nondual ideas in particular.

In conclusion: According to Patañjali, Being equals pure consciousness, which is self-illuminatingly and self-revealingly conscious. In other words, the system of Life knows what it is doing. Therefore, consciousness will only ever be reduced to consciousness. In our contemporary attempts at reconciling science and religious experience, we need to look for the correct markers. Proceeding on the road of reductionism is informative if we have the right framework.

Affect signifies the lived world as it moves in us and as us, before we reflect on it or harness it, or bind it and repress it. Furthermore, the return of the repressed sends affect running throughout our system. As a result, in affect, depth psychology found an empirical means of entering the psyche as well as evidence of phenomena that cannot be controlled. If we couple the evidence with Patañjali's certainty that our Being is pure consciousness, a single unique power that always knows what it is doing, then our affective states may offer empirical evidence of life's nondual power realizing itself over and above our knowledge construction and re-presentation.

Notably, for Freudian-oriented depth psychology affect is a marker for pleasure–unpleasure and there is a strong focus, if not a myopic focus, on human beings getting their biological needs met in the world. The “I” becomes fixed and the lived world predictive and more-or-less automated. A contemporary science of the sacred, on the other hand, warrants a complete return to the ground of Being not just in its biology.

Lastly, it is imperative that psychotherapeutics not be utilized as a means to legitimize any form of pathogenic social order. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent rise of predatory capitalism has grossly exploited and objectified our natural world, so that we dance on the precipice of ecocide and self-destruction. This time demands the deconstruction of the power systems of the Western world and an emphatic acknowledgement that our psychobiology is nature—and if anything—

psyche needs to inhabit its nondual nature more deeply. Then, perhaps, we can collectively move towards a contemporary science of the sacred: for to be psychophysically healthy, we need to be both holy and whole.

lwhitney@selfknowingawareness.com  
<http://selfknowingawareness.com>

## REFERENCES

- Boss, M. (1965). *A psychiatrist discovers India*. London, England: Oswald Wolff.
- Bryant, E. (2009). *The yoga sutras of Patanjali*. New York, NY: North Point Press.
- Burley, M. (2007). *Classical Sāṃkhya and Yōga: And Indian metaphysics of experience*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Chapple, C. K. (1996). Living liberation in Sāṃkhya and Yoga. In A. O. Fort & P. Y. Mumme (Eds.), *Living liberation in Hindu thought* (pp. 115-134). Delhi, India: Sri Satguru.
- Ellenberger, H. F. (Ed.). (1970). *The discovery of the unconscious: The history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry*. New York, NY: BasicBooks.
- Freud, S. (1989). An autobiographical study (P. Gay, Trans.). In *The Freud reader* (pp. 3–41). New York, NY: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1925)
- Jung, C. G. (1953). The relations between the ego and the unconscious. In H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, & W. McGuire (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) (Vol. 7, pp. 121–239) New York, NY: Pantheon. (Original work published 1916, revised 1934)
- Jung, C. G. (1972). On psychic energy. In H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, & W. McGuire (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) (2nd ed., Vol. 8, pp. 3–66). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1928)
- Jung, C. G. (1980). The phenomenology of the spirit in fairytales. In H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, & W. McGuire (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) (2nd ed., Vol. 9i, pp. 207–254). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1945)
- Jung, C. G. (1989). Yoga and the west. In H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, & W. McGuire (Eds.), *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.) (2nd ed., Vol. 11, pp. 529–537). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1936)

- McHenry, L. (2006). Ethical issues in psychopharmacology. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 32, 405-410.
- Miller, A. (1998). *Thou shalt not be aware: Society's betrayal of the child*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Panksepp, J. (1998). *Affective neuroscience: The foundations of human and animal emotions*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Panksepp, J. (1999). Emotions as viewed by psychoanalysis and neuroscience: An exercise in consilience. *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 1(1), 15-39.
- Panksepp, J. (2011). The "dynamic unconscious" may be experienced: Can we discuss unconscious emotions when there are no adequate measures of affective change? *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 13(1), 51-60.
- Shamdasani, S. (2003). *Jung and the making of modern psychology: The dream of a science*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Sidoli, M. (2001). *When the body speaks: The archetypes in the body*. (P. Blakemore, Ed.). New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.
- Solms, M. (2013). The conscious id. *Neuropsychoanalysis*, 15(1), 5-19.
- Solms, M. (2015). *The feeling brain: Selected papers on neuropsychoanalysis*. London, England: Karnac Books.
- Tweedy, R. (2017). Introduction. In R. Tweedy (Ed.), *The Political self: Understanding the social context for mental illness* (pp. xxv-lix). London, England: Karnac Books.
- Watts, A. (1971). *Psychotherapy east and west*. New York, NY: Ballantine.
- Watts, J. (2017). Is mental illness real? You asked Google-here's the answer. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/apr/12/is-mental-illness-real-google-answer>
- Whicher, I. (1998). *The integrity of the yoga darśana: A reconsideration of classical yoga*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Whitney, L. (2016). Depth psychology through the lens of classical yoga: A reconsideration of Jung's ontic reality, *International Journal of Jungian Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/19409052.2016.1240702
- Whitney, L. (2018). *Consciousness in Jung and Patañjali*. London, England: Routledge.
- Woodman, M. (1993). *Leaving my father's house: A journey to conscious femininity*. Boston, MA: Shambala.
- Zaretsky, E. (2004). *Secrets of the soul: A social and cultural history of psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.