OBSERVATIONS RELEVANT TO
A UNIFIED THEORY OF MEDITATION

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Meditation has been a subject of serious study for over a decade now, and much has been learned. During this time there have been a good number of scholarly works and scientific experiments that have helped greatly to improve our understanding of the essentials of the meditative process. Substantial headway has been made in determining the basic types, functions, and effects of meditation. In fact, I am of the opinion that sufficient ground has been covered to put us within possible reach of a unified theory. The following observations are offered with this in mind; and although they do not by themselves constitute such a theory, it is my hope that they will advance us a step toward that goal.

MEDITATION AND THE BIMODAL CONCEPTION
OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Thanks to the efforts of Goleman (1972a), Ornstein (1972), and, more recently, Brown (1977), it is generally acknowledged that there are two basic types of meditation, concentrative and receptive. The former consists of the concentration of consciousness upon a single object until a breakthrough is achieved, at which juncture the meditator becomes unself-consciously and unmovingly absorbed in the object. Such absorption is referred to as *samiidhi* in most Hindu schools, as *jhana* in Buddhism, and as contemplation in the Christian tradition. (But the term 'enstasis', as used by Eliade [1969], Feuerstein [1974], *et al.*, is probably the best. It certainly is

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superior to 'ecstasy', which frequently is used, since the latter term suggests a loss of autonomy. 'Enstasis' connotes, what is the case, that one stands in the object, having voluntarily entered it.) Receptive meditation, in contrast, consists of the practice of open, nonreactive attention. Experience is witnessed nons electively and without interference or interpretation. Continuous alertness also is required; for not only must experience be left untouched, but so too must the meditator keep himself untouched by experience. That is, he must maintain attention in order to avoid becoming fascinated by, caught up in, or carried away by whatever may arise in his awareness. Major versions of this type of practice are the mindfulness (satipatthana) and insight (vipassani) meditations of the Buddhists, "just sitting" ishikan-tazat of Zen, Krishnamurti's choiceless awareness, and Gurdjieff's self-remembering. Not all meditative practices are subsumed easily under one or the other of these two categories, but the great majority are comprehended within the dichotomization.

Transcendental meditation, for example, is ostensibly an anomalous case, since its proponents insist that it is not a concentrative exercise and yet attention is directed toward a single point, the mantra. The best way to deal with T.M. is to accept what its proponents say and thus to place it within the category of receptive meditations. The mantra, then, is not an object of concentration-absorption, but rather an anchor to keep attention from being captured by the objects that pass through the mind. Mantras can be used for concentrative purposes, but they are not employed in this capacity in T.M.

Of equal importance to this classification of meditation types is the attempt by Deikman (1966, 1971) and Ornstein (1972) to explain the function of meditation in terms of the bimodal conception of consciousness. That conception is no doubt well known to readers of this Journal. Suffice it to say that these theorists distinguish between active and receptive modes of consciousness. The active mode focuses consciousness upon objects and discriminates them from their contexts in order to "grasp" them in some way, theoretically or practically. The receptive mode, on the other hand, defocalizes consciousness and opens it to the unique immediacy of experience, as it actually presents itself to the senses or the mind. Additionally, the active mode is characterized as being analytic, sequential, and discursive; the receptive mode as holistic, atemporal, and intuitive.

Both Deikman and Ornstein maintain that the function of meditation is to enhance the receptive mode. And they hold this to be true not only for meditations of the receptive sort, but for
meditation generally. Thus Ornstein, for example, states that while receptive meditation works directly to open consciousness and render it more receptive, concentrative meditation works to the same end indirectly. Its function, he says, is to turn off the active mode and thereby remove the principal obstacle to the operation of the receptive mode. Specifically, concentrative meditation is said to put a stop to the discursive-sequential mentation of the active mode by restricting awareness to a single point; and in doing this it allows the receptive mode to come into play. He states:

We can, then, consider two basic types of meditation exercises—both concerned with a common effect—those which "turn off" input processing for a period of time to achieve an after-effect of "opening-up" of awareness [viz. the concentrative], and those which consist in the active practice of "opening up" during the period of the exercise [viz. the receptive] (1972, p. 128).

He also likens the practice of concentrative meditation to taking a vacation (i.e. from the active mode), after which one can return to the old, familiar environment refreshed and with heightened receptivity.

Central to the theories of Deikman and Ornstein is that meditation deautomatizes consciousness. By refusing to react to experience, by "not doing," or by practicing "negative volition," meditation suspends one's automatic response patterns, be they conceptual, affective, or perceptual, and thus makes it possible for the contents of experience to enter awareness without selection or modification. Since automatic reactions close consciousness by barring from it all aspects of experience that do not conform to them, deautomatization necessarily works in just the opposite direction, namely, to open consciousness and enhance its receptivity. To use Ornstein's analogy, it works in such a way that the mind becomes more and more like a polished mirror, which reflects things just as they present themselves, and lets them go without holding on to them.

Deikman's and Ornstein's view is liable to one criticism. For although it is true that meditation enhances receptivity, it is not true that this is the sole, or even principal, function of all types of meditation. Specifically, concentrative practices work also, and essentially, to increase the very "amount" of consciousness, i.e., its energy or degree of illumination. Almost all schools of concentrative meditation hold that the sustained practice of enstasis leads eventually to the gradual influx, or episodic breakthrough, of psychospiritual energies, usually in the form of interior illumination. A meditative program like that
of the classical Yoga of Patanjali would tend to bring about a gradual influx of these energies; Patanjali, in fact, states that a steady, deep state of illumination is achieved by the time one becomes adept at nirviciirasamddhi, which is an advanced level of enstasis (Taimni, 1961, p. 115). Zen koan meditation, in contrast, tends to cause episodic breakthroughs, satoris, due to the unique nature of its object and the relentless intensity with which it is attacked. In general, it can be stated as fact that deep enstatic or absorptive states somehow tap a vast source of illuminative energy. And although this fact allows many different metaphysical interpretations—some theories holding that the source is extrapsychic, others that it is intrapsychic—the phenomenological description of the experience is roughly constant, namely, by bringing intensely concentrated light to bear upon an object, consciousness is filled with light. At first the light is likely to come in intermittent intuitive flashes or in moments of heightened lucidity; but in time it becomes more permanently integrated within consciousness, until at last it is an abiding aspect of awareness. As Huston Smith says,

... but we must distinguish on the religious side between individuals who experience flashes of insight and others who stabilize these flashes and turn them into abiding light (1976, p. 113).

And much the same may be true on the affective level; for it frequently is stated that fervent and sustained love directed upon an object of devotion results, by grace or otherwise, in the subject being consumed by love (or better, bliss). Phenomenologically speaking, this brings many devotional and bhokti practices, along with many forms of prayer, into line with the more strictly cognitive or intellectual forms of concentrative meditation. The psychospiritual energies tapped by concentrative practices thus can be of a variety of sorts. But of these it is usually interior illumination that is stressed in the traditional meditation texts.

My point, then, is that Deikman’s and Ornstein’s use of the bimodal conception veils the primary purpose of concentrative meditation, which is not to increase receptivity (though it does this too, as an aftereffect) but to increase the (controlled) energy and light of consciousness. Receptive meditation to be sure has as its essential function the enhancement of receptivity. Its purpose, to employ Ornstein’s analogy again, is to clean the mirror of consciousness so that the mind can reflect a greater number and variety of objects, and in a manner that is increasingly faithful to their own natures. But concentrative meditation is importantly different; its principal function is not so much to open consciousness as to intensify it, to add to the
"wattage" with which it operates. In sum, the purpose of receptive meditation is to improve the mind's reflective capacity, that of concentrative meditation its effulgence.

The bimodal conception is an important tool for understanding meditation; but concentrative meditation should be assigned to the active mode. For in its initial stages it possesses most of the features that are essential to that mode. Most evidently, the lower or beginning levels involve (1) discrimination of the meditation object and the attempt actively to grasp or penetrate it, (2) discursive-sequential mental activity, and (3) subject-object separation. In Patanjali's system, for example, dhiirana and dhyana (stages of concentration prior to samaddhi) exemplify all of these features of the active mode; and although the subject-object separation is transcended upon the initial achievement of samiiddhi, discursive thought is said to persist for a while, namely, until nirviciira samadhi has been mastered (Taimni, pp. 112-17). Much the same is the case in the (Theravada) Buddhist system of concentrative meditation, according to which discursive thought remains throughout the first stage of full jhiina (Buddhaghosa, pp. 131-65; Goleman, 1972a, pp. 11-12). Both discursive thought and the subject-object separation also characterize the beginnings of the koan exercise; but these, especially the former, are transcended even sooner than in most other concentrative practices due to the opacity of the koan to rational comprehension.

Since the initial stages of concentrative meditation share so many features with the active mode, it makes sense to me to interpret it as being a particular kind of exercise of that mode. The fact that virtually all of these beginning features, including even the object focused upon, have been left behind by the time higher and deeper levels of enstasis are attained is not evidence to the contrary. It indicates, rather, that the active mode, if exercised with sufficient intensity and one-pointedness, can transcend itself and produce a new state, if not mode, of consciousness. And if this seems counterintuitive, it should be noted that something similar may well be true of receptive meditation in its capacity as an exercise of the receptive mode. Pertinent to this is the fact that in the higher stages of Buddhist insight meditation, the meditator is said to witness the complete cessation of psychomental activity and thus to experience objectless awareness. Paradoxically, receptivity to mental objects and events seems ultimately to lead to their extinction, i.e., receptivity leads to its own undoing. But discussion of these matters must be postponed until later.

In fine, the distinction between concentrative and receptive meditations and that between active and receptive modes of
consciousness are parallel. Each of the meditations constitutes an exercise of one of the modes of consciousness, specifically, a full, optimal employment of it. All parties agree that receptive meditation exercises the receptive mode. It employs that mode to the maximum of its capacity, because it aims at complete openness to, and nonreactive reflection of, experience. It is concentrative meditation that here is the controversial case. Prior opinion, as it has been discussed in this paper, has seen it primarily as a technique for the indirect enhancement of receptivity. There is no doubt that it does work in this fashion, for reasons that will be explored in the final section of the paper. But fixation on this point has kept us from understanding that its principal function is something quite different, namely, to empower or illumine consciousness, and that it accomplishes this function by an exercise of the active rather than the receptive mode. Concentrative meditation isolates an object from the environment, subjects it to intense discursive-sequential inspection, and then uses the laser of concentrated consciousness to bore into it, until finally enstasis is achieved.

At this point the characteristics of the active mode undeniably begin to wither away and, perhaps because of this, there commences an influx of psychospiritual energies. But this fact must not let us forget that it is only by means of the active mode that enstasis is achieved in the first place.

MEDITATION AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

A unified theory of meditation must comprehend the domain of the unconscious within the scope of its explanatory power. Specifically, it must explain why meditation is effective in gaining access to the major kinds of unconscious contents. Eastern schools have for centuries used meditation to explore, and transform, the unconscious. In those schools based on the original Indian tradition, the unconscious usually has been conceived in terms of the theory of the samskiiras and visands, according to which it, i.e., the unconscious, is held to consist of subtle, subliminal memory traces along with engrained tendencies to respond that have been laid down in prior experience, whether it be prior experience in this lifetime or in a preceding one, whether in human or some other form. Meditation is said to bring the subtle memory traces into awareness, thus allowing the meditator to retrace in its entirety his ontogenesis, his previous incarnations, and even, it is sometimes claimed, his phylogenesis. It also is maintained that meditation affects the karma-laden response patterns (both personal and transpersonal-archetypal). These are said to be "burned up" through the practice of samidhl, thereby creating a tabula rasa for the reflection of iiitmanor purusha (Yoga); or else gradually
disengaged through the practice of nonreactive attention, which yields insight into the manner of their operation (Buddhism). Eastern schools thus have addressed many aspects of both the personal and transpersonal unconscious. However, typical of most of them is that they have not included an explicit account of that dimension of the unconscious to which Western psychologies since Freud have given almost exclusive attention, namely, the repressed personal unconscious. Up until recently, this terrain has been dealt with only in terms of the (interpersonal) psychotherapeutic relationship. But recent work—see, for example, Goleman (1971), Rama, Ballentine, & Ajaya (1976); and Welwood (1977a)—indicates that the repressed personal unconscious also is accessible, and can be integrated into conscious awareness, by means of meditative practice.

Welwood (1977a) has offered the best theory to date to explain how meditation effects disclosure of the unconscious. According to his conception, the unconscious is not some psychic depth with interior compartments and layers of deposits, but rather a series of ever more basic and comprehensive grounds that function as the (unnoticed) support and context for focused, articulated awareness. He states:

> The paradigm here is one of "fieldswithin fields."These fieldsare dynamic patterns of relationships, each of which allows for certain kinds of knowledge and experience to occur. They do not in themselves contain any "mental stuff," any psychic contents. They do not exist in the sense of being any kind of substantial entities. Rather they are functional determinants of consciousness that actively shape how we relate to things from moment to moment (p. 21).

He distinguishes four major levels or grounds: (1) the situational ground, which corresponds to the traditional concept of the preconscious; (2) the personal ground, which he associates with Grof’s (1973, 1976) COEX systems; (3) the transpersonal ground, "... where there is an identification with the whole organism as being embedded in the larger organism/environment field" (p. 14); and (4) the basic ground, i.e. the ground of being itself.

Given this figure-ground conception of the consciousness-unconscious relation, the effectiveness of meditation in achieving awareness of the unconscious is easily explained. This is so because meditation, at least of the receptive type, has as an essential part of its practice the diffusion or defocalization of consciousness and thus the release of attention from any figure upon which it might be fixed. Since a figure exists as such only
in the context of its ground, the release of a figure from the forefront of attention allows it to recede into its ground, which itself then comes into conscious awareness for the first time as a new, more comprehensive figure. Defocalization dissolves this figure too into its proximate ground, which appears as a new, even more comprehensive figure; and this figure in its turn is dissolved into its proximate ground, and so on and so forth until the ultimate ground of being is apprehended. The defocalization or “defiguration” of consciousness thus progressively widens awareness, broadening its scope step by step up to the point at which the most basic of the “fields within fields” is met with.

The strength of Welwood’s theory is the stress that it puts upon defocalization. Its weaknesses are (1) that it artificially subsumes all of the unconscious under the single concept of ground, and (2) that it infers from this the false conclusion that defocalization is a sufficient, rather than merely necessary, condition of awareness of the unconscious. For these latter aspects of his theory make of the unconscious something that is simply unheeded by ordinary awareness, rather than something that is unavailable or denied to it; and thus they suggest that entry to the unconscious is much easier than it really is. The barrier that withholds the unconscious from consciousness, then, is still to be explained. Defocalization is no doubt sufficient to explain the emergence of the preconscious (as defined by Freud); because it, although presently out of mind, is not barred from awareness. In the case of the unconscious, however, other factors also are required. This is not to deny the fact that defocalization often precedes eruptions of repressed material, or that highly focused activity (e.g. the rituals of the obsessive-compulsive) sometimes is used as a defense against unconscious contents that threaten to break into awareness. But these facts do not prove that defocalization is a sufficient condition of awareness of the unconscious. They prove only that, as a necessary condition, it plays an important role.

Another consideration in regard to Welwood’s theory is that it is systematically ambiguous with respect to the ontological status of the fields that constitute the unconscious grounds of focal attention. It is left unstated whether these patterns of relationships are part of the nexus of experience itself or merely structures that have been reactively imposed upon it by the mind. His discussion of the situational and personal grounds suggests that the fields are projections of the psyche (“functional determinants of consciousness that actively shape how we relate to things”); but his discussion of the transpersonal and basic grounds (especially the latter) implies that the fields are objective matrices. It is necessary that this issue be ad-
dressed explicitly, because the important Kantian problem of appearances versus things-in-themselves is left unresolved so long as the objective-subjective distinction is ignored.

In response to Welwood's theory, I propose that there are three factors (i.e., aspects or effects of meditation) that are essential to the explanation of meditative access to the unconscious. These are: (1) defocalization, (2) reduction of the intensity threshold of awareness, and (3) immobilization of psychic operations. It already has been stated that defocalization is a necessary but not sufficient condition of the emergence of unconscious contents. For conditions to be sufficient it is additionally required that either one or both of the other factors just cited also obtain. Why this is so will be explained momentarily. But first I would like to reiterate an obvious but nonetheless important point about defocalization, namely, that it is not a part of meditation per se, but rather a factor that obtains only in the case of receptive meditation. Concentrative meditation of course also alters the focus of awareness; but it does so in the direction opposite to defocalization. It restricts attention to a single point and thereby closes awareness to everything else, including possible disclosures from the unconscious. Since defocalization is a necessary condition of contact with the unconscious, this fact excludes concentrative meditation from being a direct route to that domain. Nevertheless, concentrative meditation does bring about an exposure of the unconscious indirectly, after its object has been dropped, for it shares with receptive meditation the other two of the aforementioned factors. Receptive meditation is perhaps the "royal road to the unconscious," since insight is forthcoming not only because of, but during, its practice. But concentrative meditation leads there too, albeit indirectly, by creating conditions that bear fruit after its practice is concluded.

Turning to the second factor, meditation reduces the intensity threshold of awareness because it effects a decrease in the turbulence of psychomental activity, that is, in the energy level of the objects that arise in and pass through the mind. Clearly, concentrative meditation accomplishes this, for otherwise enstasis would be impossible. The psychomental flux must be subdued substantially, even halted temporarily, if absorption in a single object is to occur. The initial practice of one-pointedness is a difficult task, as the meditator must struggle with the forces of distraction. But with perseverance, these forces are weakened and attention is able to flow more easily and continuously toward the chosen object, approaching the point at which enstasis is achieved. Receptive meditation also quiets the mind, because defocalized, non-reactive attention disconnects mental objects from their source of power. These objects...
are merely observed; consciousness does not engage them in any way, and thus it does not invest them with psychic energy. Cut off from their fuel of life, they begin to lose intensity. The initial consequence is that the usual violent and eruptive character of inner experience markedly subsides; and in the long run a gradual quieting of consciousness is brought about. It is the strongest impulses that are affected first, and as they dim, the meditator begins to discern more subtle ones—just as the setting of the sun brings the stars into view. But these more subtle impulses themselves wane, which allows even more subtle ones to be discriminated. Interestingly, this is not an absolutely continuous process, for during sitting meditation there occur interludes of virtual silence during which, it seems, one passes through some kind of psychic "membrane" that divides the present from the next, subtler level. Once this divide has been passed, psychomental activity resumes (or better: it once again becomes perceptible—for it no doubt continued unnoticed all the while); but its character is now much finer and more rarified. These membranes, if the metaphor is not too farfetched, seem to perform a twofold function. Not only do they keep subtler contents from view when one is on the surface of consciousness but they also serve the purpose, once deeper levels have been arrived at, of prohibiting entry of injuriously intense stimuli into consciousness when it is in a highly sensitized, and therefore vulnerable, condition.

Consciousness in its "normal" condition operates with a relatively high intensity threshold, as only very powerful impulses can make themselves heard in the crowd of noisy contents that ordinarily occupy the mind. But meditation reduces this threshold by calming the storm on the surface of consciousness, and it thus permits what were previously unconscious contents to become objects of explicit awareness. The new threshold that is established in this way can itself be reduced by continued meditation, and this one too, and so on. In each case a new spectrum of lower-intensity, subtler objects becomes accessible to the meditator's inner sight.

Reduction of the intensity threshold does not imply a reduction in the intensity of consciousness, but only in the objects of consciousness. The quieting of the mind does not require that it lose any degree of alertness, although this happens frequently enough in the case of those who have just recently taken up the practice of meditation. Thus it is said that the first two problems that a beginning meditator encounters are, in order, distraction and sleepiness. The veteran meditator, however, has learned to counteract the tendency to become drowsy; and by steadfast attention his degree of alertness is maintained, and even increased, as his mind becomes...
quieter and more calm. Transcendental meditators have an expression that describes this perfectly: "restful alertness." Another good expression is "suprawakeful silence."

Reduction of the intensity threshold opens the door to the subliminal unconscious. Included herein are memory traces of prior life experience, extending back, according to some claims, to previous incarnations, and even, some say, to earlier stages of the evolutionary development of the species. (Grof’s research with LSD [1976] is relevant here.) Also included in the subliminal unconscious are innumerable unnoticed aspects of experiences, aspects tuned out due to habit, conditioning, or the exigencies of the situation. These can be resurrected in meditation; and it is a curious fact that one can frequently know more about an experience in its meditative review than was known in the first instance. In general, reduction of the intensity threshold sensitizes consciousness and renders it more acute. And this holds not only for the duration of the practice but also for a time thereafter, as is evident from the testimony of practitioners, who state that, upon concluding a session of sitting meditation, their sensory experience is greatly accentuated. Stimuli are said to pour into consciousness with much greater vivacity and variegation than before.

A point of interest revealed on subtler levels is that the mind can have more than one object at a time. As consciousness quiets down, one witnesses that there is much more going on in it than is ordinarily realized, that it is in fact teeming with thoughts, images, feelings, etc., many of which arise at once. The mind, it seems, is not a medium in which contents can be successive only (the "stream of consciousness"); rather it is a psychic space in which a plurality of objects can be accommodated simultaneously. Frequently, these appear in flurries and clusters which, strikingly, can be observed very much like one would observe coexisting physical objects in external space. Welwood’s article (1977b) on the spatial dimension of consciousness sheds light on this and other related points.

The third factor is immobilization of psychic operations. By this I mean that meditation, of both types, approximates the state of bare witnessing, that is, the state of motionless attention in which consciousness, or the psyche generally, neither acts upon, reacts to, nor is itself affected by the object or objects (if any) before the mind. It is evident that the major forms of receptive meditation meet this description. They consist of the practice of strict attention to whatever arises in experience. And this attention is to be as motionless as possible: experience is neither to be operated on by consciousness (e.g., by way of conceptual construction, affective response, perceptual

Observations Relevant to a Unified Theory of Meditation
Concentrative meditation also immobilizes the psyche; for it ties the mind to an unchanging object and in this way gradually brings about the cessation of all forms of mental action. This fact is stated most clearly in the (Theravada) Buddhist program, according to which each succeeding level of jhīna attainment is marked by the transcendence of a form of psychic motion or response that existed on the preceding level. Specifically, the first full jhīna state is characterized by five factors: (1) applied thought (vitakka), (2) sustained thought (vīkīra), (3) rapture (pīti), (4) bliss-joy (sukha), and (5) tranquil or motionless one-pointedness (ekagattī). (Note: Applied and sustained thought are types of discursive mental activity. Rapture is the positive feeling corresponding to the transcendence of self-consciousness, i.e. the subject-object separation, which transcendence is characteristic of eustatic states; and bliss-joy, as it is understood here, isthe positive affective state that accompanies, at least at first, the full, active utilization of the mind, as is the case in jhāna.) The second level is achieved when applied and sustained thought cease. Since these are the grossest forms of mental motion within the jhīninic state, they are the first to go as one makes progress to higher levels. The third jhāna, already without applied and sustained thought, transcends rapture too, and thus is characterized only by bliss-joy (which is a subtler type of excitation than rapture) and tranquil one-pointedness. Finally, the fourth jhāna transcends even bliss-joy, leaving a condition of completely motionless, absorbed attention.

The manner in which immobilization brings about contact with the unconscious is theoretically very simple: it brings unconscious psychic operations into awareness by interfering with their normal functioning. Such operations ordinarily function so smoothly, regularly, and automatically that they remain undetected behind the scenes of awareness. Their very constancy helps to render them invisible. Furthermore, these operations are conditions of the world as we apprehend it, since it is by their means that experience is constructed—e.g., organized according to basic categories, needs, and values, invested with feelings, meanings, and purposes, and perceived in ways that select or emphasize stimuli that conform to these categories, needs, etc. and delete or de-emphasize those that do not conform to them. And in their capacity as conditions of experience, psychic operations cannot themselves be elements of experience. Under ordinary circumstances, then, they are forms of subjectivity and not, for this very reason, objects of
conscious awareness. For example, people frequently are unconscious of the presuppositions of their own cultural milieu, because these presuppositions function as the constant medium of their awareness. It is for this reason that colleges often require undergraduate students to take foreign culture courses. The theory is that it is only by making a break with one's own cultural perspective, and then returning to it, that one can begin to look at it, rather than, as hitherto had been the case, merely through it. And so it is with all unconscious operations; they cannot become observable constituents of experience so long as they remain the constant activities by which experience is constituted. If they are to be brought into awareness, their functioning must temporarily be inhibited or interrupted; and this is what meditation accomplishes.

The two meditations differ slightly in the manner in which they make contact with unconscious operations. Receptive meditation can encounter them during the course of its practice. As one attempts "not to do" or to exercise "negative volition," one offers resistance to psychic operations already in motion; and it is, so to speak, the friction caused by the resistance that makes them manifest for the first time. Concentrative meditation works in a different manner, since, as was stated earlier, it closes consciousness to deliverances from the unconscious for the period that it is occupied with its object. It is only after the object is dropped and one returns to normal experience that contact with unconscious operations becomes possible. But by this time, provided that the meditation has met with some success—perhaps a degree of enstasis-iconsciousness is already significantly deactivated. The driving of attention into a single and unchanging object has temporarily suppressed the functioning of psychic operations. The meditator thus returns to experience in a condition that, relative to his usual state, approximates the ideal of the bare, motionless witness. This condition, however, lasts only for a short duration, as it is not too long before the operations begin to reassert themselves. But it is just at this point that they suffer exposure to the light of consciousness, for the renewal of their functioning makes them conspicuous in contrast to the preceding stillness. The motionless state is disturbed, and one feels impelled to respond to experience in ways that, previously, were entirely automatic and unconscious. So long as the psyche is in constant motion, it remains unaware of the nature of its automatic operations. But once its motion has been brought to a halt, then the resumption of the functioning of these operations is noticeable. In short, unconscious operations become known by interfering with their normal functioning, whether by resisting it through receptive meditation or by temporarily suppressing it through concentrative meditation.
The operations that are disclosed in this fashion are of the most diverse types, starting usually with personal habits of thought, feeling, perception, and action, proceeding to more basic, culturally inherited patterns of response, and leading finally to dynamic structures of an archetypal character. By practicing "mental stop," one in effect catches oneself in the act of conceptually organizing, affectively coloring, perceptually construing, and! or physically reacting to experience in ways that are unique to oneself, or part of the Weltanschauung of one's culture, or part of the subjective constitution of the species. And by bringing these operations into awareness, the first step is taken in winning liberation from domination by them, i.e. in de-automatizing them. For once they are known, it becomes possible, with real effort, to employ them on a conscious and voluntary basis, if and when appropriate, rather than being bound to them as unconscious and automatic forms of subjectivity.

Meditative immobilization of the psyche affects all of its activities, including the operation of the defense mechanisms. The principle is the same here as before: receptive meditation renders them conscious by inhibiting them, concentrative meditation by temporarily interrupting them. Thus it is not at all uncommon for a meditator, during or shortly after practice, to witness himself in the process of projection, reaction formation, denial, etc. or to feel that he is somehow withholding something from himself (repression). But of course the defense mechanisms are not the only things that one becomes conscious of in this way. One also becomes aware, eventually if not immediately, of the unconscious contents against which they are working. Meditation resists or suppresses the defenses and thereby weakens the forces (counter cathexes) that keep repressed materials from awareness. It therefore facilitates their breakthrough into consciousness. For this reason it can be dangerous for severely repressed individuals to engage in lengthy meditations. It also might be noted that such meditations may lead to unpleasant experiences even in the case of individuals who are not seriously repressed, if they should make the mistake of jumping immediately into action. Since defenses would be weak, if not temporarily paralyzed, encounter with a threatening situation could cause an anxiety attack of major proportions and a failure to cope. So caution is advised.

In review, I would like once again to speak to the matter of the differences that separate the two meditations as routes to the unconscious. As was stated, it is receptive meditation alone that is a direct route. Concentrative meditation, at the point of enstasis, is so immersed in its object that all else, including
messages from the unconscious, is unavailable to awareness; and for this reason confrontation with the unconscious can occur only after the object has been discarded, or after the practice has been concluded. But if concentrative meditation is less direct than receptive meditation in this regard, it may nonetheless be quicker and more effective in bringing the unconscious into awareness, at least for beginning meditators. This is because its object is a device that allows for a very rapid sensitization and immobilization of the psyche. Active penetration of the object of concentration puts a stop to the turbulence on the surface of the mind as well as to the operations issuing from its depths much faster and more powerfully than usually is possible by the unaided practice of mindfulness-insight, shikan-taza, and similar receptive exercises. However, once the meditator has learned to quiet and arrest the mind (by whatever means), this particular advantage that concentrative meditation possesses over receptive meditation no longer exists; and in fact the advantage then passes permanently to receptive meditation, which can encounter the unconscious directly, during its practice.

CONCLUDING SPECULATIONS

There are three questions to be addressed by way of conclusion. They are: (1) How are the two meditations related logically? (2) How are they related in practice? and (3) Do they share a single, long-range goal?

Concerning the first, it is clear from the definitions given at the outset that the two meditations are related to each other as opposites, since concentrative meditation exercises highly focused awareness, while receptive meditation defocalizes awareness. However, it is equally true, and no less important, that they are related not merely as opposites but as opposing species of a single genus, namely, sustained attention, i.e. continuous, uncapitulating alertness. Sustained attention can in fact serve as the defining characteristic of meditation per se. Concentrative meditation, then, is sustained attention with specific focus, and receptive meditation is sustained attention without focus.

This conception of the logical relation that governs the two meditations determines, in general, the answers to be given to the remaining questions. For since the two meditations are but different ways of exercising sustained attention, it follows, with respect to the second question, that they affect each other in practice in a manner that is complementary and mutually facilitating; and this in turn implies, with respect to the third
The complementary nature of the two types of meditation means that each one, in addition to performing its own function, also reinforces the function of the other type. The function of receptive meditation, as we know, is to enhance the reflective capacity of consciousness; that of concentrative meditation, it was argued, is to increase the mind's power and effulgence. Thus, the complementarity of the two meditations means, in the case of receptive meditation, that it not only improves the ability of the mind to reflect the world, but that it also affects consciousness in such a way as to make it better able to accommodate light. The principal reason for this is that receptive meditation brings about the disclosure and integration of unconscious identifications, reactions, defenses, etc.; and this renders consciousness more receptive, not only objectively, to things incompatible with those identifications, reactions, defenses, etc., but also, subjectively, to the influx of greater illuminative power. Analogically, it is as if layers of filters and colored lenses were to be removed from the eye, which simultaneously would increase both the number of objects perceived and the light by which they are perceived.

Another helpful analogy comes from the field of electricity. Dynamic structures of the unconscious like those just mentioned are similar to electrical circuits, for they are energy pathways possessing both function and capacity (i.e. maximum energy tolerance). As automatisms, they perform the function of energy-saving devices; they are ready-made response patterns by means of which consciousness deals with repeated experiences without having to devote much attention to them. However, as unconscious and involuntary structures, they also work as energy-restricting mechanisms, because consciousness is bound to them and thus is forced to keep its level of attention below what otherwise would be possible. As an example of this, most everyone has experienced how difficult it is to be fully conscious when caught up in the operation of a personal habit. The habit must be struggled with and arrested before the maximum power of mind can be given to the triggering situation. And so it is with the automatisms of the unconscious, except that in their case there is not even the awareness that this is happening. Such automatisms thus not only function to save energy; they also set a limit (which is their capacity) to the amount of energy that can be utilized. And from this it follows as a general proposition that the psyche can accommodate energy only in inverse proportion to the number of unconscious automatisms to which it is committed. But receptive meditation reverses this. It accomplishes insight into
unconscious structures, leading to their deautomatization, and thus it has the effect of increasing the energy capacity of the psychic system as a whole.

In the case of concentrative meditation, complementarity means that it not only performs its own illuminative function but that it also works to enhance the receptivity of consciousness. There are at least two reasons that help to explain this. First, there is the fact that concentrative meditation is an avenue of (indirect) access to the unconscious, the understanding and integration of which, as we know, opens consciousness and makes it more receptive. But there is also the fact that the increases in interior illumination brought about by concentrative meditation have a direct effect upon the unconscious. In the Yoga philosophy it is said that *samadhi* "burns" the *samskīras* or "seeds"; and this means that it generates power that, so to speak, overloads and thus disconnects much of the circuitry of the unconscious. To the extent and for the duration of the illumination, unconscious automatisms are disengaged; and consciousness, rather than having to proceed circuitously, channeling itself through engrained patterns of response, can encounter the world directly. Concentrative meditation thus forcibly deautomatizes the psyche and provides consciousness with additional energies with which it can deal with arising situations more fully and on their own terms. In this way it enhances receptivity and reinforces the primary function of receptive meditation.

It might be observed that concentrative meditation does not eliminate automatisms at once, although there are occasionally dramatic "inbursts" of energy (e.g. the satori experience). But whether the infusion of energy comes evenly or episodically, it almost always takes a long period of concerted practice permanently to raise the energy-illumination level of consciousness to a significant degree. It usually happens that the power generated in meditation is soon dissipated in action, after which one falls back into the old patterns. But in the long run there is an accumulation—or perhaps a constant inflow—that makes a discernible difference.

As was stated, the reciprocal facilitation of functions implies a likely convergence of the two meditations upon a single, long-range goal. This goal is arrived at, I believe, at the point where each of the meditations finally transcends the mode of consciousness of which it ordinarily is the exercise. Concentrative meditation, it will be remembered, commences as a particularly intense employment of the active mode; as such, it is characterized by focal awareness, discursive thought, and the subject-object separation. But these aspects of the active
mode begin to fall away once enstasis is achieved. First it is the subject-object separation that collapses, since the meditating subject becomes absorbed in the meditation object; then it is discursive thought that dies out, as consciousness becomes more and more immobilized; and finally it is the very object to which attention all along has been directed that disappears, because it no longer is needed as a stabilizing support. Thus in the very end there is realized an illumined state of motionless, subjectless-objectless awareness, i.e. a state of pure, undifferentiated consciousness. In Patanjali's system, for example, it is held that samadhi with object (samprajjiyata samadhi) is transcended by samiidhi without object (asamprajjitha samiidhi), the highest form of which is nirbija samiidhi(i.e, Objectless self-absorption of consciousness from which all smskiiras or "seeds" have been purged). Similarly, in the Buddhist system as set forth by Buddhaghosa it is stated that jhana with form (rupajhana) is transcended by jhana without form (arupa jhana), the highest instance of which is the "sphere of neither perception nor nonperception," which also is an illumined state of motionless, contentless awareness, Kalupahana (1976, pp. 75-78) explains that the "sphere of neither perception nor nonperception" differs from nirvana by virtue of the fact that in the former attachment, craving, and engrained movement toward things (smskiiras) merely have been suspended, whereas in the latter they have been eliminated altogether. Thus, the person who has attained only to the former would not be able to retain its benefits upon return to normal, differentiated experience. Nirvana, in contrast, is said to be as real in interaction with the world as it is in separation from it. But this difference notwithstanding, the "sphere of neither perception nor nonperception" remains as an example of the illumined, subjectless-objectless goal that exists at the far end of the concentrative path.

Receptive meditation, in turn, begins as the full exercise of the receptive mode. It aims at maximal openness to the manifold contents of experience. But in this case, too, continued exercise seems ultimately to transcend the mode-Le, when the practice is conducted with respect to mental contents. Because as the intensity threshold of awareness is lowered, the objects that are received into consciousness become subtler and subtler; and a limit is approached this way in which they cease being discrete entities, each with a form and nature of its own, and are reduced rather to the raw light-energy out of which all such contents arise. In other words, receptivity to experience culminates in the dissolution of differentiated experience, and therefore in the transcendence of the receptive function per se. Thus it is said of Buddhist insight meditation that it leads not
only to an objectless nirvanic state, but also, beyond this, to a state of cessation (nirodha), which, as I understand it, is still a state of effulgent awareness, but of no thing and no one. (On these points see Buddhaghosa [1975, pp. 824-33], Paravahera Vajirafiana [1975, pp. 461-68], and Goleman [1972a, pp. 20 & 27; and 1977, pp. 37-39]). The final result achieved by receptive meditation, then, is once again a state of illumined, subject­less-objectless awareness. And this state, so far as I can discern, is indistinguishable on both the theoretical and phenomenological levels from the unconditioned state arrived at at the very end of the concentrative route.

Thus it seems that the two meditations may well have a common telos: illumined reflectivity, enlightenment. Although they differ substantially in their initial practice and consequences, it seems that in the long run there is an increase in their functional cooperation and a decrease in the differences that separate them, including perhaps even the difference of modal contrariety. In this way there is brought about a gradual convergence upon a single, fully illumined and reflective (though undifferentiated) state, which many have held to be the highest realization of which man's consciousness is capable.

A final word of warning. The complementarity of the two meditations does not imply that it makes no difference which one is practiced, for, as just noted, they differ importantly in their initial practice and effects. A balanced program would include both. This is emphasized in Tibetan Buddhist practice. Willis (1972, p. 50) states: "But, the Tibetans continually advise, samatha [i.e., tranquility, designating concentrative meditation] and vipasyana must reinforce each other to be useful for the attainment of the highest goal, Enlightenment." Also, in Zen, the koan and shikan-taza forms of zazen usually are held to be mutually fructifying, although the Rinzai school emphasizes the former while the Soto school emphasizes the latter. Thus, it must be understood that the unguided, single-minded pursuit of either one or the other type by a novice can be dangerous.

Receptive meditations, when practiced unintelligently (e.g. by permitting attention to wander, by allowing oneself to become passive, or by letting the mind "go blank"), can lead to morbid trance states (e.g. the so-called dead void of Zen [Garma C. C. Chang, 1959])and to a weakened, submissive condition which leaves one vulnerable to intrapsychic (unconscious) forces and to external suggestion. Concentrative meditation, on the other hand, can, if practiced intensely and exclusively for long periods, unleash psychospiritual energies so powerful as to overwhelm one completely. This latter possibility is graphically
described in Gopi Krishna's autobiography (1971). But concentative meditation need not be dangerous, and virtually all of the classical literature attests to its beneficial effects.

REFERENCES


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