Mystical Experience and the Scope of C. G. Jung's Holism

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In February 1944, in his sixty-ninth year, Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) broke his foot and, while laid up in hospital, suffered a heart attack. He then had a near-death experience, during which he found himself to be floating a thousand miles above the earth (over Ceylon, now Sri Lanka). He underwent a painful process in which he was stripped of all his earthly attachments and was about to enter a stone temple on a meteorite where he would discover the meaning of his life, when he was called back to the earth by the spirit of his doctor (Jung, 1963/1995, pp. 320–324). Over several nights while recovering in hospital, he experienced a series of further visions in which he felt himself to be "in the womb of the universe" (p. 324) and witnessed, or participated in, or in some way "was," the "mystery of the conjunction," expressed in Jewish mystical (Kabbalistic) terms as the marriage of Tiphereth and Malchuth or Rabbi Simon ben Jochai's wedding in the afterlife, in Christian terms as the "Marriage of the Lamb," and in Greek mythological terms as the consummation of the sacred marriage (*hierosgamos*) of Zeus and Hera (p. 325). He described the visions as "extremely strange" (p. 320), "the most tremendous things I have ever experienced" (p. 326), and "utterly real" (p. 327).[1]

From his student days in the late 1890s until his death in 1961, Jung experienced, observed, and studied an astonishing range of paranormal and mystical phenomena (Main, 1997, 2012). His personal experiences included apparently telepathic, clairvoyant, and precognitive dreams and fantasies (Jung, 1963/1995, pp. 159–160, 200–201, 333–335); psychokinetic and poltergeist activity (pp. 125–127, 178–179); apparitions and hauntings (pp. 215–216;

1950/1977d); meaningful coincidences (1952/1969i, paras. 843–845; 1963/1995, pp. 207–208); altered states of consciousness involving both spontaneous and induced visions (2009); and the above-described near-death experience and accompanying mystical visions (1963/1995, pp. 320–329). As a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Jung heard accounts of similar experiences from his patients (1952/1969i, para. 816). Through attending séances, he witnessed the apparent possession of mediums and the materialization of spirits (1902/1957; 1973, pp. 100, 511). And in his last decade, he assiduously collected documents about the then emerging phenomenon of UFOs (1954/1977g, para. 1431; 1958/1970b). Throughout his life, he read extensively in the literature of psychical research and parapsychology (1952/1969i, paras. 830–839; 1963/1995, p. 120; 1973, p. 166), and he carried out parapsychological experiments of his own, including laboratory tests of mediums (1905/1977h) and collecting and statistically analyzing astrological data (1952/1969i, paras. 872–915). Based on his experiences, observations, and studies, he published three books on such phenomena (1902/1957, 1952/1969i, 1958/1970b), as well as numerous shorter papers.[2]

Jung's openness to extraordinary experiences profoundly influenced the development of his psychological theory, not only at the outset of his career but also at key points throughout it (Charet, 1993; Main, 1997, pp. 1–44). His openness also consolidated his opposition to materialism (1916/1948/1969b, para. 529; 1952/1969i, para. 960; 1955–1956/1970a, para. 763), to narrowly rationalistic approaches to science (1963/1995, p. 336), and to the pervasive cultural condition of disenchantment (Weber, 1919/1948, pp. 139, 155) or, as he called it, the "despiritualization" (Jung, 1938/1940/1969g, paras. 140, 141) or "desacralization" of the world (McGuire & Hull, 1978, p. 230; see Main, 2012, pp. 25–27)—all of which, he felt, were incompatible with the kinds of data he had encountered. The pivotal concept that emerged

specifically from Jung's engagement with these topics and issues was synchronicity, a principle of acausal connection through meaning (1952/1969i), which he then deployed to establish the reality, explain the dynamics, and, not least, interpret the meaning of extraordinary experiences (Main, 1997, 2004, 2007, 2012).

The Recalcitrant Case of Introvertive Mystical Experience

About one extraordinary phenomenon, however, Jung long remained skeptical: the claimed egoless and contentless awareness of introvertive mysticism (1939/1968e, para. 320; 1939/1954/1969e, paras. 774, 817–818). This may appear to be a small limitation in an otherwise strikingly open system of thought. But it does seemingly put Jung at odds with an extensive body of empirical data about mysticism, including many impressive first-person accounts (Stace, 1960/1973, pp. 88–111), and in *Irreducible Mind* (Kelly, Kelly, Crabtree, Gauld, Grosso, & Greyson, 2007) Edward Kelly and Michael Grosso (2007) understandably identify this limitation as compromising the adequacy of Jung's theoretical model when it comes to accounting for mystical experiences (pp. 555–557).

The term "introvertive mysticism" is taken from Walter Stace's classic study *Mysticism and Philosophy* (1960/1973). Stace identifies two main types of mystical experience, extrovertive ("outward-turning") and introvertive ("inward-turning"). "The essential difference between them," he writes, "is that the extrovertive experience looks outward through the senses, while the introvertive looks inward into the mind" (p. 61). He continues:

> Both culminate in the perception of an ultimate Unity—what Plotinus called the One—with which the perceiver realizes his own union or even identity. But the extrovertive mystic, using his physical senses, perceives the multiplicity of external material objects—the sea, the sky, the houses, the trees—mystically transfigured so that the One, or the Unity, shines through them. The introvertive mystic, on the contrary, seeks by deliberately shutting off the senses, by obliterating from consciousness the entire multiplicity of sensations, images, and thoughts, to plunge into the depths of his own ego. There, in that darkness and silence, he alleges that he perceives the One—and is united with it—not as a Unity seen through a multiplicity (as in the extrovertive experience), but as the wholly naked One devoid of any plurality whatever. (pp. 61–62)

Stace himself considered introvertive mystical experiences to be a higher type than extrovertive mystical experiences (pp. 132–133), the latter being "a sort of incomplete version of the completeness realized in the introvertive kind" (p. 133). As Paul Marshall (2005) has highlighted, this ranking is by no means universally agreed among experiencers and theorists of mysticism.[3] He discusses the case of Robert Forman, for example, who, drawing on the framework of Transcendental Meditation and hence ultimately of Upanishadic thought (pp. 170–172), presents a sequence of mystical development in which the introvertive state, referred to as a pure consciousness event, is a lesser attainment (p. 167). More advanced attainments include a dualistic mystical state, in which pure consciousness is experienced "alongside but separately from ordinary awareness of objects" (p. 167); and then, as a further development, a unitive mystical state, in which "Consciousness is no longer separate from its objects" (p. 168). This

unitive mystical state resembles Stace's extrovertive mystical experience. But because it unites consciousness and the world rather than keeps them apart, it is considered more unitary and hence more advanced than the pure consciousness event, which resembles Stace's introvertive mystical experience (p. 168). However, whether more or less advanced, introvertive mystical states are still widely reported to occur, and it would be a serious limitation if Jung's theory were unable to give a satisfactory account of them.

Kelly and Grosso note two respects in which Jung's psychological model seems inadequate to account for introvertive mystical experience. First, they challenge Jung's claim that mystical experiences are always archetypal. This cannot be true of all mystical experiences, they argue, "for archetypes only reach overt expression in the form of *images*, broadly construed, and as maintained by Stace and others the innermost core of mystical experience unfolds in a region beyond images and all other distinctive mental particulars" (Kelly & Grosso, 2007, p. 557). This characterization of archetypes can indeed be readily supported with reference to Jung, for example when he writes: "what we mean by 'archetype' is in itself irrepresentable, but has effects which make visualizations of it possible, namely, the archetypal images and ideas" (1947/1954/1969c, para. 417).

Second and more seriously, Kelly and Grosso argue that Jung was "systematically unable to come fully to grips with introvertive mystical experiences" because of his conviction that "the *ego* is the primary bearer of consciousness" (2007, p. 557). For Jung, as Kelly and Grosso understand him:

> [D]isappearance of the ordinary conscious ego during a numinous encounter with the collective unconscious can only mean that the conscious ego has been flooded,

> or contaminated, or engulfed by the inherently dark contents of the unknown part of the psyche. As a result, consciousness itself supposedly dims or contracts, ultimately to some sort of void, nothingness, or state of egoless unconsciousness . . . This kind of description of mystical states . . . , which follows from Jung's strong identification of consciousness with the ordinary ego, is flatly contradicted by the unanimous testimony of great mystics of all times and places that their highest states are not dim or *un*conscious, but if anything "*super*conscious." (p. 557)

There is also ample evidence in Jung to support this characterization of his position. Contrasting Western and Eastern styles of thinking, Jung (1939/1954/1969e) wrote in his "Psychological Commentary on 'The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation'":

> To us, consciousness is inconceivable without an ego; it is equated with the relation of contents to an ego. If there is no ego there is nobody to be conscious of anything. The ego is therefore indispensable to the conscious process. The Eastern mind, however, has no difficulty in conceiving of a consciousness without an ego. Consciousness is deemed capable of transcending its ego condition; indeed, in its "higher" forms, the ego disappears altogether. Such an ego-less mental condition can only be unconscious to us, for the simple reason that there would be nobody to witness it. I do not doubt the existence of mental states transcending consciousness. But they lose their consciousness to exactly the same degree that they transcend consciousness. I cannot imagine a conscious mental state that does

> not relate to a subject, that is, to an ego. The ego may be depotentiated—divested, for instance, of its awareness of the body—but so long as there is awareness of something, there must be somebody who is aware. (para. 774)

Later in the same paper, Jung describes yoga, "India's most important exercise," as "an immersion in what we would call an unconscious state" (para. 911). "It makes no difference," he asserts elsewhere, "whether [the yogis] call our unconscious a 'universal consciousness'; the fact remains that in their case the unconscious has swallowed up ego-consciousness" (1939/1968e, para. 520). Jung acknowledges that "a correct application of the methods described in the Pāli Canon or in the *Yoga-sūtra* [can induce] a remarkable extension of consciousness," but immediately adds that "with increasing extension, the contents of consciousness lose in clarity of detail," such that "consciousness becomes all-embracing, but nebulous; an infinite number of things merge into an indefinite whole, a state in which subject and object are almost completely identical" (para. 520).

Kelly and Grosso (2007) draw a contrast between Jung's model and that of Frederic Myers:

> The ingredient crucially absent from the Jungian model . . . is precisely Myers's central theoretical move, his repudiation of that identification [of consciousness with the ordinary ego] in favor of his [Myers's] own core conception of the Subliminal Self—"a more comprehensive consciousness, a profounder faculty, which for the most part remains potential only," but which expresses itself in

> greater or lesser degree as a function of fluctuating conditions in the organism. (pp. 557–558, citing Myers, 1903, Vol. 1, p. 12)

Later, in *Beyond Physicalism* (Kelly, Crabtree, & Marshall, 2015), Kelly (2015) acknowledges that in fact "Jung makes a structurally equivalent distinction between ego and Self [to that made by Myers]" (p. 545n20). However, the self that Jung postulates is still inferior to that postulated by Myers (and similarly by William James) in terms of its ability to account for mystical experiences. Writes Kelly:

> Jung's Self . . . lies within the collective unconscious, which later became the *unus mundus* . . . and unlike the Myers–James Subliminal Self it is inherently dark, unconscious, and inaccessible except by way of its symbolic products. Allegiance to this conception caused Jung to describe mystical experiences consistently, and in flagrant contradiction with the first-person reports, as a dimming or darkening of everyday consciousness as it becomes flooded or overwhelmed by unconscious contents. (p. 545n20)

The above criticisms of Jung's model are serious ones, not least as they have been made by attentive readers of Jung who are generally very favorable about his thought (Kelly & Grosso, 2007, p, 555; Kelly et al., 2007, pp. 334, 479, 481; Kelly et al., 2015, pp. 195–226). Similar criticisms have also occurred to other sympathetic scholars examining the ability of Jung's psychology to account for mystical states, especially as articulated in Indian philosophy (Coward, 1985; Kakar, 1994, pp. 268–272; Schipke, 2019; Whitney, 2017). In this chapter, I

assess to what extent these criticisms might be answerable. I do so in three stages. First, I look at Jung's own mystical visions experienced late in his life, which, I argue, contain elements of introvertive mysticism. Second, I consider how Jung's mature psychological model might be able to account theoretically for introvertive mystical experiences. I attend in particular to Jung's characterizations of the archetype of the self as well as to some late formulations of the relationship between the ego and the self, which suggest how experiencing "pure consciousness" might after all be compatible with Jung's claim that consciousness depends on the ego. Third, despite Jung's own reservations about philosophy, I argue that the apparent contradictions in his theorizing of mysticism can be resolved, or at least eased, by viewing his thought as underpinned by an implicit metaphysics of panentheism.

Jung's Mystical Near-Death Experience of 1944

Before looking at Jung's mystical near-death experience in more detail, it will be helpful to clarify further Stace's distinction between extrovertive and introvertive mystical experiences, as well as to supplement it with a more recent taxonomy. One of Stace's main aims in *Mysticism and Philosophy* was to identify a common core of mystical experiences. Accordingly, most of the specific features he identifies of extrovertive and introvertive experiences are shared. Thus the two types are both characterized by a sense of objectivity or reality; by blessedness, peace, and similar strong positive emotions; by a feeling of the holy, sacred, or divine; by paradoxicality; and by ineffability (1960/1973, pp. 131–132; Kelly & Grosso, 2007, p. 504). However, as already noted, the two types differ in how they characterize the experience of unity, which according to Stace represents "the very inner essence of all mystical experience" and is

deemed by mystics to be "in some sense ultimate and basic to the world" (1960/1973, p. 132). In extrovertive mysticism the unity is experienced as a "Unifying Vision" in which "all things are One" and there is "The more concrete apprehension of the One as an inner subjectivity, or life, in all things" (p. 131).[4] In introvertive mysticism, by contrast, the unity is experienced as "Unitary Consciousness; the One, the Void; pure consciousness" and as "nonspatial" and "nontemporal" (p. 131).[5] Kelly and Grosso also highlight what is in effect a third quality of introvertive mystical experiences implied by Stace (1960/1973, pp. 112–123), namely, a radical transformation from an ordinary sense of self to "a vastly amplified sense of self . . . that almost inevitably experiences itself as in a state of direct contact, or union, or identity with some reality variably conceived as a Universal Self, the One, the Absolute, the Ground of Being, or God" (Kelly & Grosso, pp. 507–508).

In order to avoid some of the confusions generated by Stace's claim that extrovertive experience is, as the term suggests, "always directed 'outward' through the sense organs" (p. 18), Marshall (2019) offers a slightly more differentiated taxonomy, which will be helpful when looking at Jung's experiences. He distinguishes between what he calls "This-worldly mystical experience," characterized as "mystical experience of the natural world or some region or content of it, whether or not experienced through the familiar senses" (p. 18); "Other-worldly mystical experience," characterized as "mystical experience of a world or some of its contents (e.g., places, beings, objects) fundamentally distinct from our familiar universe" (p. 19); and "No-worldly mystical experience," characterized as "mystical experience of something beyond all worlds, this-worldly and other-worldly, and all their contents" (p. 19). Marshall also highlights the possibility of "mixed experiences" (p. 20), which may be composed of elements or phases that are variously this-worldly, other-worldly, and no-worldly.

In the chapter-long account Jung gave of his mystical experiences in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963/1995, pp. 320–329) it is not hard to detect all the characteristics that introvertive mysticism shares with extrovertive mysticism in Stace's classification.[6] About the objectivity and reality of his experience Jung was in no doubt: "It was not a product of imagination," he wrote. "The visions and experiences were utterly real; there was nothing subjective about them; they all had a quality of absolute objectivity" (pp. 326–327). He was also explicit about the strong positive emotion associated with the experiences: "It was as if I were in an ecstasy . . . filled with the highest possible feeling of happiness" (pp. 324–325). That there was, more specifically, a feeling of the sacred is indicated by Jung's statement that, at the time of the visions, "Everything around [him] seemed enchanted" (p. 325) and "There was a *pneuma* of inexpressible sanctity in the [hospital] room," which "had a magical atmosphere" (p. 326). The paradoxicality that Stace noted as another typical feature of mystical experiences was expressed both by Jung's statement that his being stripped of his attachments gave him "a feeling of extreme poverty, but at the same time of great fullness" (p. 322) and by his claim that, within the experience, "The only thing that feeling could grasp would be a sum, an iridescent whole containing all at once expectation of a beginning, surprise at what is now happening, and satisfaction or disappointment with the result of what happened" (p. 327). Finally, Jung acknowledged the ineffability of his experience: he reported thinking during the experience itself that "This cannot be described; it is far too wonderful!" (p. 325), and he reflected afterwards that "It is impossible to convey the beauty and intensity of emotion during those visions" (p. 326).

Jung's mystical visions were for the most part not contentless, and for that reason would mostly fall into Stace's class of extrovertive experiences. However, some parts of the visions were almost certainly not perceived, as Stace stipulates, "using [the] physical senses"

(1960/1973, p. 61). This is where Marshall's distinction between this-worldly and other-worldly experiences becomes useful. Some elements of Jung's visions definitely involved his actual perceptual world, albeit transfigured, such as when he saw the hospital nurse who brought him his food as "an old Jewish woman, much older than she actually was, . . . preparing [for him] ritual kosher dishes" (1963/1995, p. 325). But other elements, such as his vision of being suspended in space and then approaching the stone temple on the meteorite (pp. 320–323), seeing the spirit of his doctor floating toward him "in his primal form as a *basileus* of Kos" (pp. 322–323), and above all the Jewish, Christian, and ancient Greek visions of the mystic marriage (p. 325) are better viewed as other-worldly. For in these parts of the experience Jung appears to have been seeing a visionary reality that was drawing on memories of sensory experience rather than a sensory reality that had been transfigured.

Most crucial, though, for addressing the claim that Jung's model cannot adequately account for introvertive mystical experience is the extent to which his visions may themselves include elements that Stace considered unique to such experience. Considering first the qualities of being nonspatial and nontemporal (Stace, 1960/1973, p. 131), we find various approximations to these in the form of altered spatiality and altered temporality. For example, despite Jung's use of numerous and often quite precise spatial and geographical references—"high up in space," "far below my feet," "Ceylon," "the subcontinent of India," "standing with my back to the Indian Ocean, as it were," and so on (1963/1995, pp. 320–321)—it seems clear that most of his experience did not take place in an ordinary spatial environment. Nor, at times, did he have a normal spatial relationship to the content of his visions. Of his vision of "the marriage of Malchuth and Tifereth," for instance, he writes: "I do not know exactly what part I played in it. At bottom it was myself; I was the marriage" (p. 325); and more generally, quoting Part Two of

Goethe's *Faust*, he describes how he "floated in a state of purest bliss, 'thronged round with images of all creation'" (p. 326). However, such altered spatiality is still far from being nonspatial. With Jung's descriptions of altered temporality, the approximation to being completely nontemporal gets much closer: "We shy away from the word 'eternal,'" he writes, "but I can describe the experience only as the ecstasy of a non-temporal state in which present, past, and future are one. Everything that happens in time had been brought together into a concrete whole. Nothing was distributed over time, nothing could be measured by temporal concepts" (p. 327). Even here, though, despite Jung's use of the word "non-temporal," a question mark remains over whether he is referring to complete transcendence of time, as Stace seems to require for introvertive mysticism, or to temporal inclusiveness, in which all time comes together, a kind of experience that can also be found in content-rich extrovertive mysticism.[7]

Jung's experience also evinces various approximations to the kind of radical transformation from an ordinary sense of self to the "vastly amplified sense of self" that characterizes the unitary consciousness achieved in introvertive mystical experience (Kelly & Grosso, 2007, p. 507; Marshall, 2005, p. 55), an experience, in fact, which for Stace (1960/1973) implies that "the individual self . . . must lose its individuality, cease to be a separate individual, and lose its identity because lost or merged in the One, or Absolute, or God" (p. 111). Jung (1963/1995) reports that during his vision of floating above the earth he had "the feeling that everything was being sloughed away; everything I aimed at or wished for or thought, the whole phantasmagoria of earthly existence, fell away or was stripped from me—an extremely painful process. Nevertheless, something remained . . . I consisted of my own history, and I felt with great certainty: this is what I am" (p. 321). Here Jung attains a greater or more essential self but still seems to have individuality. Later in his account, though, he does seem to be attempting to

articulate an experience not unlike Stace's merger with the One, when he describes how he felt that his identity was "interwoven into an indescribable whole," which he was yet able to observe "with complete objectivity" (p. 327).

However, we find the strongest indication of introvertive mystical experience in Jung's account when we turn to Stace's remaining and most important defining characteristic of such experiences, that is, their being experiences of "Unitary Consciousness; the One, the Void; pure consciousness" (1960/1973, p. 131). For Stace, this is in fact "the one basic, essential, nuclear characteristic, from which most of the others inevitably follow" (p. 110). The characteristic does not appear directly in the greater part of Jung's account, for his experiences were primarily visionary and ipso facto not void or contentless. However, there were repeated moments when he did seem to enter into a state describable in terms of Stace's nuclear characteristic. Jung (1963/1995) relates how while in hospital he would wake up each night around midnight "in an utterly transformed state" (p. 324). "I felt as though I were floating in space," he writes, "as though I were safe in the womb of the universe—in a tremendous void, but filled with the highest possible feeling of happiness" (p. 324). This womb-like void, paradoxically "filled" with happiness, precisely evokes the concept of the "vacuum-plenum" ("emptiness-fullness") that Stace uses to characterize the contentless nature of introvertive mystical experience (1960/1973, pp. 161–178; Kelly & Grosso, 2007, p. 507). As Stace notes, an experience of the void is necessarily nonspatial and nontemporal, and also presupposes complete loss or merger of individuality in the One; it is, in Jung's apt expression, "an utterly transformed state."

In the conclusion of their discussion of the problem of a universal core of mystical experience, Kelly and Grosso (2007) suggest that the "extreme developments" of introvertive mystical experience may be "most concisely encapsulated by the famous Vedic formula 'Sat–

Chit–Ananda'—pure being or existence, pure awareness or consciousness, and pure bliss, amplified without limit" (p. 510). We can note, finally, that each part of this formula is reflected in Jung's (1963/1995) account: he felt that he "existed in an objective form" (p. 322), he accessed "objective cognition" (p. 328), and he was "filled with . . . eternal bliss" (pp. 324–325).[8]

Jung's mystical experiences of 1944 were far from being his only visionary experiences. Above all, the earlier visions he experienced between 1913 and 1916 and recorded and reflected on in his now published *Red Book* (2009) were also remarkable in many ways and had a seminal influence on his subsequent theoretical and practical work.[9] However, it is only in the account of his 1944 experiences that we find strong indications of Jung actually having experienced introvertive mystical states. This may be significant inasmuch as all the passages cited earlier in which he can be construed as denying the possibility of introvertive mystical experiences date from before 1944.[10] That Jung's 1944 visions and experiences may have forced him to reconsider his theoretical preconceptions on this point is also suggested by his admission that, prior to his visions, he "would never have imagined any such experience was possible" (1963/1995, pp. 326–327).

Experience of the Self

While there are thus indications that Jung may have experienced introvertive mystical states, the question remains whether his psychological model is able satisfactorily to account for such states or is, as Kelly and Grosso imply, irremediably hamstrung by its assumptions that consciousness depends on the ego and we can only know archetypes as images. In addressing this question I

shall refer mainly to Jung's writings that were published after 1944, which include some of his most important works: "The Psychology of the Transference" (1946/1966a), "On the Nature of the Psyche" (1947/1954/1969c), *Aion* (1951/1968b), "Answer to Job" (1952/1969a), "Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle" (1952/1969i), and *Mysterium Coniuntionis* (1955–1956/1970a). Jung stated that his mystical near-death visions had given him "the courage to undertake new formulations" (1963/1995, p. 328). These new formulations—which included richer articulations of the archetype of the self and its relations to the ego, of the distinction between the archetype-in-itself and the archetypal image, and of the concepts of synchronicity and unitary reality (the *unus mundus*)—are natural places to look for resources within Jung's psychological model that might enable it to account for introvertive mystical states. Before directly addressing this issue, though, it may be helpful to provide a very brief overview of Jung's psychological model.

Jung (1963/1995) described the objectivity he experienced in his visions as "part of a completed individuation" (p. 328). Individuation is the core process of his psychology and signifies the process of becoming a unique self through the ongoing synthesis of consciousness and the unconscious. Jung articulated this process in a variety of ways, of which the following is a summary (based mainly on Jung, 1928/1966b and 1951/1968b, paras. 1–67).[11] For Jung, psychological development begins in childhood and early adulthood by one's developing and strengthening an ego in order to deal with the forces that assail one from the social world without and the psychic world within. Such an ego is inevitably one-sided, having been forced by the pressures of its inner and outer environments to develop and thereby make conscious some potentialities at the expense of others, which remain unconscious. In Jung's understanding, however, the unconscious has an innate drive toward expressing itself as a whole. An opposition

is therefore set up between consciousness, centered on the ego, and the unconscious. From the unconscious, contents emerge spontaneously—for example, in the form of dreams, fantasies, symptoms, and acausal convergences of events—in order to compensate and regulate consciousness in the interests of greater overall realization of the unconscious. This process of encounter between the ego and the unconscious, which can be facilitated by psychotherapy and the deployment of techniques such as dream interpretation, transference analysis, and active imagination, is marked by the appearance of certain typical themes or problems, which demand to be integrated and made conscious. Such typical themes, problems, or "archetypes" needing to be encountered and integrated with the ego include above all the dark side of one's personality (the "shadow") and the contrasexual element of one's personality (the "anima" or "animus"). When a sufficient level of integration has been achieved between ego-consciousness and these archetypes, there can emerge a new center of the psyche, a center no longer only of consciousness, as was the ego, but of both consciousness and the unconscious. This new center is what Jung called the self. The self is potentially there from the beginning as a kind of unconscious wholeness, but the aim of individuation is to realize it consciously. This is an extremely arduous, lifelong task, and it is full of pitfalls, not least the dangers of either the ego becoming excessively assimilated by the self or the self becoming excessively assimilated by the ego, both of which would result in pathological conditions, such as psychosis or inflation. "Conscious wholeness," Jung wrote more favorably, "consists in a successful union of ego and self, so that both preserve their intrinsic qualities" (1947/1954/1969c, para. 430n128).

The Archetype of Wholeness

The centerpiece of Jung's psychological model as well as the key to appreciating what he has to say about mysticism is the archetype of the self. He designated the self as "the archetype of orientation and meaning" (1963/1995, p. 224) and, perhaps most aptly, as "the archetype of wholeness" (1951/1968b, para. 351; 1952/1969a, para. 757; 1955–1956/1970a, para. 777). Like all archetypes, the self can give rise to innumerable symbolic expressions ("archetypal images"), the most important of which for Jung was the mandala, the sacred circle often represented as divided into quadrants (1934/1950/1968h; 1944/1968c, paras. 122–331; 1950/1968d; 1963/1995, pp. 220–224). He claimed that, for him personally, "finding the mandala as an expression of the self . . . was . . . the ultimate" (1963/1995, p. 222). He also stressed the nature of the self as a coincidence, complexity, or conjunction of opposites (*coincidentia/complexio/coniunctio oppositorum*) (see especially 1951/1968b, 1955–1956/1970a); and, with great significance for his entire psychology of religion, he repeatedly equated the self with the God-image (*imago Dei*), denying that images of the self and images of God could be distinguished in practice (1951/1968b, para. 42; cf. paras. 73, 320). Images of conjoined opposites and of deities, both Western and Eastern, are other symbolizations of the self commonly discussed by Jung.[12]

The Jungian analyst Warren Colman (2006), in an essay on Jung's concept of the self, writes: "The idea that mystical experience is the result of a shift in centre from the ego (which is the centre of consciousness) to the self (which is the centre of conscious *and* unconscious) is actually one of [Jung's] most brilliantly original insights, offering explanation of the very unexplainable quality of such experiences" (pp. 157–158). More specifically, the archetype of the self seems a promising resource for explaining introvertive mystical experience, inasmuch as all of the characteristics of introvertive mysticism identified by Stace are reflected in Jung's characterizations of the archetype of the self. Reflecting Stace's "sense of objectivity or reality,"

Jung describes the self as "the objectivity of the psyche" (1944/1968c, para. 32). Where Stace identifies the importance of intense emotional experiences such as "blessedness" and "peace," Jung (1963/1995) relates how, in his own case, the experiences that led him to understand that "the goal of psychic development is the self" gave him "stability" and "inner peace" and "satisfied [him] completely" (pp. 222, 224); while in the case of one of his patients (now known to be Wolfgang Pauli), a vision of the self in the form of a mandala of "the world clock" left the patient with "an impression of 'the most sublime harmony'" (1944/1968c, para. 308). Regarding Stace's "Feeling of the holy, sacred, or divine," this is reflected in Jung's frequent description of the "numinous" nature of archetypes (1951/1968b, para. 305), not least in the case of the archetype of the self (1951/1968b, para. 124; 1955–1956/1970a, para. 776). Paradoxicality, another characteristic of introvertive mystical experiences for Stace, regularly occurs in Jung's discussions of the self (1944/1968c, para. 20, 22; 1951/1968b, para. 124, 224; 1946/1966a, para. 532) and indeed occupies an entire chapter of *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1955–1956/1970a, paras. 36–103, especially paras. 36–39; cf. para. 4). Likewise, Stace's characteristic of ineffability appears regularly when Jung is discussing the self—through the use of epithets such as "indescribable," "inconceivable," and "irrepresentable" (1955–1956/1970a, para. 181, cf. paras. 771, 777, 787; 1944/1968c, para. 20; 1951/1968b, para. 171), and indeed "ineffable" itself (1955–1956/1970a, para. 771).

The preceding characteristics are those that introvertive mystical experience shares with extrovertive mystical experience. What about those that Stace considers distinctive to introvertive experience? Just as, according to Stace, introvertive mystical experience can have a nonspatial and nontemporal character, so too can experience of the self. The nonspatial or space-transcending character of the self is suggested, albeit using spatial terms, by Jung's paradoxical

statement that, “As an individual phenomenon, the self is ‘smaller than small’; as the equivalent of the cosmos, it is ‘bigger than big’” (1940/1968g, para. 289; cf. 1934/1954/1968a, para. 45). Regarding the self’s nontemporal character, he writes that “the spontaneous manifestations of the self, i.e., the appearance of certain symbols relating thereto, bring with them something of the timelessness of the unconscious which expresses itself in a feeling of eternity and immortality. Such experiences can be extraordinarily impressive” (1946/1966a, para. 531). We could also invoke here Jung’s concept of synchronicity, the principle of acausal connection through meaning (1952/1969i). The concepts of the self and synchronicity are deeply implicated with each other, and indeed were developed more or less at the same time, even though Jung only published about synchronicity much later than he published about the self (Coward, 1996; Main, 2019, pp. 68–69). As Harold Coward (1996) has clarified, synchronicity is “a fundamental principle underlying the archetypes and the way in which the opposites within and without the psyche interact” and as such is “a basic building block for Jung’s concept of the self” (p. 489). The relevance of the connection here is that one of Jung’s ways of considering synchronicity was as “a psychically conditioned relativity of space and time” (1952/1969i, para. 840). To Mircea Eliade he described synchronicity as a “rupture of time,” which “closely resembles numinous experiences, where space, time, and causality are abolished” (McGuire & Hull, 1978, p. 230). The inherently synchronistic nature of the archetype of the self would therefore account for its nonspatial and nontemporal character.[13]

Finally, there is Stace’s “Unitary Consciousness; the One, the Void; pure consciousness” (1960/1973, p. 131). Relevant to this is above all Jung’s statement about the mandala: that it “symbolizes, by its central point, the ultimate unity of all archetypes as well as of the multiplicity of the phenomenal world” (1955–1956/1970a, para. 661). A “central point” symbolizing an

"ultimate unity" of the archetypal and phenomenal worlds is certainly evocative of the concept of "the One." As for that One's also being "the Void," while the mandala is a geometrical image and to that extent not contentless, Jung was struck by the fact that many spontaneously produced modern mandalas had an empty centre, where traditionally there would have been a representation of a divinity or savior figure. In such cases, he writes, "The place of the deity seems to be taken by the wholeness of man" (1938/1940/1969g, para. 139). The particular mandala Jung had in mind in making this statement was Pauli's vision of the world clock, and Pauli himself endorsed the idea of the "empty centre," referring to it in his correspondence as "*Zentrum der Leere*" ("the center of the void") (Gieser, 2005, p. 190). In a letter to Pastor Walter Bernet (June 13, 1955), Jung (1976) elaborated, with implicit reference to mandalas:

> With increasing approximation to the centre there is a corresponding depotentiation of the ego in favour of the influence of the "empty" centre, which is certainly not identical with the archetype but is the thing the archetype points to. As the Chinese would say, the archetype is only the *name* of Tao, not Tao itself. Just as the Jesuits translated Tao as "God," so we can describe the "emptiness" of the centre as "God." Emptiness in this sense doesn't mean "absence" or "vacancy," but something unknowable which is endowed with the highest intensity. (p. 258)

The mandala, then, can symbolize the self as a One that is also a Void. So, too, can the self's expression through synchronicity, similarly by way of associations with Tao. "The realization of Tao has this quality of being in a sort of synchronistic relation with everything else," Jung is

recorded as saying during his *Visions* seminars of 1930 to 1934, adding: "that is the general mystical experience, the coincidence of the individual condition with the universe, so that the two become indistinguishable" (1988, p. 608; cf. 1935/1977k, para. 143). Regarding the void or the experience of the "vacuum-plenum," Jung, quoting the *Tao Te Ching* of Lao-tzu and commentary by Richard Wilhelm, suggests that synchronicity, like Tao, involves the experience of a kind of emptiness or "nothing" (1952/1969i, paras. 918–920). He notes in particular Wilhelm's explanation that, in Tao, "the opposites 'cancel out in non-discrimination,' but are still potentially present" (para. 921, quoting Wilhelm).[14]

This paralleling of Jung's characterizations of the archetype of the self with Stace's characterization of introvertive mystical experience suggests that Jung's model does have theoretical resources to account for introvertive mystical experience. However, the limitations flagged by Kelly and Grosso have not yet been directly addressed. The first of these limitations is that the experience of the archetype of the self seems, according to Jung's model, to be an experience only of an *image* of the self, however impressive such an image may be in terms of its associated characteristics and especially in its form as a mandala.

The *Unus Mundus*

In his later, post-1944 work, Jung stressed the distinction between the "archetype as such," on the one hand, and "archetypal image" or "archetypal representations (images and ideas)," on the other (1947/1954/1969c, para. 417). The archetype as such, which designates "the real nature of the archetype," is, Jung claimed, "not capable of being made conscious," it is "transcendent," and for this reason he referred to it as not psychic but "psychoid." The archetypal image, by

contrast, is how the archetype appears in consciousness. Such an image is necessarily inflected to some degree by the conditions of its manifestation, including the experiencer's personal, social, and cultural context, and hence the image expresses the archetype as such "only approximately." There can thus be innumerable different archetypal images expressing the same archetype as such, like "a set of variations on a ground theme." The archetype as such can be reasonably inferred on the basis of these manifestations, but it cannot be known directly (para. 417). In relation to the present theme, this seems to imply that the self cannot be experienced directly but only through its representations in consciousness, such as mandala images.

Influencing Jung's thought in distinguishing between archetypes as such and archetypal images was his lifelong, professed adherence to Kant's epistemology and its distinction between noumena ("things in themselves") and phenomena ("things as they appear").[15] But as several commentators have demonstrated, Jung's adherence to Kant was not as strict as he liked to claim (Bishop, 2000; de Voogd, 1984; Main, 2007, pp. 32–36). In particular, Jung does in practice seem to have allowed for the possibility of directly experiencing archetypes, at least at the culminating stage of individuation. This possibility is most pertinently expressed in the final chapter of *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1955–1956/1970a, paras. 654–789), where Jung frames the process of individuation in terms of the thought of the sixteenth-century alchemist Gerhard Dorn (ca. 1530–1584).

Dorn described the alchemical process as involving a series of three conjunctions. The first conjunction, which he called the *unio mentalis* ("mental union"), consists of a union of spirit and soul (paras. 664–676). Dorn considered that in the natural human state there was "an inextricable interweaving of the soul with the body, which together formed a dark unity (the *unio naturalis*)," variously referred to by the alchemists as "the *nigredo* [blackness], the chaos, the

massa confusa [confused mass]" (para. 696). Jung describes it as "The original, half-animal state of unconsciousness" (para. 696). However, through the operation of spirit—that is, through the discriminating power of "conscious and rational insight"—it is possible to extract the soul from its "enchainment" to the body, to free it from "its fetters in the things of sense," and thus "to set up a rational, spiritual-psychic position over against the turbulence of the emotions," a position "immune to the influences of the body" (para. 696). In Jung's psychological and psychotherapeutic terms, this "overcoming of the body" involves "making conscious and dissolving the projections that falsify the patient's view of the world and impede his self-knowledge" (paras. 696, 673). Acquiring greater self-knowledge (paras. 674, 711) brings neurotic symptoms "under the control of consciousness" and fosters "inner certainty" and "self-reliance" (para. 756).

The *unio mentalis* is, as Jung notes, "purely intrapsychic" (para. 664); it is a state of "interior oneness" (para. 670). As such, it leaves the body and the material world unintegrated. Indeed, as Jung elaborates, it results in a deep split of the unified spirit and soul from matter and the body (para. 664). Jung does not for this reason denigrate the process, which he considers "indispensable for the differentiation of consciousness" (para. 672). However, since it was the soul that animated the body, a consequence of the soul's separation from the body by its union with spirit is that "the body and its world" appear "dead" (para. 742). The problem confronting the alchemists was how to reanimate the body by reuniting it with the soul in a way that was not simply a return to the confusion of the *unio naturalis* (para. 742). This was the task of Dorn's second conjunction.

In Dorn's terms, the solution to the problem of how to reunite the *unio mentalis* with the body was the alchemical process resulting in production of the *caelum*, the "heaven," "the

kingdom of heaven on earth," "a heavenly substance in the body," the "blue quintessence" (paras. 691–963, 703–706, 757–758, 764). Dorn described various alchemical procedures for the production of this mysterious substance (paras. 681–685), but in Jung's interpretation such procedures are projected, symbolic expressions of the process of individuation and its facilitating method of active imagination (paras. 705–706); and the *caelum* itself, the product of the process, is a symbol of the self. As such, the *caelum* was the *imago Dei*, the image of God, which could also be symbolized by the mandala (paras. 716–719, 757) and by the central alchemical figure of Mercurius, who, as both "matter and spirit," symbolizes for Jung that the self "embraces the bodily sphere as well as the psychic" (para. 717) and indeed represents not only a "spiritualization" of matter but also a "materialization of the spirit" (para. 764).

Again, however, this is not the conclusion of the process. What the second conjunction achieved was "the representation of the self in actual and visible form"—through symbolic images—but this, for Dorn and for Jung, was "a mere *rite d'entreé*, as it were a propaedeutic action and mere anticipation of [the self's] realization" (para. 759). The final realization, "a consummation of the *mysterium coniunctionis*," could be expected "only when the unity of spirit, soul, and body [i.e., the self or "whole man" (para. 760)] [was] made one with the original *unus mundus* ['one world']" (para. 664). This was Dorn's "third and highest degree of conjunction" (para. 760).

The concept of the *unus mundus* refers to "the potential world of the first day of creation, when nothing was yet 'in actu,' i.e., divided into two and many, but was still one" (para. 760); it is the *mundus archetypus*, the "archetypal world" (para. 761). Jung is clear that the state of being united with the *unus mundus*, made one with the "one world," is not a case of "a fusion of the individual with his environment, or even his adaptation to it, but a *unio mystica* with the potential

world" (para. 767). He emphasizes that this potential world "is not the world of sense" (para. 767) but the "background of our empirical world," the "transcendental psychophysical background" in which the conditions of empirical physical and psychical phenomena inhere (para. 769), "the eternal Ground of all empirical being" (para. 760).

Such a "potential world" sounds very much like "the womb of the universe" Jung experienced in his visions (1963/1995, p. 324). As "the original, non-differentiated unity of the world or of Being" (1955–1956/1970a, para. 660), the *unus mundus* clearly must also lack differentiated content and in that sense be "contentless." What, then, about the possibility of directly experiencing it? Jung's description of the *unus mundus* refers to it as "the primordial unconsciousness" (para. 660), which suggests that by default it is remote from experience. He acknowledges, as he had previously, that it can be "indirectly experienced via its manifestations" (para. 660), above all as the mandala (par. 661). Strikingly, though, on this occasion, at the end of his life and in his last major work, Jung seems to go further and to affirm that the *unus mundus* can also be experienced directly. He writes of the third conjunction:

> Not unnaturally, we are at a loss to see how a psychic *experience* of this kind—*for such it evidently was*—can be formulated as a rational concept. Undoubtedly it was meant as the essence of perfection and universality, and, as such, it characterized an *experience* of similar proportions. We could compare this only with the ineffable mystery of the *unio mystica*, or *tao*, or the content of *samadhi*, or the experience of *satori* in Zen, which would bring us to the realm of the ineffable and of extreme subjectivity where all the criteria of reason fail. *Remarkably enough this experience is an empirical one* in so far as there are

> unanimous testimonies from the East and West alike, both from the present and from the distant past, which confirm its unsurpassable subjective significance. (para. 771, emphasis added)

In affirming an experience comparable to the highest unitive achievements described in Christian mysticism, Taoism, Yoga, and Zen Buddhism, Jung is surely also affirming the possibility of experiencing a "universal core" of mysticism, including introvertive mystical states as defined and characterized by Stace. In Jung's terms, such a state could be expressed as an experience not just of an archetypal image of the self but, rare but not impossible, of the archetype of the self as such.[16]

Yet difficulties remain. How does the *unus mundus* change from being a "primordial unconsciousness" to being a consciously experienced "One"? Often in mystical traditions this problem is resolved by assuming that the One is not unconscious but rather is supremely conscious and self-illuminating. What prevents that supreme consciousness from being realized is the ignorance or simply the activity of the ego, which as it were obscures the reality. When the ego is dissolved or appropriately stilled or aligned, then the supreme consciousness that was always there is disclosed. Such, for example, is the view expressed in Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* (Whitney, 2017). Jung, however, does not take this explanatory path. In fact, as Leanne Whitney notes, he explicitly rejected the idea when Erich Neumann, commenting on a draft of part of Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, suggested to him that, "if the Self contemplates you as the ego, then the Self is not unconscious" (Whitney, 2017, p. 22, citing Jung & Neumann, 2015, p. 344).[17] There will be more to say later about why Jung rejected the idea of the self's being intrinsically conscious and self-illuminating. But first, it is necessary to get a fuller sense of what

alternative explanation Jung can give of how experiences of the self, not least the union of the self with the *unus mundus*, can be conscious. In order to do this, we need to look more closely at the relation of the self to the ego and thereby address at last the second limitation of Jung's model identified by Kelly and Grosso: its inability to account for how mystical experiences can be conscious, even superconscious, while involving the disappearance of the ordinary conscious ego, on which, according to Jung, consciousness depends.

Self and Ego

In his earlier work, Jung tended to emphasize the difference between the ego and the self, stressing that the former was the center only of consciousness, while the latter was the center of the psyche as a whole, consciousness and unconscious together (1921/1971, para. 623; 1928/1966b, para. 400; 1944/1968c, para. 44). In his later work, while never contradicting this distinction (1955–1956/1970a, para. 133), Jung arguably softens it (Colman, 2006, pp. 160–161). Rather than presenting the ego as intrinsically different from the self—as different as the earth is from the sun (Jung, 1928/1966b, para. 400)—Jung sometimes now allowed that the ego could come to resemble the self. As he wrote in *Aion* (1951/1968b): "the more numerous and the more significant the unconscious contents which are assimilated to the ego, the closer the approximation of the ego to the self, even though this approximation must be a never-ending process" (para. 44). He also increasingly presented the ego as an integral part of the self. "The ego," he wrote, "is, by definition, subordinate to the self and is related to it like a part to the whole" (para. 9; cf. 1928/1966b, para. 274; 1941/1968f, para. 315); similarly "the integrated contents [of the collective unconscious] are parts of the self" (1951/1968b, para. 43). More

specifically, Jung sometimes referred to the ego as the "exponent" of the self (para. 350; 1942/1954/1969j, para. 391). Most suggestively of all, in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* he wrote that the ego "is an essential part of the self, and can be used *pars pro toto* [as a part that stands for the whole] when the significance of consciousness is borne in mind" (1955–1956/1970a, para. 133).

For Jung, then, the conscious self is a whole that comprises the ego and archetypes as its parts. Sometimes Jung refers just to the ego and the shadow; other times he refers to the ego, shadow, anima/animus, and collective unconscious (para. 129n66). However, since the shadow enfolds or mediates the anima/animus, and the anima/animus enfolds or mediates the collective unconscious, these are both shortcut formulations for the idea that the self is a whole that encompasses all the parts of the psyche (1951/1968b, para. 43). An important implication of such holistic formulations is that the ego is inherent in the conscious self. Indeed, since for Jung consciousness depends on the ego, it is by dint of the ego's being integrated within the self that the self can be conscious.

Before the integration of the ego with the shadow, anima/animus, and other archetypes of the collective unconscious, the self cannot be consciously experienced. Or rather, one could say that, from the perspective of a person predominantly identified with the ego, the self, if it is experienced, is likely to be experienced as contaminated with the nonintegrated contents of the shadow, anima/animus, and other archetypes. The self when contaminated with nonintegrated contents of the shadow would be experienced as dark, cognitively, emotionally, and ethically. The self when contaminated with nonintegrated contents of the anima/animus and of other archetypes of the collective unconscious would be experienced as dangerously alluring, overwhelming, and potentially destructive. In other words, the unconscious self would be

experienced in precisely the kinds of ways highlighted by Kelly and Grosso (2007, p. 557; cf. Kelly, 2015, pp. 545–546).

However, the more the ego is integrated with the shadow, anima/animus, and collective unconscious generally, the more the self can be consciously experienced without darkening and engulfment. In such conscious experience of the self, the ego is relativized, so that it is no longer the dominant center of identity, but rather is that part of the self that gives consciousness to identity (1947/1954/1969c, paras. 430–432). Such is the "Conscious wholeness" that consists, for Jung, in "a successful union of ego and self, so that both preserve their intrinsic qualities" (para. 430n128).

The actual transformation from an ordinary, ego-centered to a vastly amplified, holistic sense of self can be accounted for in terms of the connection between the self and synchronicity, and in particular Jung's claim that synchronistic experiences involve "getting rid of the incommensurability between observed and observer" so as to reveal "a unity of being" (1952/1969i, para. 960). With reference to divinatory procedures, Jung argues that the perspective of synchronicity provides a method of "grasping a situation as a whole" (para. 863) and "thinking in terms of the whole" (para. 924; cf. para. 961). If the division (or "incommensurability") has been removed between the observed object, in this case the grasped or thought-about "whole," and the observing subject, then this suggests how it can be that, as Jung says happened during his mystical visions, "One is interwoven into an indescribable whole and yet observes it with complete objectivity" (1963/1995, p. 327; cf. 1934/1954/1968a, paras. 45–46). Such a breakdown of the distinction between the observer and the observed could be described as an experience of the self in the paradoxical double sense of being both what the self as subject experiences and how the self as object is experienced.

Jung's psychological model is thus able to account for the transformation from an ego-centered sense of identity to a sense of identity centered in the self, as well as for how the self and all that it is capable of experiencing, including all the characteristics of introvertive mystical experience, can be conscious. On the one hand, this conscious self may be experienced as egoless, inasmuch as the ego, having been integrated and thereby decentered, no longer forms the primary locus of identity. On the other hand, the conscious self clearly is not strictly egoless, since the ego has been integrated and decentered rather than, as strict egolessness would require, dissolved or extinguished. For Jung, the remaining presence of the ego, even if completely unobtrusive, is essential if the experiencing self is to be conscious. It is important to be clear that this implies the dependence of the consciousness of the self on a factor, the ego, that is itself not an archetype but is "acquired, empirically speaking, during the individual's lifetime" (1951/1968b, para. 6); and that is, moreover, dependent on the body, inasmuch as it arises from and is sustained by a combination of somatic as well as psychic stimuli, from both inner and outer sources, many of them subliminal (paras. 3, 6). Why would Jung insist that consciousness depends on such a factor when the simple alternative of ascribing intrinsic consciousness to the self was available to him, and indeed had been expressly recommended by Neumann? To answer this question we need to consider Jung's implicit metaphysics.

Jung's Implicit Metaphysics

One of the most important findings of *Beyond Physicalism* was that theoretical frameworks—scientific or religious, modern or ancient, Western or Eastern—that are genuinely open to accommodating well-testified evidence of extraordinary phenomena tend to be underpinned,

explicitly or implicitly, by a panentheistic metaphysics (Kelly, 2015, p. 538; Main, 2015, pp. 252–253). Panentheism is a particular view, or family of views, of the relationship between God (the Divine, Ultimate Reality, the One, the Absolute, or however articulated) and the world (that is, the empirical world, the cosmos, the universe, nature). Composed of the Greek words "*pan*" = all, "*en*" = in, and "*theos*" = God, the term "panentheism" means literally "a doctrine ["*-ism*"] that everything exists in God." The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Trumble & Stevenson, 2002, p. 2080) defines it as "the belief or doctrine that God includes and interpenetrates the universe while being more than it." Just as with other views of the relationship between God and the world, panentheism is not a single, clearly defined position but rather a set of related positions. Michael Brierley (2008) considers a range of characteristics and varieties, and offers a helpful generic definition in terms of the following three premises: "first, that God is not separate from the cosmos . . . ; second, that God is affected by the cosmos . . . ; and third, that God is more than the cosmos . . ." (pp. 639–640). Otherwise put, panentheism sees the relationship between God and the world as one not of strict separation and transcendence (as in classical theism) or of strict identity and immanence (as in classical pantheism) but of mutual coinherence and harmony between transcendence and immanence.[18]

As I have argued in detail elsewhere (Main, 2017, pp. 1105–1111), Jung's psychological model, which clearly shares the openness to extraordinary phenomena, can also be framed in terms of panentheism.[19] Construing Jung's psychological model as underpinned by a form of implicit panentheism depends on Jung's effectively having equated the unconscious with God: "Recognising that [numinous experiences] do not spring from his conscious personality, [man] calls them mana, daimon, or God," Jung wrote, adding, "Science employs the term 'unconscious'" (1963/1995, p. 368; cf. p. 369)—a position that is as much a sacralization of

psychology as it is a psychologization of the sacred. With this equation between God and the unconscious in mind, we can note that Jung's statements about God, or the God-image, in "Answer to Job" (1952/1969a) and elsewhere, clearly depict God as not separate from the world, as affected by the world, and as more than the world (paras. 631, 686, 758); and correlatively his statements about the unconscious clearly depict it as not separate from consciousness, as affected by consciousness, and as more than consciousness (paras. 538, 555, 557-58; 1963/1995, p. 358; Main, 2017, pp. 1108–1110). Indeed, a panentheistic structure informs many, perhaps all, of Jung's signature concepts. For example, the transcendent archetype as such is not separate from, is affected by, and is more than the immanent archetypal image. In an open letter responding to what he saw as a mischaracterization of his work by Martin Buber (1878–1965), Jung even referred to the archetypes as "immanent–transcendent" (1952/1977j, para. 1505). Again, Jung's conception of the symbol links together the transcendent unknown and the immanent known (1921/1971, paras. 814–829) in a way that could be expressed as mutual coinherence. As I shall elaborate shortly, a panentheistic structure can also be discerned in the relationship between the self and the ego.

That Jung was operating within an implicit metaphysics of panentheism is evident from his discussion of the three conjunctions of Dorn. He discusses the conjunctions as processes that do, or might, take place at the cultural as well as at the personal level. Thus, he equates the first conjunction, the *unio mentalis* or union of the spirit and soul in "the overcoming of the body," with the achievement of Christianity (1955–1956/1970a, paras. 747, 773). This conjunction reflects the metaphysics of theism: the unified spirit–psyche is separate from the body (para. 747), not affected by the body (para. 696), and more than the body in the senses of being implicitly considered both more real and more valuable (para. 673). Culturally, this condition

results in an "apparently irremediable separation of spirit from nature and the body" (para. 664), a form of dualism in which "the body and its world" are experienced as "dead" (para. 742)—a description evocative of disenchantment (Main, 2017, pp. 1100–1104).

While Jung, like the alchemists, affirmed the value of the first conjunction, he also, like them, considered that "a new interpretation" of the archetypes was needed (1955–1956/1970a, para. 744), one in which "the world of natural bodies [would lay] claim to equality and hence to realization" (para. 747). For Jung, the processes of alchemy and its modern counterpart, individuation, were both attempts to establish such a renewed relationship between spirit and the body, and hence between God and the world—a relationship of union rather than of fundamental separateness. This "extremely difficult task of uniting the wayward physical man with his spiritual truth" (para. 774) was the second conjunction, and the goal it held out was essentially a panentheistic one: the spirit–psyche would be no longer separate from the body (paras. 764, 766), would be affected by the body inasmuch as in "sublimating matter" the alchemist also "concretized spirit" (para. 764), and yet would remain more than the body in that the resulting unity, the *caelum* or self, was "a transcendental principle" (para 711). Only through such a panentheistic relationship between God and world, or between spirit–psyche and body, would the third conjunction of union between the self and the *unus mundus* become possible (para. 770).

In the light of the importance that Jung, like the alchemists, attached to "the body and its world" in this implicitly panentheistic outlook, we can understand the deeper import of Jung's claims that consciousness depends on the ego. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung refers to the ego, in terms familiar from his earlier work, as "the indispensable condition for all consciousness, the latter being nothing but the association of an object or a content with the ego" (para. 129). But in the same breath he also describes the ego more enigmatically as "a dark

body" from which "our consciousness issues" (par. 129). He continues: "The ego, ostensibly the thing we know most about, is in fact a highly complex affair full of unfathomable obscurities. Indeed, one could even define it as a *relatively constant personification of the unconscious itself*, or as the Schopenhauerian mirror in which the unconscious becomes aware of its own face" (para. 129). Jung elaborates on the suggestion that the ego enables the unconscious to become "aware of its own face" with the following cosmogonic speculation:

> All the worlds that have ever existed before man were physically *there*. But they were a nameless happening, not a definite actuality, for there did not yet exist that minimal concentration of the psychic factor, which was also present, to speak the word that outweighed the whole of Creation: That is the world, and this is I! That was the first morning of the world, the first sunrise after the primal darkness, when that inchoately conscious complex, the ego, the son of the darkness, knowingly sundered subject and object, and thus precipitated the world and itself into definite existence, giving it and itself a voice and a name. (para. 129)

Rather than being as different from the self as the earth is from the sun (1928/1966b, para. 400), "the ego and its field of consciousness" are now described by Jung in alchemical terms precisely as "The refulgent body of the sun" (1955–1956/1970a, para. 129). Noting "the totality character of the sun-image" and "its frequent use as a God-image" (para. 130), Jung argues that, with this sun symbol, the alchemists were, albeit unwittingly, "establishing an intimate connection between God and the ego" and even "expressing an identity of God and ego" (para. 131).

Ever alert to the dangers of inflation, Jung tried to mitigate the grandiosity of these statements by claiming that, since they were expressions of the unconscious, "only unconscious nature can be accused of blasphemy but not the man who is its victim" (para. 131). In further mitigation, he points out that ideas such as these were "taken as self-evident" in India (para. 131). He contrasts "the Indian mind," whose "nature" it is "to become aware of the world-creating significance of the consciousness manifested in man," with "The West," which "has always emphasized the littleness, weakness, and sinfulness of the ego" (para. 131). He notes the Indian solution of "merging the ego, the personal atman, with the universal atman and thus explaining the ego as the veil of Maya" (para. 132). This parallel enabled Jung to claim that the insights he was articulating were "not the arbitrary opinions of deranged minds" but expressions of "the nature of the psyche itself," which operates in the same way "in East and West alike" (para. 132). Most interesting, however, is Jung's acknowledgment that in other writings he had presented a similar argument, "Only there it was not a question of ego but of the *self*, or rather, of the personal atman in contradistinction and in relation to the suprapersonal atman" (para. 133). He stresses that the implicit parallel he is now drawing between the ego and the personal atman does not contradict the parallel he drew in earlier work between the self and the personal atman. For, in the formulation quoted previously, the ego "is an essential part of the self, and can be used *pars pro toto* when the significance of consciousness is borne in mind" (para. 133).

This unexpected elevation of the ego into something cosmogonic, divine, and (at least to some extent) substitutable for the self can, I think, best be understood in terms of Jung's implicit panentheism. First, the partial substitutability of the ego for the self reflects the closer relationship between the world and God in panentheism than in theism. The radical difference between ego and self that was emphasized in Jung's earlier writings (1928/1966b, para. 400)

arguably reflects the theistic separation between the world and God, while the much closer relationship emphasized in his later formulations reflects the implicitly panentheistic perspective that was increasingly coming to inform his work.

Second, the connectedness and even identity of the ego with the divine reflects the nonseparation of the world and God in panentheism. This nonseparation is often expressed through the "panentheistic metaphor" or "analogy" of the world's being God's body (Brierley, 2004, pp. 6–7; Cooper, 2006, pp. 311–313). It implies that the world, as an aspect of God, is also divine. That is to say, all the processes and transformations associated with empirical reality, including birth, growth, flourishing, decay, and death, are also expressions of the divine. Thus, the ego, though acquired during the individual's lifetime, dependent on the body, and experienced as little, weak, and sinful, is nevertheless, as a part of "God's body," also divine.

Third, the cosmogonic significance that Jung ascribes to the ego reflects the importance that is ascribed to the world in panentheism. In panentheism the world is needed for God's conscious realization (Brierley, 2004, pp. 9–10). For some versions of panentheism, such as those based on process philosophy, God's self-realization need not have taken place, or be taking place, through this exact world, since the world is contingent; but some contingent world is necessary (Cooper, 2006, p. 183; cf. Göcke, 2018, pp. 177–182). Correspondingly, Jung came to believe that the empirical ego, contingent as it is and dependent on the body, is necessary for making conscious the self; and since the self for Jung is indistinguishable from the God-image, this amounted to the ego's bringing the world, and hence God's immanence, out of a state of unconsciousness into a state of conscious realization (1963/1995, pp. 370–372). In the light of this belief, or "explanatory myth" (p. 371), of Jung's, we can understand why he rejected

Neumann's suggestion that the self is intrinsically conscious. For Jung (1976), the contribution of human consciousness to the realization of the divine gave human life its meaning:

> Since a creation without the reflecting consciousness of man has no discernible meaning, the hypothesis of a latent meaning endows man with a cosmogonic significance, a true, *raison d'être*. If on the other hand the latent meaning is attributed to the Creator as part of a conscious plan of creation, the question arises: Why should the Creator stage-manage this whole phenomenal world since he already knows what he can reflect himself in, and why should he reflect himself at all since he is already conscious of himself? Why should he create alongside his own omniscience a second, inferior consciousness—millions of dreary little mirrors when he knows in advance just what the image they reflect will look like? (p. 495)[20]

In sum, just as in panentheistic metaphysics the world is essential for God's conscious realization, so, in the more psychological terms of Jung's thought, the ego, despite all its limitations, is essential for conscious realization of the self.

Finally, returning to the question of introvertive mystical experience, we can see, in relation to Jung's implicit panentheism, why it has been so difficult both to isolate the introvertive moment within his experience and then to explain it within his theory. Jung, it appears, experienced introvertive mystical states; his theoretical model ultimately has resources to explain such states; and, significantly, subsequent scholars have been able fruitfully to explore his work in relation to mystics for whom introvertive experiences were central (Dourley, 2014a;

Henderson, 2014; Stein, 2014). But Jung's own deep inclinations were not toward the cultivation of introvertive mystical states. When he discusses mysticism, his emphasis tends to be toward more visionary than contemplative, more "numinous" than "luminous," more "hot" than "cool" varieties (Schlamm, 2006; Smart, 1997, pp. 175–176, 189), even toward prophetic varieties (Kingsley, 2018). This probably reflects Jung's panentheistic orientation: he did not consider the transcendent pole of mystical experience, culminating in a sense of pure, egoless, contentless consciousness, more important than its immanent pole, in which the divine can manifest itself in and through creation.[21]

Jung framed the ultimate concern of his life and work in various ways, but in each way transcendence is balanced with immanence. One way he framed "the decisive question" was whether or not we are related to "something infinite" (1963/1995, p. 357). In this context, he argued (p. 358) that awareness of our limited nature is essential if we are to realize the "feeling for the infinite" and for "boundlessness" in our relationships: "In knowing ourselves to be unique in our personal combination—that is, ultimately limited—we possess also the capacity for becoming conscious of the infinite. But only then!"

Another way he expressed the aim of his works, as well as of the "images in which [he had] lived" was as "fundamentally nothing but attempts, ever renewed, to give an answer to the question of the interplay between the 'here' and the 'hereafter'" (1963/1995, p. 330). That Jung did not denigrate the limited "here" in favor of the boundlessness of the "hereafter" is powerfully shown by the myth of the afterlife that he developed, in which he speculated that "the souls of the dead" are "dependent on the living for receiving answers to their questions, that is, on those who have survived them and exist in a world of change" (1963/1995, p. 339); for "Only here, in

life on earth, where the opposites clash together, can the general level of consciousness be raised. That seems to be man's metaphysical task" (p. 343).

A third way in which Jung framed the "goal" of his life was as an attempt to find a myth that could fit humanity "meaningfully into the scheme of creation" (p. 371). The myth he found was, as we have seen, precisely the panentheistic one of how humanity's "reflecting consciousness," through reconciling "the opposites within the God-image," enables "the Creator [to] become conscious of His creation," thereby bringing about what is, Jung writes, effectively a "second cosmogony" (p. 371).

Fourth and last, Jung framed his ultimate concern as a quest for wholeness (1963/1995, p. 222; Smith, 1990). As expressed most magisterially in his last major work, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (1955–1956/1970a), this sought-after wholeness included not only the achievement of an "interior oneness" (para. 670), however spiritual (the first conjunction), but also the reuniting of that spiritual–psychic oneness with the body and its world, in order that "the insights gained should be made real" (para. 679) (the second conjunction). In a further stage, the resulting "unity of spirit, soul, and body" (par. 664) might then be united with the *unus mundus*, the "potential world," "archetypal world," or "eternal Ground of all empirical being" (paras. 760, 761) (the third conjunction). Experience of this ultimate unity or wholeness, which, as we have seen, Jung did believe possible, could include all the attributes of introvertive mystical experience, as identified by Stace, but it was also, crucially, a unity that did not erase but included "the multiplicity of the phenomenal world" (para. 661).

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Notes

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[1] Jung's full account of his mystical near-death experience appears in Chapter 10 of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963/1995, pp. 320–329). He also described the experience, in much more condensed form and with a few minor differences or additions of detail, in a letter to Kristine Mann (February 1, 1945), who was then dying of cancer (Jung, 1973, pp. 358–359). In her biography of Jung, Deirdre Bair (2004) discusses the context of the experiences (pp. 496–502). According to Bair, the content of the account of Jung's mystical near-death experiences

contained in the manuscript version of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (the so-called *Protocols*) "closely follows the [published] version in Chapter 10 of *MDR*, but the language is much more earthy and direct. The language of *MDR* has been not only refined but also interlaced with elaborations and clarifications that are not found in the *Protocols* or in any supporting documentation [consulted by Bair]" (2004, p. 811n3). While a certain caution may be needed regarding the weight given to particular expressions, Jung's account appears to be otherwise fairly reliable. For other discussions of Jung's mystical near-death experience, see Shamdasani (2008), Drob (2010, pp. 207–227), Dourley (2014b), and Stephens (2020, pp. 23–27).

[2] See, for example, Jung (1905/1977h, 1920/1948/1969f, 1934/1969h, 1938/1977c, 1948/1977i, 1950/1977d, 1950–1955/1977f, 1951/1969d, 1954/1977g, 1957/1977b, 1958/1977a, 1960/1977e).

[3] Marshall (2005) offers a fine critique of many aspects of Stace's typology of mystical experiences (pp. 147–167). Nevertheless, since experiences of the type Stace calls introvertive have been and continue to be reported, the question remains of whether and how Jung's thought could account for such experiences.

[4] A much richer list of typical features of extrovertive mystical experiences can be found in Marshall (2005, p. 27). Jung's account (1963/1995, pp. 320–329) includes almost all of the features mentioned there. The focus of the present chapter, however, is on those elements of Jung's experience that contribute to its qualifying as introvertive.

[5] As Marshall notes (2005, p. 56), Stace is inconsistent in including altered temporality or nontemporality as a distinguishing characteristic of introvertive experiences, for this quality can also be found in some of Stace's own most detailed cases of experiences that he designates as extrovertive.

[6] In this chapter I focus on the mystical rather than the near-death aspects of Jung's experience. Given my focus on introvertive mysticism, I also do not engage here in analysis of the rich content of Jung's experiences. Either of these alternative approaches to the material would warrant a study in itself.

[7] I thank Paul Marshall for drawing my attention to this distinction.

[8] As an addendum, it is also worth noting that Jung's experiences included qualities that are not emphasized by Stace but arguably should have been. Perhaps the most significant of these omissions by Stace is the lack of any reference to noetic quality. As Marshall (2005) comments, the omission is "a major shortcoming because heightened knowledge, understanding, or meaning is commonly reported" (p. 55). In Jung's experience, this quality is strongly emphasized. For example, there is his sense that, had he entered the temple on the meteorite in his vision, he would have learned the real meaning of his life (1963/1995, p. 322); his apparent foreknowledge of his doctor's imminent death (p. 324); and his explicit claim that his experience gave him access to a form of "objective cognition," which he says "lies hidden behind the attraction of the emotional relationship," is "the central secret," and alone makes possible "the real *coniunctio*" (p. 328).

[9] Jung conducted a seminar on visions between 1930 and 1934 (1988). The visions discussed were primarily the result of exercises in active imagination, as were Jung's own visions in *The Red Book* (2009).

[10] Jung's "Psychological commentary on 'The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation'" carries the date "(1939/1954)." However, the date "1954" in this case refers not to a revision but to the date of first publication of an essay written in 1939, as explained in an editors' note (Jung, 1939/1954/1969e, p. 475n1).

[11] For a helpful collection of secondary literature on Jung's thought, see Young–Eisendrath and Dawson (1997/2008). For contextual background, see especially Shamdasani (2003).

[12] For more on Jung and wholeness, see Smith (1990), Main (2019), and Main, McMillan, and Henderson (2021).

[13] Synchronicity is the principal concept that enables Jung's psychological model to account for extraordinary or paranormal experiences generally (Jung, 1952/1969i; Main, 1997, 2012). Demonstrating the full contribution of synchronicity to accounting also for mystical experiences, through its close implication with the concept of the self, would help to establish the continuity of paranormal and mystical phenomena in Jung's understanding (cf. Marshall, 2015, pp. 40–43). However, such a task is beyond the scope of the present chapter.

[14] Jung arguably also has in mind here what he had written in 1916 in the first of his "Seven Sermons to the Dead" (*Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*) (in Jung, 2009, pp. 346–348) about the *Pleroma* (the "fullness"). The sermon opens: "Now hear: I begin with nothingness. Nothingness is the same as the fullness . . . We call this nothingness or fullness the *Pleroma*. Therein both thinking and being cease, since the eternal and endless possess no qualities" (Jung, 2009, pp. 346–347). The scholar of Gnosticism Gilles Quispel reports that, much later, after Jung had presented his concept of synchronicity for the first time at the 1951 Eranos conference, he seemed "quite relieved and unusually good humoured." Quispel continues: "All his life he had rummaged in the collective unconscious, but now he had forced a breakthrough from the soul to the cosmos. He beamed when he told me: '*Es geht um die Erfahrung der Fülle des Seins*'; it is the experience of the fullness, the pleroma, of Being that matters" (1995, p. 19).

[15] A wry comment of Marshall's (2005) in relation to how Rudolf Otto's theorization of mysticism was hampered by his Kantian commitments applies equally to Jung: "Kantian

philosophy is not the most congenial environment in which to pursue a metaphysics of mystical experience." (p. 142).

[16] Harald Atmanspacher similarly draws on Jung's use of Dorn's three conjunctions to argue that unitary reality can be directly experienced (2021, pp. 157–161). So, too, does Murray Stein (2014) in his Jungian interpretation of the Zen ox-herding pictures, specifically in relation to the ninth picture (p. 124). For a description of what the perspective of a person united with the *unus mundus* might be like, see Jung's letter to Pauli of December 1956 (Meier, 2001, pp. 156–157).

[17] For Neumann's own Jung-influenced interpretation of mysticism, see Neumann (1948/1968) and Marshall (2005, p. 217).

[18] For fuller discussion of panentheism, see Atmanspacher and von Sass (2017), Biernacki and Clayton (2014), Brierley (2004), Clayton and Peacocke (2004), Cooper (2006), and Göcke (2018, 2019).

[19] Jung generally disclaimed that he engaged in metaphysics, which is why I have referred to his metaphysics here as implicit. In identifying panentheism as Jung's implicit metaphysics, I do not do so exclusively. Panpsychic emergentism (Cambray, 2009), process philosophy (Haule, 2011), dual-aspect monism (Atmanspacher, 2012, 2021), and objective idealism (Kastrup, 2021) have all been illuminatingly applied to Jung's thought. Each of these metaphysical models is, however, compatible with an overarching framework of panentheism.

[20] Neumann (Jung & Neumann, 2015) had in fact argued (18 February 1959) that the same outcome of rendering human life meaningful could be achieved on the assumption that the self was intrinsically, even if not absolutely, conscious: "If we humans are complexes of the divine unconscious, which he or it becomes conscious of while we make conscious our individuality with our human consciousness, the accent on the individual would be still greater without our

having to formulate the Self or God as unconscious" (p. 344). Jung responded (March 10, 1959) that his view of the unconsciousness of God was not just an idea but was based on "a most painful experience of almost immeasurable impact that cannot easily be debated" (p. 348).

[21] Neumann (1948/1968), influenced by Jung, places a similar emphasis on what he calls an "immanent world-transforming mysticism," in which the numinous is experienced in the world "everywhere and at all times" (p. 414). He contrasts this with what he calls "nihilistic uroboros mysticism," in which the mystic rejects the world (pp. 397–401; see also Marshall, 2005, p. 217).