

## 12 YOGA AND WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

<sup>1</sup>Oxford University Press published in 1934 a work by British psychologist and educationist, Geraldine Coster: *Yoga and Western Psychology; a Comparison*. A more exact title of Coster's work would have been "Yoga and Western Psychoanalysis," for psychoanalysis cannot be merely equated with psychology.

<sup>2</sup>Coster is intelligent, well-read, and inspired with a warm desire to help people in their psychological conflicts. Unfortunately this is not always sufficient. Nor is it sufficient to have studied the various psychoanalytical authorities and to account for their views without really knowing what their hypotheses are good for. And the study of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* and some other yoga literature certainly does suffice to understand Patanjali.

<sup>3</sup>It is clear from her book that she is not so superficial a judge as she too often appears. Probably she realized that she did not master the issues at hand, but thought herself able to make a useful contribution by her pioneering work of comparing psychoanalysis and yoga. Such an enterprise is abortive, however.

<sup>4</sup>Psychoanalysis wants to analyse the individual's consciousness content to discover the constant phenomena occurring in it. Coster makes the first mistake when she believes that yoga, in contradistinction to psychoanalysis, is occupied with self-analysis. That is completely wrong. The yogi knows the axiom of maya philosophy: that the consciousness content of life-ignorant man is useless – bundles of associations of illusions and fictions. Those are things which the yogi should not analyse but rather control: not allow them to occupy his attention. The yogi wants to decide for himself what to see, hear, perceive, feel, think, be willing, be aware of, and do. There are pretty well "countless" proofs that this is possible. Whether this or that particular yogi can succeed in this is quite another matter. The guru (teacher) guarantees nothing. The only word he utters in response to that question is: "Try!"

<sup>5</sup>It must be said to be futile for a Westerner to study Patanjali even with commentaries by yoga philosophers, for the latter have not been able to understand his sutras, because this requires esoteric knowledge. What Patanjali taught was intended precisely for the initiates who knew what kinds of reality were being discussed. The yogi believes it possible to reach nirvana (world 45) in samadhi, where he either (like Ramakrishna) moves about in the highest emotional spheres or (when contacting world 46) is unconscious but upon reawakening is filled with ineffable bliss.

<sup>6</sup>The conception of higher worlds formed by the yoga philosophers is completely fictitious. Correct knowledge of those worlds is possessed only by the hylozoician who has received his facts from the planetary hierarchy, the individuals of the fifth natural kingdom, the only ones to possess true knowledge of reality.

<sup>7</sup>Coster makes attempts at elucidating, by the aid of the fictions of yoga philosophy, the different kinds of consciousness entering into the individual's superconscious. Such attempts must fail, although by no fault of her own. No speculation stands the least chance of finding the truth. Facts are required for everything. Neither philosophers nor psychologists in the West or the East have realized this yet.

<sup>8</sup>Coster has faced insurmountable difficulties and ventured into fields of knowledge that only disciples of the planetary hierarchy are able to master. She attempted the impossible. The fact that she (apart from this) made some discoveries that no psychoanalyst before her succeeded in making is proof of her undeniable superiority in her own field of research.

<sup>9</sup>The following critique of the content of Coster's book will probably be deemed captious and finicky. However, there is no harm in pointing out also other errors than such as bear on fundamental problems. The more such errors are eliminated, the better.

<sup>10</sup>"In the east *experimental* psychology has gone as far as if not much farther than with us." This branch of psychology was founded in by Wundt, in Leipzig 1870, and so is not yet one

hundred years old. In India such experiments have been made (although not methodically and systematically in the scientific sense) during thousands of years. Hence Coster's statement, "if not much farther", is no exaggeration.

<sup>11</sup>Coster's assumption that yoga "contains the clue needed by the west if the analytical method and theory is to reach its fullest scope as a regenerating and re-creating factor in modern life" explains why she grappled with this task. She did not realize that it must lead to degeneration rather than regeneration.

<sup>12</sup>By "salvation" she means "happiness in the sense of poise determined by one's own inner life", and considers that "the more thoughtful among mankind are gradually outgrowing the belief that they ... are going to be 'saved' by some external intervention, and the idea is gaining ground that salvation is essentially from within" (according to esoterics, through "self-realization").

<sup>13</sup>That Coster believes in psychoanalysis is seen from her opinion that this therapy can afford self-knowledge, which it cannot.

<sup>14</sup>Neither psychoanalysts nor their patients know what the self is. "What is *Self*?" Pythagoras asks. And he answers: "Only a passing guest."

<sup>15</sup>The self is a monad which in continually new envelopes (which it abandons soon enough) in different natural kingdoms has had countless kinds of experience well preserved in its subconscious.

<sup>16</sup>What psychologists call self-knowledge cannot be anything but the remembrance of an infinitesimal fraction of what they have experienced, thought, felt, said, and done during one single life. They do not even know what they are able to do in circumstances quite different from those experienced by them.

<sup>17</sup>In the beginning of her chapter on analytical therapy, Coster says that "many years before Freud was heard of, Christian Science and New Thought had made familiar the idea that bodily disease could be cured by purely mental treatment". Freud himself began practising as a neurologist, and it was his dissatisfaction with the method of treating nervous disorders that impelled him to make new experiments.

<sup>18</sup>The followers of the doctrines mentioned certainly believe that they can heal organic disease by their methods, or that no one having the right faith need be ill, or even that disease exists in the imagination only.

<sup>19</sup>The esoterician (D.K.) says to this that disease can be healed through "mental treatment" if the healer possesses physical-etheric objective consciousness and moreover knows the causes of the disease and which kinds of energy are needed, can follow the healing process and guide the right energies through the right envelope centres.

<sup>20</sup>Believers can heal, too, of course. But in those cases there either was no real disease but just a temporary disturbance, or the disease regressed spontaneously, or it was moved to another organ.

<sup>21</sup>So much for organic disease. It is quite another matter that the different kinds of consciousness of the emotional and mental envelopes can be of great significance to the general well-being of the organism. Needless to say, psychotherapy is important for the understanding and treatment of the patients at psychiatric hospitals. Many revolutionary discoveries remain to be made, however, before they will be able to make the right diagnoses and have found the right methods.

<sup>22</sup>A psychology that cannot give a true explanation of what it means by consciousness (subconsciousness, waking consciousness, superconsciousness), the self, mind, soul, spirit, emotion, instinct, will, etc. demonstrates in so doing that it deals with fictions. Besides, without esoterics it will never succeed.

<sup>23</sup>Coster is one of the exceedingly few physicians who not only see through traditional and compulsory medical fictitiousness with a critical eye, but also have the great courage of

honestly acknowledging it. She does not want to be deceived and refuses to deceive others. Faced with such a human being we must express our admiration and respect. We know that we are standing before a heroine and a martyr.

<sup>24</sup>Coster appears not to discriminate between religion and metaphysics in epistemological respect. Such a lack of discrimination usually is due to the fact that the individual has not experienced the distance between religion and theology, religion as a phenomenon at the stage of culture (attraction, higher emotionality) and theology as a typical phenomenon at the stage of civilization (repulsion, lower emotionality). She also thinks that science through gradual discovery of laws of nature decreases the gulf between itself and metaphysics. Essentially this is correct, of course, but it will probably be long before scientists generally are capable of realizing this and willing to acknowledge it. Progress towards general recognition of new ideas is slow, due to several hindrances: people are unwilling to do the work necessary to the acquisition of a new system of thought, they are disinclined to lose cherished fallacies, and they are unable to formulate a new system by themselves. Generally speaking, these hindrances are overcome only through the emergence of a new generation which has not got stuck in the old systems. However, this intellectual inertia and dishonesty have aggravated the wide-spread contempt for authority.

<sup>25</sup>Sense perceptions disregarded all kinds of consciousness are beyond the range of physical exploration and consequently belong to the superphysical. The fact that philosophers, psychologists, etc., have not yet seen this should be instructive to all people capable of reflection as to the current primitivity of the pertaining studies.

<sup>26</sup>Among the many things that strike esotericians when acquainting themselves with psycho-analysis is the fact that all the complexes from which analysts try to liberate their patients are direct results of the emotional illusions and mental fictions of life-ignorance in those world views and life views which are persistently being stuffed into people, all those superstitions which engender fear, agitation, anxiety before life, make people increasingly unfit for life. They prefer treating them with psychoanalysis to showing them the path out of the labyrinth, the path that they will have to tread sooner or later, the path to the kingdom of knowledge and unity, hylozoics.

<sup>27</sup>The untiring seeker, who is intelligent enough to realize that the ruling ideologies are untenable, is driven in his search by a deep dissatisfaction with life as it appears to be and by his inability to orient himself in the universal chaos of views where everybody holds a different opinion on practically everything. Where is the reality basis? It must surely exist. Our world is an organized cosmos, not a chaos. Where is that construction of thought which agrees with reality, which gives us an ordered world in the chaos of guesswork and suppositions; a system which affords us, without inner contradictions or absurdities, an explanation of what was previously incomprehensible; a system which can be accepted by common sense and which solves our problems of life?

<sup>28</sup>Coster thinks that in the long evolutionary history of man, the physical body developed first, but later emotion and mind developed simultaneously. This is quite wrong. The organism developed in Lemuria, emotional life in Atlantis, and the faculty of thought in the present continents. In Atlantis, mental consciousness was embryonic and imitative, and in the masses it did not reach above the level of present-day anthropoid apes. In most people, the faculty of thought still has not reached above the lowest stage of four possible ones.

<sup>29</sup>Coster gives an account of the one-sided views held by Freud, Adler, Jung, and others as to the cause of the sense of inferiority. This one-sidedness of the explanations given is strange. All of the enumerated factors, and more, may be causes. The same is true of complexes. There may be practically no end of them. Psychoanalysis is still little more than primitive speculation. Whenever consciousness is discussed, Westerners seem incredibly childish. When not even introvert yoga philosophers, who have been occupied with these

problems for thousands of years, can elucidate them, we understand that typically extravert Westerners do not stand a chance. This is no objection to experiments. Also negative results are valuable. However, the realization of the fact that human reason is incapable of solving the problem of consciousness must finally force even the most hardened to begin examining hylozoics.

<sup>30</sup>It is a characteristic of the complete disorientation as to the meaning of life and the deplorable result of that disorientation that patients in masses seek the assistance of psychoanalysts.

<sup>31</sup>Most people do not reflect at all on any meaning of anything. Large groups can be satisfied with the theological, philosophical, or scientific guesswork. But in our times it seems as if increasing numbers of people did not succeed in this. They easily fall prey to mistrust, doubt, anxiety before life. Many psychoanalysts have their own method of restoring to the individual his faith in life or setting him free from disturbing complexes. It is excellent if they succeed in this. To the esoterician, however, all of this seems like attempts at replacing old fictions with new ones, since the knowledge of reality is absent. Perhaps in most cases the analyst solves his problem by finding a fiction that the patient seeking his assistance may accept or, in simpler cases, finding the origin of some particularly painful complex.

<sup>32</sup>“To a great many people the time comes when the attainment of a candid outlook on life, of a freedom from mental and emotional confusion, of actual contact with reality, becomes crucial.” Then there is the question if they are willing to face the tremendous cost involved in attaining this: the liberation from the lie of life.

<sup>33</sup>The following shows how unclear even the most fundamental concepts of psychoanalysts are.

<sup>34</sup>According to Coster, “sublimation” is the goal of analytical therapy. “To accept life as it comes, to accept people as they are, to accept one’s own inherent limitations and deal with them on a reality basis rather than by fantasy.” In so doing we arrive at the attitude to life characteristic of the mystics: Best as it was, is, will be, since everything has a function and exists according to the Law (including the law of reaping). “It is by non-acceptance of reality that the life-force or libido is dammed, so that creative activity becomes impossible. The deeper forms of analysis aim at freeing libido and enabling the individual to unite with life, and by so doing attain his own maximum development.”

<sup>35</sup>Poul Bjerre declares the concept of “sublimation” to be a fiction. “Freud knows as well as all other sexologists that every urge can be released along its own pathway only. One cannot satisfy the urge to eat by playing the Moonlight Sonata three times a day ...” The confusion of ideas could scarcely be greater.

<sup>36</sup>There are plenty of people who say that we should not criticize. That is surely an attitude that is too innocent. How would it be possible to set mankind free from its illusions and fictions, if we were not permitted to prove that they are superstitions? People will not accept the truth until they have been convinced that what they saw as truth is a lie. Resentment against criticism is probably due to confusion of ideas, confusion of views with people holding those views. Tolerance lets everyone hold however idiotic views. But we have a right to explain reality and reality concepts and to illustrate them in various contexts.

<sup>37</sup>One of the most important tasks of esotericians is to weed out the old fallacies in such a manner that people comprehend what is erroneous in them. And they do so by demonstrating what is unclear in the old notions and how much simpler and clearer are the explanations of things offered by the new ideas. It is to be hoped that an esoteric psychologist makes a clean sweep of Freud’s system of fictions, and gives the correct, reality-based explanations of the unconscious mind, the libido, repression, the Oedipus complex, the transference (sublimation), the id, the ego, and the superego.

<sup>38</sup>All these phenomena are familiar to esotericians, who understand what they are. Psycho-

analysts, however, cannot understand them, since they do have the knowledge of the three fundamental aspects of existence and Pythagorean hylozoics in general, which has an effect similar to that of sunrise in a tropical night on all who have mastered it.

<sup>39</sup>Esoterics is the key to comprehending and understanding reality. This is best seen in the fact that by its aid you immediately understand the various ideologies, you can explain their distorted ideas and how these fictions have been able to arise. Anyone who cannot explain these phenomena in a simple and clear manner has never comprehended esoterics.

<sup>40</sup>Coster shows that there are many similarities between analytical therapy and yoga because they both address universal human experience. She has taken pains to penetrate into yoga psychology, which is clear from the fact that she has been able to utilize its explanations better than any other psychoanalyst. In that respect Jung's attempt at understanding yoga bears witness to his complete incompetence for that task. Coster explains particulars from universals. In contrast, Jung explains universals from particulars. One is amazed at the absence of the most elementary logic and psychology in such a procedure.

<sup>41</sup>It is true that Coster has realized that the interweaving of the emotional and mental envelopes has brought about a coalescence of emotionality and mentality (kama-manas), but she does not realize where the dividing line is but attributes much of emotionally dominated thought to mentality. She realizes that pleasure-disgust, sympathy-antipathy are emotional. But such a phenomenon as aversion she attributes to mentality, although it is an expression of the urge of attraction-repulsion, as is contempt. She has not clearly realized that everything is hatred which is not love, which is the more astonishing as she seems to have studied *The Science of the Emotions* by Bhagavan Das. Apparently, she has not clearly seen that the lower mentality (47:6,7), intelligence (imagination) at the stage of civilization, is dominated by emotionality and that only the higher mentality (47:4,5) is liberated from this dependence.

<sup>42</sup>Much remains to be discovered for our Western psychologists, who seem almost illiterate in the matter of psychological subtleties. Also, Coster has clearly seen that Western psychologists have not been able to distinguish the different layers there are in consciousness. It will probably be long before they gain this ability because of their habitual, seemingly ineradicable faith in their own judgement and their inability to see that speculation is imagination without support of objective facts. And facts are quite absent in Western psychology, since psychologists cannot study man's different superphysical envelopes and the objective phenomena occurring in them.

<sup>43</sup>Coster makes creditable attempts at representing the different kinds of consciousness. She fails because of her ignorance of esoterics. She totally misunderstands two fundamental realities: will and self-consciousness (or self-awareness).

<sup>44</sup>It seems to be a very old pedagogical opinion that the child adopts the view of reality and the conception of right that are deemed valid by those around him. Even if this is a true statement, it needs qualifying. And such qualifying is due to several factors never realized by the ignorance of life: the stage of development reached by the monad; the understanding of life acquired by monad; the limited resources there are in the etheric envelope, determined by the horoscope, for the assimilation of vibrations; the factor of heredity (the plasticity of the brain, etc.). Of course much depends on the child's opportunities of remembrance and reacquisition, that is, his physical, emotional, and mental environment. In this connection occurs the concept of "conscience".

<sup>45</sup>"The psychology of conscience is an aspect of the subject that has been deeply studied by the various schools of psychotherapy. The Freudian regards conscience as a compulsive automatism, the result of the child's early identification of himself with his parents and their standards." They have certainly pondered much on this problem, but that is not sufficient. Without the knowledge of the kinds of consciousness of the triad and the kinds of consciousness of the different envelopes (subconsciousness, waking consciousness, and super-

consciousness) and their reciprocal struggle, the result is fictitious. Whence the “voice of conscience” or the inspiration came, what gave rise to those consciousness phenomena, probably only a causal self can establish upon examination of each particular case. General statements may be correct, and it may nevertheless be impossible to sort the individual case into any one of those few general categories. It is the realization of this fact that causes the esoterician never to be cocksure, which in its turn has the effect that he appears “poorly gifted” to those who are always sure of their ground, know everything better.

<sup>46</sup>Without the esoteric knowledge, which is the true knowledge of reality, it is impossible to realize that the basic concepts of psychoanalysis as well as those of yoga are fictitious. One wonders why mankind always prefers lies to the truth, how mankind has been able to acquire such a perverse instinct of research that, when faced with the choice between different possibilities, it always prefers any option but the only right one, and that this is the last one it cares to examine.

<sup>47</sup>Whenever research leaves the domains where facts can be ascertained objectively, it is the prey of its theories and hypothesis. Some time in the future it must be able to realize that everything that is not a fact and can be objectively examined is beyond the understanding of human consciousness. There are phenomena of countless kinds that can be grasped only by higher kinds of consciousness than those attainable by mankind at its present stage of development. Without the light that we can receive from individuals of the fifth natural kingdom we shall always “wander in darkness”. Those who cannot see this are in no position to understand esoterics either. Apparently this cannot be said too often.

<sup>48</sup>Coster has translated the word “samadhi” by “meditation”. The word “samadhi” probably is not used nowadays in that sense but exclusively to denote some one of the many kinds of trance states. Even on the latter there are different views.

<sup>49</sup>Esoterically the word “samadhi” terms the power of leaving the organism with its etheric envelope at will. Still in the esoteric sense, the different kinds of samadhi depend on which envelopes the individual has left with the organism. Anyone who has acquired mental objective consciousness leaves his emotional envelope as well. Anyone who has acquired causal objective consciousness leaves both the emotional and mental envelopes. Practising samadhi you use the highest envelope you can perfectly control. The lower envelopes would limit your freedom of movement.

<sup>50</sup>Coster sets her hopes on a new kind of Society for Psychic Research, not the one of the present kind, “whose aim it is to prove or disprove the existence of poltergeists and spirit communication from ‘the other side’, but to demonstrate to the ordinary public the possibility (or impossibility) of genuine superphysical experience on this side.” She asserts with perfect justice that while “There are many people whose hearts are set on convincing themselves that there is a life beyond the grave. ... there are far more people who are deeply, despairingly concerned to find a greater reality here and now.”

<sup>51</sup>Even Patanjali recommended the student “in order to eradicate undesirable thoughts, habits of mind, and emotions ... to meditate upon their opposite.”

<sup>52</sup>Coster thinks that meditation on the opposite is a less simple matter than it seems and is beset by various pitfalls. It may be difficult to find out what is in fact the true opposite. There may be many different causes of any given bad habit or undesirable trait. Moreover the motive is essential; it can strengthen egoism if the motive has been determined by outer compulsion or has arisen out of consideration for the individual’s self-esteem or fear of offending his fellow human beings.

<sup>53</sup>Coster is of the opinion that there are risks to Coué’s method as well if auto-suggestion is used contrary to the patient’s natural desires or applied through pressure from without. All such things amount to conscious or unconscious self-deception and counteract the formation of character.

<sup>54</sup>Coster is clearly aware, and has the courage to admit, that psychoanalysis is a primitive method which can do harm and has done so. To the esoterician it is quite clear that it wholly depends on the analyst whether the treatment benefits the patient. Only those who have the natural (“innate”) qualifications for a profession should exercise it. On that condition any therapist could help a patient to achieve liberation from harmful complexes by analysing the problem together with the patient until the latter finds the solution himself. Any outside interference is objectionable as a matter of principle. That much has been understood by many of them. It is as true of psychoanalysts as of teachers, psychologists, physicians, etc., that many are called but few are chosen.

The above text constitutes the essay *Yoga and Western Psychology* by Henry T. Laurency. The essay is part of the book *Knowledge of Life Five* by Henry T. Laurency, published in Swedish in 1995. Translation by Lars Adelskog.

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*Endnotes by the Translator*

12.14 “What is Self?” Pythagoras asks. And he answers: “Only a passing guest.” The *Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, Letter No. 45. By “Pythagoras” Laurency means 44-self K.H., the last known incarnation of that monad; compare what is said in *Knowledge of Life Five*, 17.3