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BEYOND CONSCIOUSNESS: PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THE EARLY WORK OF MIRCEA ELIADE (1925-1932)

Abstract

This paper offers an overview of the way in which Mircea Eliade used psychological language in his early work on religion, and places this early contribution in the context of the history of the psychology of religion. The first two sections comment on Eliade's earliest mentions of psychological concepts, while the following two go into a more in-depth analysis of the history of the concept of higher consciousness in psychology and into the history of the psychology of yoga in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Building on these two sections, I analyse the uses of psychology in an unpublished manuscript from 1929 and in Eliade's Ph.D. thesis.

Keywords: Mircea Eliade, super-consciousness, the sub-conscious, psychology of religion, yoga, metapsychics

1. Introduction

The cover blurb on the 1991 edition of Mircea Eliade's *Images and Symbols* does not hesitate to call the Romanian scholar "one of the most renowned expositors of the psychology of religion, mythology, and magic".¹ Had he still been alive, Eliade would have, no doubt, recoiled at the description. At first glance, the notion of Eliade the psychologist seems like a joke. For, after a lifetime of work emphasising the need to study religion on its own terms, without reducing it to psychological, sociological, or economic factors, to be called a psychologist would amount to no less than a radical misunderstanding of his work. Nevertheless, this quote poses several important questions: what was Eliade's relationship with psychology? Did psychological concepts play any part in his theorisation? And if so, how would an understanding of his uses of psychology affect

the understanding of Eliade's project and his hermeneutics? The answer to these questions in the secondary literature has often taken the form of a "Jungian or not Jungian" equation, often with reference to Eliade's use of the concept of "archetype".² At the same time, Eliade's use of psychologically-sounding concepts, such as "transconscious" and "metapsychoanalysis" has puzzled interpreters, but there has been little attempt to try to understand these terms historically.³ Finally, in a more recent piece on Eliade's early writings, Liviu Bordaș has claimed that Eliade titled his Ph.D. thesis *The Psychology of Indian Meditation* not because he was in fact offering a psychological interpretation of yoga, but because of administrative reasons, having to do with the academic specialization of Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, the psychologist who was heading his examination committee.⁴ That this is clearly not the whole picture can be seen from what follows.

In this paper, I will take a different line. In the first and second sections, I will show that Eliade was familiar with psychological concepts since his youth, and that he also drew on texts belonging to the psychology of religion in order to outline his own conception of mysticism. In the following two sections, I will examine in more detail two strands of the psychology of religion that came to play an important part in Eliade's understanding of yoga, as well as in his later, mature understanding of religious experience. In effect, I will argue that in his Ph.D. thesis Eliade also offered a psychological interpretation of yoga, an interpretation that is not entirely intelligible without the full context of the development of the idea of higher consciousness, and without understanding the ways in which the practice of yoga was interpreted in psychological terms by scholars and practitioners who came before Eliade.

This article is the first part of a larger work aimed at explicating more fully Eliade's uses of psychology in his writings on religion. In a future paper, I will use the development outlined in these pages to try to tease out the way in which Eliade's psychology changed in the period after the Second World War. The 1940s and 50s were a period when Eliade became more versed in psychology, both through his reading, as well as through meetings with various psychologists and psychotherapists (C.G. Jung, René LaForgue, Medard Boss, James Hillman, and others). At the same time, during this same period Eliade changed his general hermeneutics, developing new concepts ("transconscious" "metapsychoanalysis") and what we might call the rudiments of a "metaphysical psychotherapy". The story that I tell here constitutes a prelude to that later theorization.

2. The Young Eliade: Psychology of Religion and Metapsychics

Eliade's interest in psychology can be discerned in several publications that date back as early as 1925. Though his main interest appears to have been in the field of metapsychics or psychical research (i.e. the study of mediumship, telepathy, and other seemingly preternatural capabilities), Eliade was also interested in developments in general psychology, and especially in the psychology of religion. It is quite possible that he became interested in the latter through his reading in the former discipline, as psychical research and psychology were closely linked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, many early psychologists (William James, Théodore Flournoy, Pierre Janet, Frederic Myers to name just a few) were also practitioners of psychical research. As recent research into the origins of academic psychology has shown, it was only through a process of active rejection by some psychologists (often motivated by less than "scientific" reasons, such as strong Christian beliefs) that psychical research was pushed out of the mainstream psychological agenda.⁵

As it is evident from an article published in 1925 in his high school magazine, Eliade was an impassioned advocate for psychical research. The title of the piece was "Occultism and Science", or, as Eliade would have it, a brief demonstration of the existence of hidden psychic faculties, as well as a refutation of positivistic sceptics like his colleague Israilovici, against whom the polemic was directed.⁶ In this paper, Eliade provides a brief genealogy of "occultist" practices (from ancient Egypt to Rudolf Steiner and contemporary mediums), as well as a sequence of contemporary accounts of various "unknown psychic forces", drawn from psychical researchers committed to a scientific elucidation of mediumistic phenomena: William Crookes, Camille Flammarion, Richard Hodgson, Frederic Myers, W.F. Barrett and William James. Eliade claims that there are two planes of reality: the formal one, accessible with the ordinary means of "rationalist" and sense-based cognition, and the "noumenal" one, which can be tapped by means of faculties that are undeveloped in modern man (e.g. clairvoyance, telepathy).⁷ Clearly enamoured with Steiner's works, Eliade recommends them to the reader who is keen to develop such faculties.⁸

By 1926, Eliade was writing to Raffaele Petazzoni to inform him of the project for a "Romanian University Association for the Study of Religions," which would publish a journal dedicated to the "history and psychology of religions"⁹. And while this project, like many others of the young scholar,

did not come to pass, it nevertheless shows the direction in which he was going with his investigations.¹⁰

In 1927, Eliade's interest in the psychology of religion crops up again in the *Spiritual Itinerary* and in a new paper discussing the relationship between contemporary mediumship and ancient lore.¹¹ This latter piece is, in a sense, an extension of the earlier argument. In the earlier article, Eliade had claimed that occult authors had known truths that only subsequently become discovered by science. In this sketch, he puts forward the notion that developments in psychical research are re-discoveries of ancient truths, for example those of magic. What James Frazer and others like him had described as "contagious magic" (i.e. the notion that an occult relationship obtains between two things that had once come into contact) can be found again in the notion of psychometry, whereby a person can be known by an object that had once come in contact with them.

For Eliade, the verification of the truths of magic in contemporary psychometry is proof that magic is not the product of "prelogical minds", but of minds attuned to generalizing on the basis of repeated observations—in other words, of minds capable of obtaining "an objective scientific truth". This brief article also gives him an opportunity to note down a definition of religion as "a series of effervescences of the psyche, and of moments in which consciousness goes beyond the boundaries of normality".¹²

But going beyond the limits of normality does not mean entering into the field of pathology. In this respect, Eliade commends William James' analysis in the *Varieties of Religious Experience* for having dealt with the issue in a "just" way. However, he takes a different route than the American philosopher by pointing out that "religious experience cannot be a form of hysteria, because such a view mistakes the *content* of the psyche with its material *expression*".¹³ The question, then, for Eliade, is to be resolved by an analysis of this content, which, in his view, "only psychology and metapsychics will be able to elucidate, even before philology and sociology".¹⁴

3. Mysticism and the Spiritual Itinerary

In the summer of 1927, Eliade travelled to Geneva on a two-month scholarship given by the U.N. As one would expect of Eliade, he spent a good deal of his time there reading in the University Library.¹⁵ In August,

he began sending to *Cuvîntul* a series of articles that bore the collective title *Spiritual Itinerary*, and which were meant to give a spiritual x-ray of his generation, discussing themes such as culture, literary and scientific creation, experience, dilettantism and religion.¹⁶

As part of his broader apology for “experience” in the *Itinerary*, Eliade takes up arms for “mystical experience” in the eighth article of his series. As he puts it there, “mysticism for us, the young ones, is already a reality—more confused or more lucid, more undifferentiated from vitalism and aestheticism, or more purified”.¹⁷ The “more purified”, for him, is the religious kind, but one can also find mysticism everywhere, in the multiple and verified irruptions of the irrational in everyday life, such as clairvoyance, miraculous healings or psychometry. In a roundabout way, by inference, all of these facts point in the direction of a higher plane. However, to work only with such traces, to try *to think* one’s way into the reality of mysticism (whether through logic, metaphysics or metapsychics) is to labour with methods that are alien to religion, and cannot discover its essence. Mysticism, Eliade argues, is an affective experience and also “a transcendence of consciousness into a plane, mental of course (not to be confused with a crystallization of hallucinations, we will show why; we write “mental” because it is inaccessible to the senses)”.¹⁸ It is a breaking through to the *other side*. What is on the other side? That cannot be said, because, Eliade claims, he is not doing theology.¹⁹ At any rate, mystical experience cannot be translated into words and “causal chains”. It is impervious to such an analysis, and most of all to the analysis of psychologists who try to explain it by pointing out its fundamentally pathological nature.

As Eliade is no doubt aware, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, psychology had established itself as a main contender in the race for a scientific description of religious and mystical experiences.²⁰ The psychology of religion arose in the U.S. in the final decades of the 19th century, primarily around William James (1842-1910) at Harvard and G. Stanley Hall (1846-1924) at Clark University. These two were joined by their students James Henry Leuba (1868-1946), E.D. Starbuck (1866-1947), as well as by other colleagues in Europe and America. The list of notables included Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920) in Geneva, and Pierre Janet (1859-1947) and Henri Delacroix (1873-1937) in Paris. The psychology of religion sought a complete overhaul of the science of religion, as it had been practiced in the 19th century by luminaries such as Max Müller, Albert Réville and others.

As opposed to these authors, whose practice often relied on a philological and comparative investigation of historical religious texts, the religious psychologists argued instead that the essence of religion lay in an affective religious experience that could be examined also through contemporary accounts. As William James wrote in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, “feeling is the deeper source of religion [...] and philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue.”²¹ James was the uncontested leader of the sub-discipline, and his *Varieties of Religious Experience* became an instant classic, as well as, according to Eliade himself in 1937, “the best introduction to the understanding of religious phenomenon that a lay person could read up to 1917”.²² The turn toward religious experience, which psychologists of religion like James advocated, could only appeal to Eliade, since it fitted in well with his own (and one might add Nae Ionescu’s) advocacy of lived experience.²³

As I have already hinted in the previous section, Eliade had read the *Varieties* as early as June 1927, and had deemed that James had “treated mystical-religious phenomenology from a just angle”.²⁴ In the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James had argued that mysticism comprised four qualities: ineffability, noetic quality, passivity, and transience.²⁵ Eliade accepted at least two of those four qualities in his own understanding of the concept. But James’ “angle” had also encompassed a trademark attempt to defuse the issue of whether mystics were victims of mental pathology or not. James’ solution to this problem had been to apply his pragmatic criterion. He argued that it did not matter whether a mystic was deranged or not, as the test of a mystic’s experience was not its organic origin, but whether his or her experience was valuable for life. As James put it:

*Immediate luminousness, in short, philosophical reasonableness, and moral helpfulness are the only available criteria. Saint Theresa might have had the nervous system of the placidest cow, and it would not now save her theology, if the trial of the theology by these other tests should show it to be contemptible.*²⁶

Even though Eliade likely appreciated James’ attack on medical materialism, he did not adopt James’s solution, arguing instead that the “fruits” of mysticism were evidence that the mystics were actually healthy and not deranged.²⁷ In the article on mysticism, he nevertheless counterposed James and Henri Delacroix to the pathological arguments

proffered by psychologists such as Ribot, Leuba and Janet.²⁸ But it was Henri Delacroix who provided Eliade with the thrust of his argument.

Henri Delacroix (1873-1937) grew up in Paris in a Catholic family and taught philosophy and psychology at the Sorbonne.²⁹ In his 1908 book *Studies in the History and Psychology of Mysticism*, Delacroix (1873-1937) makes the claim that in order to understand mysticism one needs to engage in an extensive perusal of the lives of great mystics.³⁰ Psychology of mysticism, for him, was by necessity a historical endeavour. This was because contemporary great mystics were hard to find, and also because, in order to comprehend the psychological law of mysticism, one had to find mystics (like St. Theresa of Avila or Henry Suso) that had left behind a sufficient number of documents (letters, autobiographies) that permitted a reconstruction of their whole lives.³¹

The psychological law of mysticism was, for Delacroix, one of an oscillation between extremes (contemplation and action, ecstasy and sadness, presence as well as absence of God), which proceeded progressively until a state of psychological balance was reached. Delacroix calls this balance "theopathic", and he describes it as a state wherein the "I" of the mystic is completely replaced by what the mystic calls "God", and what the psychologist calls the "subconscious".³²

Fundamental to Delacroix's understanding of mysticism is the notion that though pathology explains a lot of the mystic's adventure, it cannot explain everything. Pathology is powerless when it comes to explain "the specific mental state" (état mental particulier) that underscores mystical experiences. And it is this specific mental state that constitutes the essence of mysticism: if no such states existed, then there would be no artistic or religious genius.³³

In the *Spiritual Itinerary*, Eliade uses this description as evidence that mysticism lies beyond the pale of psychopathological analysis. As for the notion that it is the subconscious that is responsible for mystical visions, for the feelings of presence and for other peculiarities of the mystical life, Eliade claims that it cannot be so, because the mystics themselves know about the subconscious and can differentiate between it and the action of divinity.³⁴ In other words, it is not a question of refuting psychology *tout court*. The subconscious, for Eliade, is a reality even in the mind of a sixteenth century saint. The saint, however, had learned to circumvent it.

4. Enter the Superconscious

The distinction between the content of religious experience and its exterior expression that Eliade articulated in 1927 would become fundamental for the way in which he later approached the question of the relationship between pathology and religion. More broadly, one can also consider this distinction as basic for understanding Eliade's later rejection of reductionism. It was because religious experience was the result of a specific mental state that it could not be understood without a specific hermeneutic that took that state into consideration. Any other kind of analysis was bound to deal only with the surface, as if one tried to explain *Madame Bovary* "by a list of social, economic and political facts; however true, they do not affect it as a work of literature".³⁵ Starting with his 1932 doctoral thesis, the specific mental state was called by Eliade the "super-conscious" (applied at first only to *sāmadhi*) and from 1948 onwards "the transconscious".³⁶ However, before I outline the context in which Eliade first used this notion, I would like to first outline a brief history of the "superconscious" in late 19th and early 20th century psychology, which will help to better situate Eliade's concept.

The "superconscious" can be found appearing for the first time in the 1880s, in a couple of papers published by Frederic W. H. Myers (1843-1901). As a founding member of the *Society for Psychical Research*, Myers was deeply involved in the study of mediumship and unusual psychic faculties, defining a whole new vocabulary in which to discuss these: telepathy, hypermnesia, panmnesia, telaesthesia, etc.³⁷ He argued that such faculties were the work of a subliminal Self that could not fully manifest itself in an organism evolved for life on this planet. At the same time, he claimed that such mental operations upended the distinction between unconscious and consciousness. As he wrote in an essay in *Phantasms of the Living* (1886):

Well, besides these sub-conscious and unconscious operations, I believe that *super-conscious* operations are also going on within us; operations, that is to say, which transcend the limitations of ordinary faculties of cognition, and which yet remain—not *below the threshold*—but rather *above the upper horizon* of consciousness, and illumine our normal experience only in transient and clouded gleams.³⁸

Some fifteen years afterwards, another author, a Canadian psychiatrist named Richard Bucke (1837-1902) sought to give a similar account of an evolutionary higher form of consciousness. Bucke's book was called *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind*, and it was made famous by William James, who quoted from it in his *Varieties*.³⁹ Eliade also quoted from this volume in his 1957 Eranos lecture.⁴⁰ The topic of Bucke's book was summarised in the title: it was a study of "cosmic consciousness" as the next step in the evolution of the human mind. Bucke had had an experience of "Brahmic bliss" in 1872, which he used as the basis for theorizing about the nature of consciousness and the conditions for attaining the "supra conceptual mind".⁴¹ Most of his account was given over to the description of cases of cases of cosmic consciousness, which ran the gamut from the Buddha, Christ, Paul, and Mohammed, to Socrates, Dante, Balzac, Pushkin, Walt Whitman and a host of anonymous contemporaries.

According to Bucke, there were three types of consciousness in the living universe, each developing out of the one preceding it, and each offering a qualitatively different understanding of the world. The lowest rung of this consciousness ladder was occupied by simple consciousness, which the higher animals also possessed, followed by self-consciousness, which was a prerogative of (most) humans. The third step belonged to cosmic consciousness, which only a few men (and even fewer women) had ever attained.⁴²

In addition to these two, almost "classical" descriptions of higher forms of consciousness, one can also find similar discussions in a number of texts, most of them written in the wake of Myers's account, but also drawing on different psychological theories.

A case in point is the work of one Jean Henri Probst-Biraben (1875-1957), a Freemason, occultist and Sufi, who worked as a school teacher in France and Algeria. Drawing on his knowledge of Sufi milieus in the north of Africa, as well as from the study of authors such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Arabi, Probst-Biraben put forward an argument in favour of the existence of "hyper-consciousness", managing to get his argument published in the pages of the *Revue philosophique*, the main organ of experimental psychology in France, edited by Théodule Ribot.⁴³ While Probst-Biraben started from Ribot's own musings on the psychology of ecstasy, he ended up with radically different conclusions. Starting in 1883, Ribot had argued that ecstasy was an almost complete abolition of consciousness.⁴⁴ The ecstatic experienced a restriction of the

area of consciousness to one image-idea, or to a nucleus built up around it. What the ecstasies lost in extension of consciousness, they more than made up for in intension.⁴⁵ For Ribot, thus, ecstasy amounted to a state of heightened consciousness, but with one important corollary: the nature of consciousness implied continuous change, a flow of representations, and since the mystic's procedures made these grind to halt, such intensified consciousness resulted in an abolition of consciousness. It was like overloading a jet-engine and making it flame out. Probst-Biraben heeded Ribot's claim that ecstasy was "an infraction of the laws of the normal mechanism of consciousness", but argued that whatever happened at those supersonic mental speeds belonged to a different kind of psychological physics.⁴⁶ Hyper-consciousness meant delivery into a different ontological regime, into a state that was different both from unconsciousness, and from Myers' subliminal consciousness.

Concepts such as Probst-Biraben's were brought into more mainstream psychology of religion in 1915, when Théodore Flournoy discussed the nature of ecstatic consciousness in a contribution in which he analysed the experiences of a contemporary mystic, whom he pseudonymously named Cécile Vé.⁴⁷ Flournoy claimed to take no stance on the ontology of such a state, whether it was a superior evolutionary state as Bucke or Myers had argued, or an entry into an earlier form of consciousness as other investigators had claimed. He did, however, note that such an ecstatic consciousness seemed to fit the facts as he knew them: ecstatic consciousness was not just an abolition of consciousness, as Ribot and Leuba had stated.⁴⁸

In addition to such guarded statements from an official psychologist like Flournoy, higher consciousness also had a career in theosophical and occultist milieus.⁴⁹ The notion of 'super-consciousness' appeared, for example, in Annie Besant's *Theosophy and the New Psychology* (1904) and *A Study in Consciousness* (1904).⁵⁰ Besant was explicit in her drawing on Myers in her account of what she called either "Super-Consciousness", "higher consciousness" or "Super-physical Consciousness". As much as Myers and Bucke, she argued that such higher consciousness was a prerogative of the future: "for the sub-consciousness belongs the Past, as the waking-consciousness to the Present, as the super-consciousness to the Future".⁵¹ Dreams could be considered as manifestations of super-consciousness, as well as a whole host of premonitions, inspirations, "intuitive grasps of truths", "flashes of genius, visions of artistic beauty, etc., etc."⁵² In order to obtain a glimpse of super-consciousness one had

to enter into trance, which is “but the sleep-state, artificially or abnormally induced”.⁵³ Eastern masters, as one might expect, were deemed to possess the best means for manifesting super-consciousness, either through Hatha-Yoga, which led to hypnotic trance, or through Rāja-Yoga, whereby “the consciousness is withdrawn from the body by intense concentration, [and which] leads the student to continuity of consciousness on the successive planes, and he remembers his super-physical experiences on his return to the waking state”.⁵⁴ As I will show in the next sections, Besant’s description bore some similarity both to Vivekananda’s account of yoga and to Eliade’s (with some notable differences).

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), Eliade’s preferred “occultist” in his youth, also wrote of mental states that he described either as “higher consciousness” (*höhere Bewußtsein*), or super-sensible consciousness (*übersinnliche Bewußtsein*).⁵⁵ In one of the books that the young Eliade was familiar with, Steiner argued that such a state was obtained by developing consciousness during deep sleep:

We achieve knowledge of higher worlds by acquiring a third state in addition to sleeping and waking. When we are awake, our souls are devoted to sensory impressions and the mental images they stimulate. When we sleep, these sensory impressions are silenced, but our souls also lose consciousness; the experiences of the day sink down into a sea of unconsciousness. Now let’s imagine that the sleeping soul is capable of becoming conscious in spite of the fact that all sensory perceptions are excluded, as is otherwise the case in deep sleep, and that not even a memory of the day’s experiences is present.⁵⁶

This line of thought no doubt fascinated Eliade, who will later look for and find confirmation for Steiner’s ideas in his studies on yoga. One of the particularities of yoga that caught Eliade’s attention was precisely the fact that the yogin was able to enter consciously into all states of consciousness, as well as to control the subconscious.⁵⁷ These were faculties that Steiner’s anthroposophical system promised to develop as well, and Eliade had noted as early as 1926 that what he appreciated about Steiner’s work was

the reform of mysticism through logic, the introduction of normal faculties of knowledge into the re-awakening of super-sensible ones, *the control of consciousness over the unconscious*, and the capital concern of not despising the living and palpable reality in favour of the deceitful imagination.⁵⁸

5. The Psychology of Yoga

In 1928, Eliade set off for India to work on his doctoral thesis, supported in part by a stipend offered by the maharajah of Kasimbazar, to whom he had written a few months before, disclosing his intention to learn Sanskrit and study Indian philosophy. The scholarly work on yoga that he did in this period resulted in several articles and a Ph.D. thesis (*The Psychology of Indian Meditation*) submitted to the University of Bucharest in 1932 and later re-worked as *Yoga. Essay on the Origins of Indian Mysticism* (1936).⁵⁹ Eliade continued to refer back to this material throughout subsequent decades, using it as a basis for all his books on the topic. My interest here is in the psychological aspects of this work, and in the international context that made this use of psychology possible and even recommended.⁶⁰

Understanding Eliade's use of psychological categories in his thesis and its subsequent avatars requires that one understands something of the international study of yoga in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as of Eliade's own shifting relationship to psychology in this period. For the purposes of this paper, I will leave aside the question of how yoga developed in India, as well as most of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Orientalist discourse around it.⁶¹ Instead, I want to focus briefly on the way in which certain aspects of the practice of yoga were re-configured using psychological language. The reason is that it is precisely to such psychological interpretations that Eliade responded when composing his own study of yoga.⁶²

The story of the Western psychological interpretation of yoga begins in 1843, when Manchester surgeon James Braid (1795-1860) was the first to claim that the feats of Indian fakirs were the result of self-hypnosis.⁶³ The hypnotic state, he argued, was achieved by "over-exerting the attention, by *keeping it riveted to one subject or idea which is not of itself of an exciting nature*, and over-exercising one set of muscles, and the state of strained eyes, with the suppressed respiration, and general repose, which attend such experiments".⁶⁴ Several years later Braid returned to the topic, quoting the case of a fakir who had been buried alive for six weeks in Lahore and had survived. He argued that such feats resulted from the fakirs' ability to place themselves in a state of "temporary hybernation, or trance".⁶⁵

Braid's ideas became a template for how aspects of yogic practice were understood in the second part of the nineteenth century. Starting in the 1880s, Braid's hypnotic state began to be explained through suggestion, which was popularized by the Nancy school physicians Hyppolite

Bernheim and Ambroise Liébeault. Bernheim defined suggestion as “the act by which an idea is introduced into and accepted by the sensorium”.⁶⁶ Suggestion worked best when the higher reasoning powers were kept in abeyance. Sleep was a natural way of putting to rest reason’s inhibiting power, but so was religious faith, or faith in medicinal practices of one sort or another. Hypnosis was only another name for a state of artificial sleep, which could be induced by suggestion, and which itself increased suggestibility. Bernheim recommended eliminating the term “hypnotism” altogether, and replacing it with “condition of suggestion”.⁶⁷

Bernheim’s work was applied to yoga in 1894 by Swiss ethnologist Otto Stoll (1849-1922), who taught ethnology and geography in Zürich. As many other early interpreters of yoga, Stoll was taken with the description of the supernatural powers that the yogis were thought to acquire through their practice.⁶⁸ He claimed that though the stories of such powers may strike the uninitiated European reader as absurd, they were nevertheless perfectly intelligible through the action of suggestion. The same was the case for the use of mantras, whose repetition could lead all the way to ecstasy (a word he used as virtually synonymous with the hypnotic state). Stoll thought that though the use of suggestion in such fashion was by no means peculiar to the Indians, no one else had pushed it as far or developed its practice as methodically.

Nor was Stoll the only author to take the line that suggestion was the key to understanding yoga. In 1896, the chemist, industrialist and occultist Carl Kellner (1851-1905) attended the 3rd International Congress for Experimental Psychology in Munich, accompanied by an Indian yogi (Bheema Sena Pratapa), who made public demonstrations of “yogic sleep” (placing himself in a state of deep concentration from which he could not be aroused without using a pre-arranged signal). Kellner also used his attendance as an opportunity to distribute a pamphlet he authored called *Yoga. A Sketch of the Psycho-physiological Side of the Old Indian Yoga Teaching*.⁶⁹ Kellner argued that “From a ‘European’ point of view, we can say: yoga is the ability to produce all of the phenomena of somnambulism arbitrarily, through steady practice and a suitable way of life.” The goal of yogic practice, *Samādhi*, was thus little more than the somnambulant state.

The psychological reading of yogic practices was not, however, restricted to professional and amateur psychologists. Indologists such as Richard Garbe, Max Müller, or Jakob Wilhelm Hauer all indicated that the psychology of suggestion and hypnotism could throw some light on the seemingly miraculous feats of Indian yogis.⁷⁰ Writing in 1896, Garbe

claimed that certain Hatha Yoga methods were quite clearly hypnotic.⁷¹ Through their use, the yogis thought they could hear sounds in certain parts of their body (in the heart, the throat, etc.). The goal of such yogic practices was to reach a state of “yogic sleep”, which was a complete loss of consciousness. His position on the topic had hardly changed over 25 years later, when he declared that “that this Yoga-sleep, which naturally among Indians is regarded as a supremely marvellous phenomenon, is none other than the hypnotic sleep scarcely needs formal demonstration.”⁷² He did agree, however, that for the Indians themselves, the yogic exercises were aimed at obtaining “higher states of consciousness” and not merely unconsciousness. Garbe’s position on what the goal of yoga was seemed to be close to that espoused by James Henry Leuba, who also argued that yogic discipline (as well as drugs) worked to reduce mental activity to the point of complete unconsciousness.⁷³

By the 1920s however, more complex psychological understandings had been tried out, which were sometimes critical of the older psychology of suggestion and hypnotism. Such was the case, for example, with William James, who claimed in 1907 that the explanations based on self-suggestion were hardly explanatory. All such “explanations” merely stated the obvious, which was that some people could be influenced by some ideas, and that others could not. Instead, James proposed that yogic practices functioned as “dynamogenic agents, or stimuli for unlocking what would otherwise be unused reservoirs of individual power.”⁷⁴

Other interpreters brought in the unconscious and used it to explain the complexities of Yoga-psychology. By 1915, the psychology of the unconscious had begun replacing the hypnotic paradigm in accounting for yoga. The key to this interpretation, which would be further developed by C.G. Jung in the 1930s, was that yoga was taken to be a sinking into the unconscious, or, to use Jung’s own term, an “introversion”.⁷⁵ An English writer named F. I. Winter had put forward such an interpretation in 1915, in the pages of *Quest*, a journal edited by G.R.S. Mead.⁷⁶ Winter sought to compare psychoanalysis and yoga, drawing on Jung’s *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* and on Vivekananda’s translation of the Yoga Sūtras. He had pondered the notion that whereas psychoanalysis tried to bring up material from the unconscious, yoga tried to suppress it, but argued that in practice that amounted to the same thing—an introversion.

In parallel with this process whereby Western scholars attempted to translate aspects of yogic theory and practice into psychology, in a way that often belittled yogic achievement, a counter-movement arose in the

later years of the nineteenth century. Eliade's work on yoga can be seen as part of this counter-current. One of its first representatives was Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a native of Calcutta, whose work Eliade had encountered in India.⁷⁷

Vivekananda grew up in a milieu pervaded by both Neo-Vedāntic ideas and Western culture and esotericism, and he achieved world-wide fame after his participation in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.⁷⁸ He spent three years lecturing in the U.S. (until 1896). His reason for going there was quite explicit: "I give them spirituality and they give me money".⁷⁹

Vivekananda was a proponent of rāja-yoga, which he construed as a thoroughgoing psychological discipline. He noted:

Yet we know we must observe in order to have a real science. Without proper analysis any science will be hopeless, mere theorizing; and that is why the psychologists have been quarrelling among themselves since the beginning of time, except those who found out the means of observation. The science of rāja-yoga proposes, in the first place, to give us such a means for observing the inner states, and the instrument is the mind itself.⁸⁰

In an essay entitled "The Importance of Psychology", he made clear that he regarded psychology as "the science of sciences". This was because "we are all slaves to our senses, slave to our minds, conscious and subconscious". Psychology was a salvific and supreme science, inasmuch as it helped one end this slavery, by reigning in "the wild gyrations of the mind".⁸¹

To accomplish this, the yogi had to "go deep down into the subconscious mind, classify and arrange all the different impressions, thoughts, etc., stored up there".⁸² Vivekananda did not go into details about the "subconscious", but did note that he regarded it as containing memories of past thoughts and actions, not just of this life, "but of all the other lives we have lived".⁸³ At the same time, he used the term "unconscious" to refer to "a sort of thought, which we call instinct... the lowest plane of action".⁸⁴ Above this basement of the mind (where reflex-action reigned supreme), there lay the mezzanine of consciousness and reason, and beyond that, the upper floor of *Samādhi*, defined as "perfect concentration [and] super-consciousness". The latter was the goal of yogic practice.⁸⁵

This practice was underscored by a cosmic evolutionary schema that took each microscopic speck along a set path, turning it into plant, animal, human and eventually God. Usually, this process took eons, but by learning to focus and manipulate the vital force of *prāna*, the yogi could speed it up and become God in several months or a year.⁸⁶ Vivekananda's vitalistic understanding of *prāna* was no doubt influenced by his contact with the mind-healing literature that was popular in America at the time. As it was, this conception provided him not only with an intelligible language, but also with a way of re-framing the work of "mind- healers, faith-healers, spiritualists, Christian Scientists, hypnotists, and so on".⁸⁷ He ascribed their success to the unknowing, and "unconscious" use of *prāna*. For him, these too were yogis, after a fashion.⁸⁸

In addition to Vivekananda, Eliade's future teacher, Surendranath Dasgupta, also attempted to offer a psychological translation of yoga, which took into account the subconscious. Dasgupta published his views in 1921, in a brief essay entitled "Yoga Psychology".⁸⁹ He started by making a point that was often missed in discussions of the psychology of yoga: that this psychology was inextricably linked with a particular metaphysics and could not be understood without reference to that metaphysical system. Dasgupta argued that the root idea of yogic psychology was the "existence of the mental states in potential forms in the sub-conscious".⁹⁰ Some of the mental states that existed in the sub-conscious could continue to exist through several births. These "semi-effaced" mental states continued to determine present behaviour, and they were of two kinds: those that resulted from the actions of past lives and those that were the result of repeated experiences in this life.⁹¹ Dasgupta claimed that though the sub-conscious attempted to determine our present actions, yoga admitted that there was a power inherent in the mind (*śakti*) which allowed for its overcoming. The only way in which one could master sub-conscious tendencies was by striving to think the opposite in one's conscious life. He enunciated this as a law: "the law that the repetition of any mental state will strengthen the corresponding impression of it in the sub-conscious".⁹² Though this process was not at all easy, it was not impossible: even if the workings of the sub-conscious were unknown to us, we could nevertheless determine their action through conscious striving. This, however, was only a preliminary of the process of liberation: for ultimately, the point of yoga was not to become merely moral, but to completely halt the movement of the mind. At that point, one acquired a direct knowledge of the object, incomparable to any other human knowledge (*prajñā*-knowledge). He

ended his account by writing that: “this *prajñā*-knowledge has nothing to do with telepathy, dual or multiple personality or the like, which are all but varieties of phenomenal knowledge”.⁹³

6. Eliade’s Use of Psychology in his Ph.D. Thesis

In 1929, in Calcutta, Eliade set to work on a manuscript aimed at demolishing the pretensions of the psychology of religion.⁹⁴ The discussion was a continuation of what he had laid out in the *Spiritual Itinerary*. Eliade began by arguing that madness was intelligible, because madness was an irrational state that existed in attenuated form in anyone. It was possible, thus, to draw on the non-harmful, and brief moments of ordinary irrationality (available through dreams, hypnosis or drugs) in order to understand what it was like to be mad. In the case of religious experiences, however, it was their content that mattered, and not their mental manifestations. The same kind of analogical procedure could not be applied in the case of religious experience, since, ordinarily, one did not have anything to compare it with in everyday experience. Religious experience dealt with “a transcendent object, known through grace, and hence outside of psychological analysis”.⁹⁵ According to his outline, the study was to progress through seven steps:

- 1) The problem [and?] is it the same case as for normal psychology? Is the critique the same?
- 2) What does religious exp[erience] mean for religion? The feeling of presence. Differences with religion in general. What attitudes can one have towards this feeling?
 - a) it is due to an illusion
 - b) it is real
- 3) How could one prove the former? Not, in any case, through an a priori postulation of the non-existence of the religious object, for then we would not progress. But, maybe, through psychological proofs, showing the pathological state with sufficient explanations. The three refutations:
 - 1) there is no strict interdependence between pathology and religious exp[erience]
 - 2) refuting double personality
 - 3) refuting psychoanalysis
- 4) Comparison with insanity. Comparison with the absence of a specifying organ. [Conclusions?]: the case is more difficult, as one is dealing not only

with a specific state, but also with an illumination, and hence with an intellectual manifestation.

5) The critique of the objections against the religious method (prayer, repentance, etc.). Grace. The simplification of the understanding through the problem of the infinite. How is it possible to reach the infinite?

6) Comparison with value judgements.

7) Sceptical conclusions. It has no use, not even as material. The only [possibility?] for understanding: documents, or, in the case of experience, a spiritual master.

4') The evolution of religious] senti[ment].⁹⁶

As this sketch shows, in 1929 Eliade was not only opposed to the psychology of religion as a method for understanding religious experience, but claimed that “it had no use, not even as material”. In his view, there was a radical break between religious experience and any other kind of experience. As opposed to the majority of religious psychologists—and to his own position in 1927—, who argued that religious experience was a more intense form of what people normally felt in their everyday life (sudden inspirations, intoxication, moments of insight), Eliade argued that this was not the case. The analogy with one’s moments of average irrationality worked only for an understanding of madness, but not religion. The psyche, in his view, was only a vessel where a transcendent object came to rest. The form of the vessel, or whether it was cracked, made no difference whatsoever. What mattered was the content, and its intellectual illumination—which Eliade, with a nod to James, also acknowledged.

One can also make two further observations: 1) the question that Eliade asked about religious feeling (is it real or not?) was a question that, in theory at least, fell outside of the purview of religious psychology. Such a question took the discussion into the realm of metaphysics, and metaphysics was something that the psychologists had programmatically tried to stay away from (Eliade had also claimed in his notes to abstain from any “a priori dogmatical-theological help”, but the question he asked appeared to take the discussion into the field of theology);⁹⁷ 2) by refusing to acknowledge the possibility of comparison between “religious experience” and other experiences, Eliade was effectively undercutting the very foundations of psychology, to the extent that psychology was founded on the assumption that human experience was unitary and not discontinuous. As William James had written in the *Varieties*: “Religious melancholy, whatever peculiarities it may have qua religious, is at any

rate melancholy. Religious happiness is happiness."⁹⁸ Eliade, however, maintained the opposite.

Despite this radical stance with respect to psychology, in his doctoral thesis, and in his work on yoga more broadly, Eliade nevertheless continued to make use of psychological concepts. Eliade's thesis went in a number of different directions: outlining the origin of Yoga in an "interiorization" of Hindu ritual, the historical development of contemplative techniques, the relationship between yoga and Brahmin orthodoxy, the relationship between Buddhist ascetic practices and yoga, the meaning of yoga in the Mahābhārata, the philosophical underpinnings of yoga in *Samkhya*, and the psychology of yoga.

He began his thesis by making a distinction between two types of approaches in the methodology of the history of religions: an "extrospective" one, which sought to deal with the "objective" and "rigid" aspects of religion: philology, ethnographic hypotheses, intellectual filiations of various texts and doctrines; an "introspective" one, which would, on the contrary, speculate on the "intimate, evanescent, and untranslatable value" of the yoga practices and metaphysics.⁹⁹ As this distinction shows, Eliade was already, to some extent, familiar with Jungian concepts, though probably not at first hand, since he later remembered reading his first Jungian work in 1940.¹⁰⁰

Eliade argued that yoga was a common term in India, whose meaning tended to vary, but which originally had meant "*a mystical practice of harmonizing or union between the individual spirit (purusha; atman more generally) and the supreme consciousness (Ishvara; more generally Brahman)*."¹⁰¹ He also allowed that this union was often an "illusory trance caused by a thinning of normal consciousness", but this fact only showed that there was a lot of original variation in the non-Arian practice of yoga, as well as subsequent degeneration. The premise of yogic philosophy and practice was the general one of all Indian thinking: a deep pessimism about human life (and life in general), which was trapped in an endless cycle of rebirth by the inexorable law of karma. The goal of yoga was to attain deliverance of the soul from the "cycle of phenomena and to fix it, by way of a purifying contemplative elevation, in a plane of absolute and eternal values."¹⁰²

In addition to its philosophical underpinnings, yoga was thus a series of techniques aimed at reaching *samādhi*, which Eliade described as "a transcendent state, nude, unaltered, pure autoconsciousness."¹⁰³ In a different passage, he also referred to it as "the state of super-consciousness".¹⁰⁴ As

Eliade makes clear, yogic liberation is not achieved through gnosis, or revelation, “but through an actual destruction of the psychic organism”.¹⁰⁵ The greatest obstacle for liberation is not the physical body, but the subconscious, “vast receptacle of racial experiences, deep roots, [which are] themselves formal frameworks for present experiences.”¹⁰⁶ As Eliade argues, “the role of the subconscious (*samkaras*, *vāsanas*) in yoga psychology has a paramount importance, conditioning the whole of experience.”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, Eliade considers that yoga has a “psychoanalytic vision” that is “surprisingly just”, and devoid of Freudian exaggerations. He outlines two main differences between yoga and psychoanalysis: 1) whereas in psychoanalysis the subconscious has an exclusively sexual origin, in yoga it is born out of any selfish action; 2) as opposed to psychoanalysis, yoga believes that the subconscious can be mastered through moral discipline and contemplative practice.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, subconscious elements can not only be mastered, but also completely uprooted, or “burned”¹⁰⁹ By uprooting the subconscious, the yogi is delivered into the *samādhi* state. As I have already mentioned, Eliade refers to *samādhi* as a state of “super-consciousness” or “autoconsciousness”. The nature of these terms is hard to specify. On the one hand, Eliade would seem to agree that his description is psychological—in fact he even uses the expression “religious psychology” when he refers to the analysis of the different stages of *samprajñātasamādhi*.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, *samādhi* lies beyond the boundaries of psychology—it’s a “transcendence of experience” altogether.¹¹¹

This raises the question: in what sense is Eliade using the word “psychology” in his description? I would argue that Eliade uses “psychology” with at least two different meanings in his thesis: 1) the first meaning is that of a “science of psychic facts”, where the word science is used much in the same way as the German *Wissenschaft*—a system of knowledge about the psyche, or what Eliade refers to as “general-human experience, constituted by the totality of experiences realized in the natural order.”¹¹² It is with this sense in mind that Eliade refers to “yoga psychology”, “general psychology” (i.e. Western psychology), “Buddhist psychology”, or “Samkhya psychology”; 2) the second meaning refers to an effort to provide a phenomenological account of the different states of consciousness that are present in religious experience. In the second meaning, psychology is concerned with describing, as accurately as possible, “psychic experiences”, which Eliade places in inverted commas precisely because they sometimes transcend ordinary, natural

experience.¹¹³ In the second meaning, psychology thus also contains an implicit attempt at cross-cultural psychology—which also amounts to a kind of cross-cultural metaphysics. As such, Eliade not only provides a critique of the psychoanalytical subconscious based on the elements of Yoga-psychology, but also reflects on the translation of certain key terms: *samādhi*, he writes, is only provisionally translated as “trance”.¹¹⁴ In other parts of the thesis, Eliade argues that *samādhi* is not a hypnotic trance, repeating the point several times, and backing it up with quotations that are meant to show hypnosis was known in India since the time of the Mahābhārata.¹¹⁵ Finally, Eliade also attempts to compare Buddhist *dhyāna* with yogic *samādhi*, arguing that the former is a “state of lucid concentration [...] a kind of apparent reverie, but without the distraction and the incoherence of a reverie”. In *dhyāna*, there is still consciousness, whereas in *samādhi*, “normal consciousness” is suppressed.¹¹⁶ Despite this difference, he also notes that Buddhism “never became simply an automatic and hypnotic technique”.¹¹⁷

In conclusion, the Ph.D. thesis provided Eliade with an opportunity to perform his own brand of psychology of religion, drawing not just on documents, but on his own familiarity (elementary though it may have been) with yogic practices. This familiarity seems to have played a part in his rejection of the hypnosis hypothesis, which, as we have seen, was widespread among Western interpreters of yoga.¹¹⁸ Eliade, it should be said, never rejected his early psychological interpretation of yoga, though he developed it, by adding concepts such as “enstasis” and “the transconscious”.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to offer a wider contextualization of Eliade’s early scholarly work, by drawing on a tradition of thought that has been largely omitted from the secondary literature on Eliade: the psychology of religion. As I have shown, Eliade showed a marked interest in this discipline in his youth, as it is evident from his desire to start a journal for the history and psychology of religion in 1926, as well as from the 1927 statement to the effect that psychology and metapsychics would be the first disciplines capable of elucidating religious experience.

As I have also tried to suggest, there was nothing extraordinary about Eliade’s embrace of the psychology of religion in the late 1920s, since

during that period the psychology of religion still had a certain cachet among scholars of religion—a cachet which it gradually lost during the subsequent decade. In Eliade's case, the prestige of the psychology of religion was also amplified by his reading of "occultist" works, in which the "new psychology" more broadly, and the psychology of higher states of consciousness in particular, were *au courant* topics. The same could be said about Eliade's reading of the scholarly literature on religion, in which, once again, psychological concepts were used together with philological or historical methods in a "multi-disciplinary" way that Eliade also adopted in his doctoral thesis.

However, as I have shown, Eliade was rather ambivalent toward the discipline of psychology, both critical of its explanatory pretensions, but also continuing to use its concepts, and referring to parts of his analysis as "psychological".¹¹⁹ No wonder then that he wrote to C.G. Jung in 1955: "if I had read your work ten or fifteen years earlier [than I had], I would have certainly become a psychologist of religions, and not a historian..."¹²⁰ Even if one allows for some hyperbole, the record bears out at least some of Eliade's statement.

Eliade clearly saw some value in the works of William James and Henri Delacroix, and borrowed elements of their description of mystical experience. The most important of these was the notion of the "particular mental state" that underlay mysticism in Delacroix's conception. Such a notion allowed Eliade to declare that whatever evidence the pathologists of mysticism might adduce, mysticism would always remain inexpugnable. At the same time, Eliade continued to make free use of psychological categories in his doctoral thesis: "subconscious", "consciousness", "super-conscious", "hypnosis", "sublimation", "introversion", "trance". He never seems to have doubted the ontological reality of these terms or their applicability to the Indian context.

As I have also tried to show, Eliade's use of psychological categories in his doctoral thesis was born out of a particular engagement with the texts and practices of yoga and was framed, in part at least, as a response to the questions he had been asking himself about the psychology of religion and to the psychological interpretations of yoga that were apparent in previous works on the subject. To recapitulate, I have suggested that Eliade combined two traditions of interpretation: on the one hand, the psychology of higher consciousness, which he would have found in one (or more) of a number of texts authored by Myers, Bucke, Annie Besant, Rudolf Steiner and others; on the other hand, the psychology of yoga,

which could be found in a host of psychological or scholarly works that mostly tended to assume that the goal of yoga was entrance into a hypnotic state or (later on) a sinking into the unconscious. Eliade, however, claimed that *samādhi* was a qualitatively different kind of consciousness, which had nothing to do with hypnosis, following thus in the footsteps of authors like Swami Vivekananda. In effect, one might say, Eliade had become a kind of Vivekananda, just as Swami Shivananda had predicted for him in Swarg Ashram, only not in the sense the swami gave to that statement.¹²¹

NOTES

- ¹ Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. Trans. Philip Mairet (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991)
- ² See for example Natale Spineto, "The Notion of Archetype in Eliade's Writings", *Religion* 38, 4 (2008): 366-374.
- ³ The best article on Eliade's relationship with psychology is still Mac Linscott Ricketts, "The Nature and Extent of Eliade's 'Jungianism'", *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, vol. XXV, No. 2 (1970): 211-234. See also Mac Linscott Ricketts, "In Defence of Eliade", *Religion* 3, 1 (1973): 13-34.
- ⁴ Liviu Bordaș, "Yoga între magic și mistic. Reflecție hermeneutică și experiență religioasă la primul Eliade", *Studii de istorie a filosofiei românești*, vol. XII, *Teorii și categorii ale cunoașterii*, ed. Alexandru Surdu et al. (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2016), 218. This is a curious statement, inasmuch as, in his Ph.D. thesis, Bordaș's claims are more consistent with the argument presented here: "Bringing together Macchioro's research on the mysteries and his own earlier interest for the occult, Eliade arrives at the psychology of religion, also cultivated from afar by professor C-tin Rădulescu Motru. For this reason he selected him to coordinate his doctoral thesis on yoga". See Liviu Bordaș, „Eliade Secret: India și „metapsihica” în construcția filosofiei religiei lui Mircea Eliade” (Ph.D. diss, University of Bucharest, 2010), 138. The classic monograph for Eliade's early work is Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Rădăcinile românești ale lui Mircea Eliade*. Two volumes. Translated by Virginia Stănescu et al. (București: Criterion Publishing, 2004).
- ⁵ Andreas Sommer, "Crossing the boundaries of mind and body: Psychical Research and the Origins of Modern Psychology" (Ph.D. diss., UCL, 2013).
- ⁶ Mircea Eliade, "Știință și occultism", in Mircea Eliade, *Cum am descoperit piatra filozofală. Scrieri de tinerețe, 1921-1925*. Edited by Mircea Handoca (București: Humanitas, 1996), 243-254. For an outline of the debate with Israilovici see See Bordaș, "Eliade Secret", 77-82.
- ⁷ Mircea Eliade, "Știință și occultism", 245. On the question of "planes" in Eliade's early work see Linscott Ricketts, *Rădăcinile Românești*, vol. 1, 169-170.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 244.
- ⁹ See Mircea Eliade to Raffaele Petazzoni (Summer of 1926), in Mircea Eliade and Raffaele Petazzoni, *L'histoire des religions a-t-elle un sens? Correspondence 1926-1959*. Ed. Natale Spineto (Paris: CERF, 1994), 100.
- ¹⁰ A list of psychology titles compiled in his youth shows which books he was likely familiar with. The books in this bibliography are an assortment of animal psychology, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, general psychology, and psychology of religion: R. Allier, *La psychologie de la conversion chez les peuples non- civilisés* ; Dr. Buytendijk, *Psychologie des animaux*; Dr. Ernest Dupré, *Pathologie de l'imagination et de l'érédicté*; G. Dwelshauvers,

- Traité de psychologie*; A. Hesnard et R. Laforgue, *L' Evolution Psychiatrique*; Dr. Laforgue et Dr. Allendy, *La psychanalyse et les névroses*. See Mircea Eliade, *Diverse note, texte culesc dupa 1926. Completări*, Manuscript, BCU, București.
- 11 Mircea Eliade, "Magie și metapsihică", in Mircea Eliade, *Itinerariu Spiritual: Scrieri de Tinerețe, 1927* (București: Humanitas, 2003), 205-209. Eliade will take up this argument again in 1937. See Mircea Eliade, „Folclorul ca instrument de cunoaștere”, in Mircea Eliade, *Drumul spre centru*. Ed. Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Pleșu (București: Univers, 1991), 163-84.
- 12 "Magie și metapsihică", 207.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 207.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 207.
- 15 Mircea Eliade, *Memorii (1907-1960)* (București: Humanitas, 1997), 135.
- 16 Mircea Eliade, "Itinerariu spiritual", in Mircea Eliade, *Itinerariu Spiritual: Scrieri de tinerețe, 263-75, 284-92, 304-12, 327-31, 342-46, 349-52, 357-62*.
- 17 Eliade, "Itinerariu spiritual. Misticismul", *op.cit.*, 342.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 344.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 345.
- 20 Matei Iagher, "Theorizing Experience: The Psychological Search for a Science of Religion (1896-1937)" (Ph.D.. Dissertation, UCL, 2016).
- 21 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Centenary edition. (London: Routledge, 2002[1902]), 333.
- 22 Mircea Eliade, "La moartea lui Rudolf Otto", *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* 4 (1937): 676-79, reprinted in Mircea Eliade, *Drumul spre centru*, 307. The „up to 1917” in the sentence refers to the year when Rudolf Otto’s book *Das Heilige* was first published.
- 23 For an outline of Ionescu’s metaphysics see Ricketts, *op.cit.* vol. 1, 93-102.
- 24 Eliade, "Magie și metapsihică", 207.
- 25 James, *Varieties*, 295.
- 26 James, *Varieties*, 19.
- 27 See Eliade, "Itinerariu spiritual. Misticismul", 345.
- 28 For Ribot, see infra. Regarding Leuba and Janet, Eliade was probably referring to: James H. Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1925) and Pierre Janet "Une extatique: conférence faite à L'Institut Psychologique International le 25 mai 1901." *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique* 5 (1901): 209-240.
- 29 See Noemí Pizarroso, "Henri Delacroix’s Psychology of Religion in Context: Between Secular Religious Sciences, William James’ psychology and Marcel Mauss’ sociology", *Piper: International Psychology, Practice and Research* 5 (2014): 13-19.

- 30 Henri Delacroix, *Études d'histoire et de psychologie du mysticisme. Les grands mystiques chrétiens* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1908).
- 31 Henri Delacroix, *Études*, ii-iii.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 62.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 342.
- 34 Eliade, "Itinerariu spiritual. Misticismul", 345.
- 35 Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. Trans. Rosemary Sheed (London: Sheed&Ward, 1958), xi.
- 36 Mircea Eliade, *Tehnici Yoga*. Traducere de Mihaela Cosma (București: Univers Enciclopedic, [1948] 2000), 93.
- 37 Frederic W.H. Myers, *Human Personality And Its Survival of Bodily Death*, vol. 1 (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), xiii-xxii.
- 38 Frederic W.H. Myers, "Note on a Suggested Mode of Psychical Interaction", in Edmund Gurney, Frederic W.H. Myers, Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the living*, vol. II (London: Trübner & Co., 1886), 285. He had also used the term two years earlier: F. W.H. Myers, "On a Telepathic Explanation of Some So-Called Spiritualistic Phenomena" *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 2 (1884): 219
- 39 Richard Maurice Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness: A Study in the Evolution of the Human Mind* (Philadelphia: Innes & Sons, 1905[1901]). William James, *Varieties*, 70, 308-309.
- 40 Mircea Eliade, "Experiențe ale luminii mistice", *Mefistofel și androginul* (București: Humanitas, 1995), 11-12.
- 41 Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness*, 13.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 17-18.
- 43 Probst-Biraben, "Contribution du soufisme a l'étude du mysticisme universel", *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 61 (1906):520-525. Probst-Biraben, "L'extase dans le mysticisme musulman. Les étapes du soufi", *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 62 (1906):490-98. Probst-Biraben, "Le mysticisme dans l'esthétique musulmane: l'arabesque, ascèse esthétique", *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 64 (1907):65-72.
- 44 See Th. Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, translated by Merwin-Marie Snell (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1915), 94-111.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 96.
- 46 Ribot, *The Diseases of the Will*, 101. Probst-Biraben, "L'extase", 497.
- 47 Théodore Flournoy, "Une Mystique moderne (Documents pour la psychologie religieuse)", *Archives de psychologie* 15 (Genève: Librairie Kündig, 1915).
- 48 *Ibid.*, 179-81.
- 49 René Guénon used it as well, criticising official psychologists for not distinguishing clearly between the "superconscious" and the "subconscious".

See René Guénon, *Man and His Becoming According to the Vedānta*. Translated by Richard Nicholson (Hillsdale, NY: Sophia Perennis, 2004[1925]), 120. Eliade was familiar with this book. See Natale Spineto, *Mircea Eliade: istoric al religiilor*. Traducere de Șerban Stati și Magdalena Ionescu (București: Curtea Veche, 2009), 143. Julius Evola, whose work Eliade read and appreciated, began using the “superconscious” as early as 1927. See EA [Julius Evola], “Esoterismo, Inconscio, Psicoanalisi,” in *Introduzione alla magia*, 3 vols., vol. 3, 383-408. I am grateful to Tommaso Priviero for this reference.

50 Annie Besant, *Theosophy and the New Psychology: A Course of Six Lectures* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904). Annie Besant, *A Study in Consciousness: A Contribution to the Study of Psychology* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904).

Besant, *A Study in Consciousness*, 213.

51 *Ibid.*, 224.

52 *Ibid.*, 225.

53 *Ibid.*, 232.

54 Rudolf Steiner, *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse höhere Welten?*(Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1992), 163. Rudolf Steiner, *Die Geheimwissenschaft in Umriss* (Dornach: Rudolf Steiner Verlag, 1989), 93.

55 Rudolf Steiner, *An Outline of Esoteric Science* [Translation of *Geheimwissenschaft in Umriss*]. Translated by Catherine E. Creeger (Hudson, NY: Antroposophic Press, 1997), 281.

56 See Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. Translated by Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958), 99.

57 Mircea Eliade, „Rudolf Steiner”, in Mircea Eliade, *Misterele și Inițierea Orientală. Scrieri de tinerețe, 1926* (București: Humanitas, 1998), 141. The italics in the quote are mine (M.I.)

58 See Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: eseu asupra originilor misticii indiene*. Edited and translated by Eugen Ciurtin (București: Institutul de Istorie a Religiiilor, 2016).

59 For a wider look at the Indian years see See Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade: prizonierul istoriei*. trans. Monica Anghel and Dragoș Dodu (București: Humanitas, 2007),170-226. Ricketts, *op.cit.*, vol.1, 300-477.

60 For a useful introduction to these issues see David Gordon White, *The Yoga-Sutra: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014). On the construction of modern yoga see Elizabeth de Michelis, *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism* (New York: Continuum, 2008). Much useful material on the psychological interpretation of yoga can also be found in Karl Baier, *Yoga auf dem Weg Westen: Beiträge zur Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998), 161-255. For the history of yoga in France see Silvia Ceccomori, *Cent ans de yoga en France* (Paris: Edidit, 2001).

- 62 This is of course not to say that these are the only questions that Eliade was responding to—only that they played an important part in his interpretation. My interpretation of the history of yoga psychology is indebted to Sonu Shamdasani, “Preliminary Sketch of a Study of the Early Reception of Yoga in Psychology and Psychotherapy in Europe and the United States” [unpublished paper], 1-29.
- 63 James Braid, *Neurypnology Or The Rationale of Nervous Sleep Considered in Relation to Animal Magnetism or Mesmerism and Illustrated By Numerous Cases of Its Successful Application in the Relief and Cure of Disease* (London: George Redway, 1899 [1843]), 103.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 126.
- 65 James Braid, *Observations on Trance, Or, Human Hybernation* (London: John Churchill, 1850), 26.
- 66 Hyppolite Bernheim, “Suggestion and Hypnotism”, in Daniel Hack Tuke (ed.), *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine: Giving the Definition, Etymology and Synonyms of the Terms Used in Medical Psychology*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: P. Blakiston, Son & Co., 1892), 1213.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 1214.
- 68 Otto Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnotismus in der Völkerpsychologie*. 2nd edition (Leipzig: Verlag von Veit & Co., 1904), 64-65.
- 69 Carl Kellner, *Yoga. Eine Skizze über den psycho-physiologischen Teil der alten indischen Yogalehre* (München: Druck von Kastner & Lossen, 1896). Available online at <http://www.pareareligion.ch/sunrise/yoga.htm>
- 70 J. W. Hauer, *Die Anfänge der Yogapraxis im alten Indien: Eine Untersuchung über die Wurzeln der indischen Mystik nach Rgveda und Atharvaveda* (Stuttgart: Druck von W. Kohlhammer, 1921), 87-88; 160-61. Hauer also allowed for “superconscious experiences” that came through in ecstasy, but he did not explain how he reconciled these with the notion of the unconscious. See Hauer, *op.cit.*, iii, 5. F. Max Müller, *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1899), 458, 465.
- 71 Richard Garbe, “Sāmkhya und Yoga”, in Georg Bühler (ed.), *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde* (Strassburg: Verlag von Karl J. Trübner, 1896), 45-46.
- 72 Richard Garbe, “Yoga”, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 12, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1922), 832.
- 73 James H. Leuba, “The Yoga System of Mental Concentration and Religious Mysticism”, *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 16, 8 (1919): 197-206. See also Richard Garbe, “Sāmkhya und Yoga”, 33. Writing of the psychological interpretation of Samādhi as either unconsciousness (*apud* Leuba) or pathological introversion in a 1921 essay, Paul Masson-Oursel argued that such interpretations were based on a *petitio principii*. For him, Indian piety had to feature in a general theory of mysticism, but in order to bring it into one, it was necessary to forego

- simplistic comparisons (as between drug intoxication and yogic meditation) and the temptation to bring in philosophical ideas or facts that were foreign to the realm of religious phenomena. See Paul Masson-Oursel, "Doctrines et méthodes psychologiques de L'Inde", *Journal de psychologie* 18 (1921): 545.
- 74 William James, *The Energies of Men* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co, 1914[1907]), 29.
- 75 Jung had introduced the concept of "introversion" as early as 1909. See Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, 62. The classical description of introversion and extraversion is in *Psychological Types* (1921). See C.G. Jung, *Psychological Types or The Psychology of Individuation*. trans. H.G. Baynes. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., [1921] 1946). On Jung's interpretation of yoga see Sonu Shamdasani, "Introduction: Jung's Journey to the East", in C. G. Jung, *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1932 by C.G. Jung*. Edited by Sonu Shamdasani (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), xvii-xlvi.
- 76 See F.I. Winter, "The Yoga System and Psychoanalysis", *The Quest* 10 (1918-19):182-196, 315-335.
- 77 Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, vol. 1 1941-1969*. Edited by Mircea Handoca (București: Humanitas, 1993), 401.
- 78 de Michelis, *op.cit.*, 91-100.
- 79 Vivekananda, quoted in de Michelis, *op.cit.*, 109.
- 80 Swami Vivekananda, *Rāja- Yoga, Being Lectures of the Swami Vivekananda with Patanjali's Aphorisms, Commentaries and a Glossary of Terms* (New York: Brentano's, 1920[1896]), 6.
- 81 Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Vivekananda*, vol. 6, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1972), 25-26.
- 82 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 84 Vivekananda, *Rāja- Yoga*, 33.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 89 Surendranath Das Gupta, "Yoga Psychology", *The Quest* 13, 1 (Oct. 1921): 1-19.
- 90 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 91 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 93 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 94 Mircea Eliade, *Note pentru rădăcinile magiei și psihologia religioasă*, Calcutta, 1929. Manuscript, BCU, București.

- 95 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 7. The “three refutations” are listed on p. 5.
- 97 In 1902, Théodore Flournoy had outlined the two fundamental principles of the psychology of religion: 1) the exclusion of transcendence; 2) the biological interpretation of religious experiences. See Théodore Flournoy, *Les Principes de la psychologie religieuse* (London: Williams and Norgate, [1902] 1903), 6.
- 98 William James, *Varieties*, 24.
- 99 Mircea Eliade, *Psihologia meditației indiene. Studii despre Yoga*. Edited by Constantin Popescu-Cadem (București: Jurnalul Literar, 1992), 16-18.
- 100 See Mircea Eliade and Gene F. Nameche, “Interview with Prof. Mircea Eliade, Chicago, IL, 24 December 1970”, Mircea Eliade Papers, University of Chicago, Box 52, Folder 2.
- 101 Eliade, *Psihologia meditației indiene*, 23. See also p. 41 for his use of the concept of “introversion”
- 102 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 103 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 104 *Ibid.*, 84.
- 105 *Ibid.*, 138.
- 106 *Ibid.*, 136.
- 107 *Ibid.*, 143.
- 108 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 109 *Ibid.*, 141.
- 110 *Ibid.*, 164.
- 111 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 112 *Ibid.*, 134
- 113 *Ibid.*, 132.
- 114 *Ibid.*, 135.
- 115 *Ibid.*, 84, 158.
- 116 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 117 *Ibid.*, 66.
- 118 In his 1954 yoga book, Eliade criticised one of the proponents of the hypnosis thesis (Sigurd Lindquist) by saying that a minimum of familiarity with yogic practice would have convinced him otherwise. See Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 79.
- 119 In 1929, for example, he was writing to Hauer that “I would like to attempt an analysis [of tantrism] from the point of view of psychological and mystical experience—and not just history like Tucci.” See Mircea Eliade to J. W. Hauer, 29 January 1929, quoted in Bordaș, “Eliade Secret”, 324.
- 120 Mircea Eliade to C.G. Jung, 22 January 1955, in “Correspondance M.Eliade-C.G.Jung, 1950-1960”, 26.
- 121 See Eliade, *Memorii*, 195.