

# INNATE AND EMERGENT: JUNG, YOGA AND THE ARCHETYPE OF THE SELF ENCOUNTER THE OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF AFFECTIVE NEUROSCIENCE

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**ABSTRACT:** Jung's individuation process, the central process of human development, relies heavily on several core philosophical and psychological ideas including the unconscious, complexes, the archetype of the Self, and the religious function of the psyche. While working to find empirical evidence of the psyche's religious function, Jung studied a variety of subjects including the Eastern liberatory traditions of Buddhism and Patañjali's Classical Yoga. In these traditions, Jung found substantiation of his ideas on psychospiritual development. Although Jung's career in soul work was lengthy, throughout, he aimed to steer clear of metaphysics. Patañjali's metaphysics, on the other hand, are straightforward, and his ontological commitments are evident. Because Jung's ontological commitments were not explicit, his theories, when seen through Patañjali's lens, confuse ontological questions with epistemic issues. As a result, when comparing the Jungian and Patañjalian notions of the Self, Jung's insightful ideas seem to be constructed upon a considerably shaky foundation. Yet, utilizing the exceptionally consistent ontological and epistemological commitments of Patañjali Yoga, as well as the objective measures of affective neuroscience, brings credence to the innate aspects and instinctual nature of Jung's archetype of the Self, and assists in answering the question of whether the archetype is innate or emergent.

**KEYWORDS:** Ontology; Pure consciousness; Religious function; Archetype; Patañjali; Jung

Many scholars in the field of Jungian psychology have utilized neuroscience as a means of exploring the validity of Jungian archetypes and to further develop archetypal ideas (Goodwyn, 2010, 2013; Hogenson, 2009; Knox, 2004, 2010; Merchant, 2009, 2016; Stevens, 1995). The present paper joins the efforts to investigate the innate and

emergent aspects of archetypes through interdisciplinary means and to examine whether the archetype-as-such is an intrinsic psychic structure organizing psychological life.

The present paper begins by offering a foundation for the current study via a quick review of Patañjali Yoga and the Jung–Yoga dialogue. Jung’s oeuvre on archetypes is then examined followed by an exploration of the archetype-as-such and the archetype of the Self through the lens of Patañjali’s Classical Yoga as well as the *tathāgatagarbha* texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Studies in affective neuroscience, which support the ideas of innateness in the work of Jung and Patañjali, are then reviewed.

Patañjali’s Classical Yoga philosophy is one of the six orthodox Hindu philosophies sitting right at the heart of Brahmanic culture in India. Patañjali systematized and developed the pre-existing traditions, including the Upanishadic and Buddhist systems, through his Classical Yoga text, the *Yoga Sūtra*; a body of work of less than 200 lines. The term yoga is etymologically derived from the verbal root *yuj*, which means yoke, join or harness. Most often the connotation of yoga is to unite or connect. Classical Yoga is both a method that joins and a revelation of a harnessed state. Yogic union is, in the simplest terms, the union of any splits whether they be, for example, mind–body, me–you, us–them, personal–impersonal, or transcendent–immanent. Healing these splits is a psychological and epistemological process. Then, once the splits are healed and there is full integration, Yogic union is freedom from suffering, whereupon pure consciousness abides in its true nature.

For the purposes of this research, what is most notable about Brahmanism, as a philosophical system, is its grounding in the notion of pure consciousness. Its nature is self-illuminating, self-knowing, and immutable (eternal and absolute). Alternative words for *brahman* are the Self, the Absolute, God, pure consciousness and Being-consciousness-bliss, however *brahman* really has no English equivalent. For this study, pure consciousness is the most suitable translation.

Jung spent a fair amount of time studying the liberatory psychologies of the East, and there he found comparable evidence of his theories on the psychospiritual development of the personality. Jung’s thoughts in regards to Eastern liberatory traditions in general, and yoga psychology in particular, are easily accessed in the *Collected Works*. Several scholars interested in the East–West dialogue have attempted to clarify the differences between Jung and Patañjali (Coward, 1995, 2002; Jordens, 1964; Stein, 2010; Watts, 1971; Whitney, 2017) and to find a means of bridging their approaches to consciousness (Whitney, 2018).

Looking closely at the work of Jung and Patañjali, it is evident that their psychologies hold many similarities. For instance, they are both concerned with the healing of human suffering, the religious function of the psyche, affect as an empirical

means of entering the psyche, the reconciliation of science and religious experience, and integrating what we are aware of with what we are unaware of. However, one critical aspect of the work in comparing Jung and Patañjali is to understand that Jung's Self does not map to the Brahmanic or Patañjalian Self, even though Jung believed that it did. The reason the Patañjalian and Jungian notions of Self do not map is because the Brahmanic Self allows for no metaphysical splitting of opposites. So in an ontological sense, in Brahmanism there can be no unconscious. While there was a Sanskrit term for the unconscious, *acitti*, utilized five times in the *Rgveda Samhitā* (ca. 1200 BCE), that word became obsolete in subsequent periods (Kenghe, 1976, p. 255). In Classical Yoga, *avidyā* is a term utilized epistemologically for what we misunderstand or cannot see.

Throughout Jung's vast body of work, he never declared his ontological commitments outright. Yet we can extract his ontological beliefs from his text. For him, both the ego and the unconscious are ontically real and ego-consciousness is seen to bring light to the darkness of "mere" being. In other words, reality is neither conscious nor self-illuminating. As noted earlier, the metaphysical underpinning for Patañjali's psychology is pure consciousness. Again, its nature is self-illuminating, self-knowing, singular, abiding in its own form, and immutable (eternal and absolute). The incongruence in their metaphysics resolves their psychologies to different paths with different goals. Therefore, in order to foster and continue the dialogue between Jung and Yoga, the underlying metaphysics of Jungian and Patañjalian psychology, as well as their notions of consciousness, need to be examined far more closely. This has been done in detail in *Consciousness in Jung and Patañjali* (Whitney, 2018), with only a quick summary being given here.

One avenue to continue moving the dialogue between Jung and Yoga forward is to look more closely at the Jungian archetypes in general, and the archetype of the Self in particular, through the lenses of the Eastern liberatory psychologies of Classical Yoga and Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as through the lens of affective neuroscience. Etymologically, archetype means primordial imprint. So it is an imprint that exists at the beginning of time. This is important because while the archetypal images may change culturally, if the archetype-as-such is imprinted at the beginning of time it has resonance to the whole species independent of culture, and is therefore prior to environmentally dependent cognitive development or formulations of representation. This is why Jung refers to the archetype-as-such as instinctual and equivalent to the pattern of behavior in biology. He often stresses he is not referring to inherited ideas but to inherited, instinctive impulses and thought patterns that can be observed in all living humans regardless of culture or race or location or time. This idea goes hand-in-

hand with Jung's ideas on the religious function of the psyche. Jung (1948/1976a) stated,

The archetype represents a mode of psychic behavior. As such, it is an "irrepresentable" factor which unconsciously arranges the psychic elements so that they fall into typical configurations, much as a crystalline grid arranges the molecules in a saturated solution. The specific associations and memory images forming these configurations vary endlessly from individual to individual; only the basic pattern remains the same. (pp. 483–484 [*CW* 18, para. 1158])

In Jung's psychology, it is the archetype of the Self that holds great significance. For him, the whole range of psychic phenomena, the unity of the personality as a whole, is represented by his concept of the archetype of the Self, the subject of one's total psyche. The Self represents the whole human, which in addition to ego-consciousness also includes the unconscious. As mentioned earlier, postulating a Self that has unconscious elements is an area of significant difference from the Classical Yoga tradition. For Patañjali, there can be absolutely no metaphysical splitting, no ontic duality.

There are three main points about the Jungian Self that are important to emphasize. First, for Jung (1916/1953), the beginnings of our whole psychic life seem to be inextricably rooted in the Self and all our highest and ultimate purposes seem to be driving towards it (p. 236 [*CW* 7, para. 399]). Secondly, for him, the Self seems to be completely outside the personal sphere (implying inherent dualism,) yet is the God within us. Thirdly, he refers to the Self as the archetype of the God-image. If it appears at all, the Self does so as a core element or theme of religious mythology. To reiterate: the archetype-as-such is the primordial imprint within our whole species, and the archetype of the God-image appears as religious myths and symbols differently across cultures, space, and time.

Īśvara is the Supreme Lord, or God, referred to in Patañjali's *Yōga Sūtra*. Devotion to Īśvara is one of the paths of Classical Yoga, leading to Yogic union. Īśvara is untouched by afflictions, acts, their traces, and their results or fruits—and therefore may be akin to pure consciousness as a God-image. Knowledge of omniscience reaches its full development through the surrender to Īśvara. Īśvara is unconditioned by time and teaches even the most ancient teachers, including all Buddhas.

Since there are many depictions of the incarnated Buddhas, and due to the fact that Buddhism is being imported to the West as rapidly as yoga, adding Buddhism into the present dialogue is helpful. By combining Buddhist and Yogic scripture, we can get an even closer Eastern comparison to the Jungian archetype-as-such.

The yoga mentioned and developed in the early phases of the Brahmanic tradition would have been known to the Buddha of the 5th century BCE, and would have influenced his thought. In fact, Sanskrit scriptures referred to the Buddha as a yogin

(Whicher, 1998). Buddhism and Yoga share several similarities. For instance, both systems view external reality as a never-ending flow of interdependent, interconnected phenomena. However, in distinction to Yoga, in mainstream Buddhism consciousness does not have eternal, essential existence. Absolutism is consistently rejected. Yet, in contradistinction to mainstream Buddhism, within the tradition of Mahāyāna Buddhism, absolutism is recognized. In the *tathāgatagarbha* texts (where *tathāgatagarbha* means ‘buddha-womb’ or ‘buddha-embryo’), which are derived from a lecture the Buddha gave on the last day of his physical life on earth, it is recorded that the Buddha declared there is a true Self. The Self, in this context, is described as reality, eternal, stable, sovereign (self-governing), untransforming, and true. This true Self is often referred to as the Buddha principle or Buddha element. This Buddha principle, just like the true nature of a Yogi, although present in all at all times, is obscured by the mental phenomena that limit and distort pristine awareness. Nevertheless, regardless of any limitations or distortions, all beings have the possibility of attaining Buddhahood, because there is a ‘buddha-seed’ inherent within all sentient beings.

When looking at the similarities and differences between Yoga and Buddhism the *tathāgatagarbha* texts are critical because, as just mentioned, in postulating an unconditioned, unchanging, and eternal reality, the *tathāgatagarbha* discourses bring absolutism into Buddhism (King, 1995) and therefore, into alignment with the absolutism of Brahmanic tradition and Yoga philosophy. Therefore, it is not really a stretch to say that Buddhahood is another way of explicating the full realization of a yogi.

In the broad strokes of this nascent research, exploring the connections between the Jungian archetype-as-such, Patañjali’s use of Īśvara, and Mahāyāna Buddhism’s notion of the *tathāgatagarbha* is informative. The *tathāgatagarbha*, or Buddha womb, means that each being is naturally inscribed with complete knowledge of a Buddha, Buddha qualities and virtues, as well as the potential to realize this. Īśvara is a principle of manifestation unconditioned by time, which teaches even the most ancient teachers. Both Īśvara and the Tathāgata are unchanging, stable and eternal. While not described quite the same, the Jungian archetype-as-such holds several similarities to the Īśvara principle and Mahāyāna Buddhism’s notions of a Buddha womb and Buddha seed.

The Jungian archetype-as-such is an inherited mode of psychic functioning, a pattern of behavior, which correlates to the God-image yet is a purely biological aspect. Jung (1949/1976b) explained that the human inherited mode of psychic functioning corresponds “to the inborn way in which the chick emerges from the egg, the bird builds its nest, a certain kind of wasp stings the motor ganglion of the caterpillar, and eels find their way to the Bermudas” (p. 518 [CW 18, para. 1228]). In another paper,

Jung (1946/1972) explained this notion in more detail,

Every instinct bears in itself the pattern of its situation. Always it fulfills an image, and the image has fixed qualities. The instinct of the leaf-cutting ant fulfills the image of the ant, tree, leaf, cutting, transport, and the little ant-garden of fungi. If any one of these conditions is lacking, the instinct does not function, because it cannot exist without its total pattern, without its image. Such an image is an *a priori* type. It is inborn in the ant prior to any activity, for there can be no activity at all unless an instinct of corresponding pattern initiates and makes it possible. This schema holds true of all instincts and is found in identical form in all individuals of the same species. The same is true also of man: he has in him the *a priori* instinct-types which provide the occasion and the pattern for his activities. (p. 201 [CW 8, para. 398])

Notably, for Patañjali, the mind also has an instinctual basis. Therefore, in Jung's exploration of the archetype-as-such, there is incredible similarity to both Patañjali Yoga and the *tathāgatagarbha* idea that the Buddha qualities, and instincts to manifest Buddha Nature, are inherent in all beings. Unlike the Buddha and Patañjali however, in the end Jung did not feel that liberation from the suffering of the world was possible. He felt that the intuitive function of Buddha and Patañjali had overreached itself—that they were speculating.

Yet, Jung's divergence from the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha* can be detected in his writings where we find conflation between the ontic and epistemic—the exact place where his psychology weakens from the point of view of Patañjali's ideas (Whitney, 2017, 2018). Because Jung's God was unconscious, he could not rest in it, causing him confusion between ontological questions and epistemic issues. That is why individuation never stops, and why Jung never speaks to the stillness that both Yoga and Buddhism do. In Jungian psychology there is no deep rest because humans are making God, and the world, conscious. Whereas in Yoga, eternal Being is the luminescent ground of all becoming, in Jungian psychology, there is no stable ground.

Discerning between the ontic and epistemic and Being and becoming is a critical point in Yoga psychology; therefore exploring Jung's literal divergence from the notion of the *tathāgatagarbha* a bit further is helpful. Jung kept separate what he felt to be the epistemically accessible and the ontically inaccessible. In Jung's (1916/1953) words, the Self is “a construct that serves to express an unknowable essence which we cannot grasp” because it is transcendent, unavailable to our typical modes of comprehension (p. 236 [CW 7, para. 399]). In Jung's view, the possibility of our ever being able to reach even approximate consciousness of the Self is slim because there is an indeterminate and indeterminable amount of material in the unconscious which belongs to the Self's totality and cannot be known by ego-consciousness. Fair enough. Objectively, or

physically, our microscopes and telescopes prove this. No matter what lens we seem to take to the world, the phenomena get smaller or larger, accordingly.

However, this line of thinking reduces human knowledge to that which can only be objectified. Because consciousness for Jung is that which is associated to an ego, his notion of consciousness is fundamentally dualistic, conceptual, and linguistic. This approach to consciousness is different from Patañjali's approach. While consciousness is conceptual and linguistic in Patañjali's world too, Patañjali also speaks to nonconceptual and nonlinguistic consciousness.

In Classical Yoga when there is appropriation, or enmeshment of consciousness and the "I-sense," there is a lack of discernment that can be characterized in at least three ways: a lack of discernment between ontic reality and psychological experience; between pure consciousness and the contents of consciousness; and between the unchanging reality and the changing world. Without this discernment, our innate embodied knowing of the true nature and power of pure consciousness—which is singular, eternal, and absolute—cannot be realized.

Mahāyana Buddhism also shows nondual sensibilities. For example, by explicating the *tathāgatagarbha*, the Buddha revealed that the Buddha's inseparable qualities are present in all beings as their True Nature. Since the action of Buddha Nature is spontaneous and inseparable from the action of the Enlightened Buddha, there is continuity between the Buddha Nature of the Enlightened Buddha and that of so-called ordinary beings (Hookham, 1991, p. 54). This action is dynamic and instinctual. Buddhist scholar S.K. Hookham's *The Buddha Within* has clarified this point well.

The teachings of the Buddha awaken an Awareness that is somehow inherent within beings. It is because that Awareness is their nature that they recognize truth when they hear it. It is why they develop an aversion to their mundane, conceptual world so fraught with suffering. If they did not have that inner Awareness with which to compare their present state, neither aversion nor aspiration to freedom from it could arise. (Hookham, 1991, p. 54)

The action of Buddha Nature is nondual, dynamic, and instinctual.

Taking the *tathāgatagarbha* and the Jungian archetype-as-such through Patañjali's lens is even more educative. For Patañjali the mind has an instinctual basis and pure consciousness is single and absolute. In fact, the decisive point of Classical Yoga is that resting in the true nature of pure consciousness is aloneness or resting upon oneself, *kaivalya*. This freedom from the divisions and bounds of any form of dualism allows Patañjali to show his followers how pure consciousness can be embodied, fully and completely, subsequently uniting the mind-matter dualism. Another way to state this entirely is to say that for Patañjali knowledge is structured in pure consciousness—knowledge is imprinted in any matter, at all levels of reality, the moment it begins to

materialize. Therefore, as humans, we can know pure consciousness because we are pure consciousness. In fact, we can know nothing else as the reality of Being, because there is no other. So while objectification may be a mental function, that does not mean that ultimate reality can be objectified. For Jung, nondual consciousness falls into the schema of the unconscious. In Jungian-oriented depth psychology, contrary to Patañjali's Yoga psychology, pure consciousness cannot be known.

To highlight this disagreement between Jung and Patañjali, looking closely at one of Jung's remarks in regards to Yoga, and to what Jung termed universal consciousness, is helpful. Jung (1938/1980) stated,

One hopes to control the unconscious, but the past masters in the art of self-control, the yogis, attain perfection in *samādhi*, a state of ecstasy, which so far as we know is equivalent to a state of unconsciousness. It makes no difference whether they call our unconscious a "universal consciousness;" the fact remains that in their case the unconscious has swallowed up ego-consciousness. They do not realize that a "universal consciousness" is a contradiction in terms, since exclusion, selection, and discrimination are the root and essence of everything that lays claim to the name "consciousness." "Universal consciousness" is logically identical with unconsciousness. (pp. 287–288 [*CW* 9i, para. 520])

Jung goes on misunderstanding the ontic reality of pure consciousness and talks only of the contents of consciousness. He stated,

It is nevertheless true that a correct application of the methods described in the Pāli Canon or in the *Yōga-sūtra* includes a remarkable extension of consciousness. But, with increasing extension, the contents of consciousness lose in clarity and detail. In the end, 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. This is all very beautiful but scarcely to be recommended anywhere north of the Tropic of Cancer. (Jung, 1938/1980, p. 288 [*CW* 9i, para. 520]).

This quote clearly elucidates Jung's conflation of ontology and epistemology. Just as the leaf-cutting ant needs all the right conditions for its instinct to function, the seed of our Buddha Nature needs to rest and surrender into the self-illuminating, self-knowing, immutable nondual nature of ontic reality in order to flourish.

Having looked closely at the Jungian archetype-as-such through the lens of Patañjali's Classical Yoga, as well as the *tathāgatagarbha* texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, is it possible to further the study through the objective measures of brain science? As noted at the beginning of the present paper, the psychologies of Jung and Patañjali are similar in that the both point to affect as an empirical means of entering the psyche. Furthermore, both Jung and Patañjali mobilize the release of affect as a means of



healing and psychospiritual development. Can the research results of neuroscience help us envision whether the archetype-as-such is an innate psychic structure organizing psychological life?

Our innate, nondual nature as it relates to the archetype-as-such may best be expressed contemporaneously through the research results of affective neuroscience, which reveals that primary-process, prepropositional emotional energies seem to have a mind of their own. Early in development they “exist in the brain independent of the enormous complexities of learning, as well as of associated cognitive processes with which they always interact later in real life” (Panksepp, 2009, p. 5).

While Jung undoubtedly valorized the image as the foundation of psychic experience, his work often pointed behind and beyond it. While the role of the archetypal image in Jung’s thinking certainly cannot be overemphasized, it is important to note that through Patañjali’s lens the image becomes inhibitory to the liberatory aspects of psychospiritual experience. Archetypes apply as much to the body as they do to the mind, with affect a seeming bridge between mind–body duality, both individually and collectively.

In summarizing what has been discussed thus far; for Jung the archetype was both innate and emergent. The archetype-as-such, for him, was like the pattern of behavior in biology whereas the archetypal image would emerge differently across epochs and cultures. Separating Jung’s archetype of the Self from his theory on the collective unconscious is impossible, they go hand-in-hand. For Jung, the unconscious was ontic. It was real. Yet, throughout Jung’s vast body of work, he never declares his ontological commitments outright. In light of this imprecision, ontology and epistemology are conflated for him, greatly weakening his psychology from the point of view of liberation and full embodiment. Through the lenses of both the *tathāgatagarbha* and Classical Yoga, any theory on an ontically real unconscious which is neither self-illuminating nor self-knowing is incorrect, a distortion of perception. Yet Jung’s work unintentionally and unknowingly pointed toward nonduality and pure consciousness at almost every turn.

Jung and Patañjali both knew that positive and negative affects code for life supporting and life-detracting activities and environments respectively. The current research in neuroscience proves these aspects of both Jungian and Patañjalian psychology to be true (Panksepp, 2009). Even though Patañjali’s *Yōga Sūtra* is less than 200 lines, he was even more explicit on this point than Jung. Patañjali was succinct in explaining that the nadir of affect is grief and that our ability to experience joy is an all-important marker to whether the nondual force of life is comfortably situating in our bodies. Affective neuroscience research, therefore, while certainly utilizing objective

measures, seems to be revealing aspects of nature that are beyond dualistic conception and offering Jungian psychology a possible means of reconciling science and religious experience for the West. For the East, this is a reconciliation Patañjali's oeuvre made all on its own due to the radically empirical nature of its methodology.

In conclusion: Jung and Patañjali both knew that our mentation revolves around an affectively rich core, and the objective measures of brain science have now proven that. Utilizing affective neuroscience to move the Jungian and Patañjalian notions of psychospiritual experience forward into current day empirical measures might be a valid means of reconciling science and religious experience. As prominent affective neuroscience pioneer Jaak Panksepp (2009) stated, "Although debatable, I suspect the biological 'soul' or 'core self' is a coherent and completely neurobiological process, barely studied, with its epicenter running deep in brain–mind evolution" (p. 23). Panksepp (2009) further stated, "Scientifically, an understanding of the 'whole' psychic apparatus can only be achieved gradually through a thorough understanding of both neuronal and psychological 'parts'—at both affective and cognitive levels of mind–brain organization" (p. 26). This is no doubt true from the point of view of orthodox science and the scientific side of the science–religion debate. However, the religious experience that Jung and Patañjali both point to will never be experienced from reading a research report. But, yet, that is what makes affective neuroscience so appealing from the point of view of consciousness studies. To really know consciousness in an ontological sense we must move beyond the thoughts and images into the lived experience of the body.

Jung was a pioneer, no doubt. Nevertheless when looking at Jungian-oriented depth psychology through the lens of Classical Yoga, Jungian-oriented depth psychology breaks down at points of imprecision where ontology and epistemology are conflated. Classical Yoga psychology is a much stronger and logically consistent psychology. In spite of that, the similarities between Jung and Patañjali also offer much substance to the East–West dialogue and the need to bridge Eastern and Western approaches to consciousness.

For psychology to flourish, in the ways in which Jung and Patañjali both envisioned—where numinous experience is tended and the psychospiritual realized—it is imperative that we have the right framework. In regards to emergence and the archetype of the Self, this paper formulates introductory material aimed at expressing the innateness of the archetype-as-such in biological systems in its most basic conceptual form—allowing for increased theoretical discernment between what is innate and what is emergent and, consequently, allowing for increased theoretical discernment between Being and becoming.

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