Enstasis and *Ecstasis*: A Critical Appraisal of Eliade on Yoga and Shamanism

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In his works *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* and *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, the Historian of Religions Mircea Eliade developed a distinction between shamanic and yogic phenomena based upon what he characterized as *enstatic* and *ecstatic* types of religious practice and experience. This distinction has had a considerable impact in the study of South Asian religion, where *enstasis* has been used extensively to interpret Hindu and Buddhist meditation. The primary goal of this paper is to demonstrate some of the problems that arise from the application of Eliade's *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction and to bring more subtlety to the analysis of religious practice and experience in this context.

The *Enstatic* and *Ecstatic* as Categories in Eliade's Thought

In two of his most famous works, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* and *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, the Historian of Religions Mircea Eliade attempts to elucidate the distinctiveness of shamanic and yogic typologies of religious belief and practice. Through this process, Eliade notes at several points what he believes is a fundamental distinction between shamanic and yogic practice and experience that can be understood as the difference between *enstasis* and *ecstasis*, or *enstasy* and *ecstasy*, respectively "standing within" and "standing without." This distinction has become part of the foundation of scholarship in both the domains of the academic study of yoga and shamanism far beyond the sphere of Eliade's own work. The controversial issue of determining the primary characteristics of shamanism is framed by the context of Eliade's emphasis on ecstasy as the definitive component of shamanism as opposed to possession and other phenomena. In the case of the study of meditation (*dhyāna*) in the Hindu and Buddhist contexts, the terms *enstasy*, *enstasis*

or *enstatic* have become an important part of the terminology of both Hindu and Buddhist studies. With its roots in the comparison of yoga and shamanism, Eliade's *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction has found its way into the language of the phenomenological dimension of the study of religion and into the language of Religious Studies more broadly. The goal of this paper is to provide a closer examination of these terms that may lead to a more sophisticated understanding of Eliade's phenomenological theory and the question of its ongoing utility in the study of religion.

In particular, this paper will explore Eliade's notion that the ultimate goal of shamanism is a type of visionary experience that involves the association of mythical beings and their realities, in contrast to the more abstract goal of release from conditioned reality that is characteristic of Indian forms of yoga, most notably Classical Yoga. As well as re-examining Eliade's theory in this regard, a number of other issues not found in Eliade's work will be considered that may further illuminate this relationship and demonstrate other important possibilities for the yoga-shamanism comparison. These include examples of initiatory types of phenomena associated with Buddhist meditation, the junction of *enstatic* and *ecstatic* modalities in the development of meditation in Buddhist and Hindu yoga, and the possibility of viewing the yogic practitioner as a sort of psychopomp akin to the shaman. It will be demonstrated that the *enstatic* and *ecstatic* modalities can be better seen as being dynamically related rather than mutually exclusive, and that Eliade's distinction is useful but in need of further elaboration and specificity. *Enstatic* and *ecstatic* phenomena have an intimate relationship with what can be called *numinous* and *cessative* modalities or conceptions of religious practice and experience, demonstrating both continuity and distinction in the yoga-shamanism relationship. These dimensions have a deep connection in how they tie together the psychological and social realities in the lives of religious practitioners, and relate both to questions of cosmology and divinity. It will be suggested that Eliade's phenomenology may hold much promise when brought into dialogue with more recent sociological approaches to the study of shamanism and ecstatic religion more broadly.

Religious Specialization in Comparative Analysis

Eliade states that shamanism can be said to possess four primary elements. These include: an initiation in which the adept faces death, dismemberment, and possibly a descent into the underworld and an ascent into heaven; an ecstatic journey in which the shaman acts as healer or psychopomp; a "mastery of fire" in which the shaman proves himself capable of withstanding some type of ordeal; and an ability to change form, to "become invisible" and to demonstrate other magical powers (Eliade 1990:320). The primary factor among these, according to Eliade, is *ecstasy*, the ability to leave the body in order to journey to otherworldly realms,

and to master the world of spirits, ultimately qualifying the shaman as a "specialist in the sacred."

> The essential and defining element of shamanism is ecstasy—the shaman is a specialist in the sacred, able to abandon his body and undertake cosmic journeys "in the spirit" (in trance) (320).

The idea of the shaman as specialist leaves the door open for a broad range of comparisons for Eliade, and presents the implicit idea of specialization as a cross-cultural phenomenon. Along these lines, I. M. Lewis, working in the domain of ecstatic religion, and particularly shamanism, has commented on the significance of understanding and unpacking the notion of shamanism in order to come to a greater comparative understanding of what he terms "universal religious roles" (Lewis 1995: 121). Although Lewis and Eliade differ substantially in defining exactly what constitutes the specialization of the shaman, it is clear that they both believe that "religious specialization" or "profession" has cross-cultural validity. Similarly, Birgitte Sonne has asserted that a shaman is a "professional ecstatic," recognized as such on the basis of his or her ability to carry out an ecstatic ritual that consists of entering into dissociative states that have cultural and traditional analogues (Sonne 1982). Though this definition differs substantially with Eliade's with respect to the interpretation of the ecstatic, it nevertheless shares much with Eliade with regards to the sense of religious profession and the validity of profession as an authoritative concept in both the religious and secular context.

The notion of religious specialization and its consequences provide the foundation for Eliade's comparison of the shamanic type of religious specialization and that of yoga. The *yogin*, or yoga practitioner, as a specialist in the sacred is akin to the shaman as a religious ideal, an example of how religious ideas are concretely embodied. According to this interpretation, the *yogin*, like the shaman, is understood to embody the truths of his or her tradition (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism etc.) and therefore exemplifies the living reality of its philosophy, mythology, and so on. Both the shaman and the *yogin* are understood in their respective traditions to have unique powers of perception and vision, and therefore they are understood to play a role as specialist in their religious community, perhaps even as mediators between the mundane (profane) and supramundane (sacred) worlds. There is a sense of direct access to religious truths that may be at the heart of Eliade's curiosity in this domain, the notion of specialization perhaps being kin to Weber's conceptions of religious virtuosity and charisma. However, unlike Weber, Eliade's primary concern is with the experiences of individuals, the object of his phenomenology, rather than upon the socio-cultural context in which these individuals live and have such experiences. For Eliade, the fact that both the shaman and the *yogin* experience the truths of their tradition directly and with a degree of

autonomy provides a basis for distinguishing them as specialists and for examining their religious experience as being prototypical or paradigmatic of their respective traditions.

Dimensions of Comparison: Meditation and Initiation

Eliade investigates similarities between yoga and shamanism on a number of levels, including initiation, mystical ascent, magical heat and ritual intoxication. In the first case, the subject of investigation refers to shamanic initiations that include ritual dismemberment and death (Eliade 1990: 321-26). Striking examples of yogic practices that center on death that Eliade does not significantly address are present within Theravāda meditation practices, namely those of *maraṇasati*, "contemplation of death," and *asubhabhāvanā*, "meditation on [the] foulness [of decaying corpses]." In the contemplation of aspects of death and decay, the *yogin* establishes both an existential sense of the immediacy and reality of death and an image of the repulsiveness of the physical body in life and death. With respect to Eliade's view of initiation, George Bond has stated that "...although he does not discuss Theravāda Buddhism's meditations on death in this context, they seem in many ways to fit this model and to be analogous to the symbolism of initiatory death as Eliade describes it" (Bond 1980: 254). Bond also has demonstrated the strong resemblance in the contemplation of the skeleton that presents itself in Eskimo initiation and in Theravāda practices. Bond ultimately comes to the conclusion that the effects of the contemplation of death in Shamanism and in Theravāda Buddhism "are phenomenologically identical: transforming religious experience, attainment of wisdom and liberation" (252).

It should also be noted that meditations such as *asubhabhāvanā* have a strong *numinous* component, in that they hinge upon the contemplation of images and not simply abstract truths, although faith or understanding of such abstract truths may be seen to arise out of such practice. The initiatory quality of such meditations is significantly different in character to the shamanic paradigm, in that the contemplation of corpses does not lead the Buddhist meditator towards a sense of "mastery over spirits" which Eliade states is the paradigm of shamanic phenomena. However, it is clear that both Buddhism and shamanism utilize the power and psychological impact of imagery of death and dismemberment in its corporeal manifestation in service of religious ends. The embodiment of death lends concrete reality to religious conceptions and to the ability to see oneself or one's body taking upon such a form. The impact of such embodied imagery is mirrored in the utilization of graphic embodied images as a basis for developing both liberating insight and temporal power in the Hindu and Buddhist tantric contexts as well. Liminal images, such as those that represent death, decay and pollution that are characteristic of the cremation-ground bring about deep psychological

responses suitable for evoking dramatic changes in consciousness and perception. Even in Theravāda, which is often stereotypically portrayed as the "sober" side of Buddhism, we find the development of meditation methods that involve the engagement of powerful imagery of death and initiation, ultimately oriented towards producing profound changes in the mental and emotional constitution of the practitioner.[1]

Dimensions of Comparison: Ascension Motifs

The notion of ascension is carried through several levels of investigation in Eliade's work (Eliade 1990: 326-330). The climbing of the ceremonial ladder in the performance of Vedic ritual is said to represent the shamanic ascent of the heavens through the conquering of the "world tree," and serves as a starting point for Eliade's analysis of ascension motifs:

> We meet the same symbolism again in Brahmanic ritual; it too involves a ceremonial ascent to the world of the gods. For the sacrifice, we are told, "there is only one foundation, only one finale...even heaven." "The ship fair crossing is the sacrifice"; "every sacrifice is a ship bound heavenwards." The mechanism of the ritual is a *dūrohana*, a "difficult ascent," since it implies ascending the World Tree itself (Eliade 1972: 403).

Eliade sees this ascent as parallel to the mythical account of the birth of the Buddha—the infant Buddha's steps are said to represent the ascension through a seven-fold division of heavenly realms (Eliade 1972: 406). Eliade asserts that the Buddhist meditation system can be also said to correspond with ascension through a progression of celestial realms. In this case, through the process of mastery, the Buddhist *yogin* acquires power over subsequent realms as a result a higher rebirth, culminating in the attainment of *nirvāṇa*, "liberation" (406). Here Eliade appears to be discussing Buddhist conceptions of the meditative sequence characterized by *rūpadhyāna*, "form-meditation," *ārūpyadhyāna*, "formless meditation," and *nirodhasamāpatti*, "attainment of cessation." This identification is problematic in a number of respects, among them Eliade's apparent identification of *nirvāṇa* with *nirodhasamāpatti*, the association of rebirth with the soteriological process, and the absence of a discussion of the role of insight (*prajñā*) in the process of liberation.[2]

This is not to say that there is not a meditative ascension concept in Buddhism, but rather that the connection between ascension and liberation is much more problematic. In the development of *samādhi*, "contemplation" or "absorption,"

(Eliade's *enstasis*) and more generally, *dhyāna*, "meditation," in the Buddhist context, there is an understanding that meditators who have attained a significant degree of progress in meditation approximate the consciousness of gods in higher cosmological realms. These realms in Buddhism are those of the *rūpadhātu* and the *ārūpyadhātu*, the "form realm" and the "formless realm," which constitute two of the so-called *traidhātuka* or "three realms" of Buddhism. The third realm, the *kāmadhātu*, is the "desire realm" in which there are successive levels of rebirth including those of deities, human beings, animals and hell-beings, among others. The *rūpadhātu* and *ārūpyadhātu* contain only deities, and they are considered to have cognitive powers superior in many respects to the deities of the desire realm. As a result of attaining high degrees of refinement of meditation in one's life, a practitioner of *śamatha* or "tranquility" meditation may be reborn after death in the realm equivalent to that meditative state. There is certainly a sense in which the realms build upon each other, in that the higher realms imply that the beings have very refined state of consciousness. The higher rebirths within the desire realm and by extension in the higher abodes of the form and formless realms are also indicative of a high degree of religious merit. All of these states are considered to be part of *saṃsāra*, and do not therefore constitute liberation or any permanent heavenly abode. Therefore, it is problematic to assert that the ascension through these cosmological and psychological states represents the soteriological path of Buddhism. The "attainment of cessation," *nirodhasamāpatti*, does not refer to a state of rebirth at all, but rather to the cessation of all mental and physical functions, in some cases identified with liberation, but not in a locative or cosmological sense. It presupposes the action of *vipaśyanā* meditation, "insight meditation," the complement and partner of *śamatha* meditation. It is *śamatha* meditation that indicates the "ascension," and the *vipaśyanā* aspect that is considered the quintessential type of Buddhist meditation that brings about the cessation, *nirodha*, which is equivalent to liberation. In the case of Buddhist *śamatha* meditation, the *yogin* pursues *samāpatti*, "attainment," of the sublime levels of the *rūpadhātu* and *ārūpyadhātu*.

The Pātañjala Yoga tradition also embraces a series of levels of *samādhi* that lead to profound states of being, acting and knowing. The Classical Yoga tradition presents a typology of *yogins* based upon the attainment of different stages of *samādhi* —such as the *prakṛtilaya*, "immersed in the phenomenal ground of material reality," and the *videha*, "bodiless one" who has developed a significant degree of skill in *samādhi* but not complete liberation.[3] In both cases, there is a set of stages that encompass a notion of attainment through an ascension motif, which is placed parallel to a notion of cessation, *nirodha*, which is seen to be the distinct culmination of the soteriological process. Frits Staal has rightly noted that there is a strong distinction within yogic traditions between *nirodha* and *samāpatti*, similar to the *śamatha-vipaśyanā* distinction in Buddhism (Staal 1975: 86-91). This fact may well suggest two trends rather than just one, possibly even

the coexistence of ecstatic and enstatic techniques, establishing a dynamic between the ascension and cessation aspects. There is evidence that these *nirodha* and *samāpatti* aspects in the *Yogasūtras* (YS) have their origins in possibly separate texts and separate methodological approaches to yoga (88).[4] However, it makes more sense to follow Ian Whicher in this regard, however, who ultimately characterizes yogic experiences as both *ecstatic* and *enstatic* rather than seeing these aspects as ultimately at odds with one another (Whicher 1998: 201-04). Gerald Larson also seems to be in agreement with such an interpretation in his criticism of Frauwallner's view that the tension between *saṃprajñāta*, "object-oriented" and *asaṃprajñāta* "non-object oriented" forms of *samādhi* indicates that Patañjali's YS is a composite text (Larson 1999: 730-31).

This tension is elucidated by examining distinctions between "introvertive" and "extrovertive" forms of religious phenomena and their relationship to the *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction. One of the ways this has been done is by developing a scale of religious experiences, depending on the level of arousal or lack thereof and the range of phenomena from the lower to the upper limits (Forman 1999: 4-6). The extremes are understood to be states of hyperarousal, or "ergotropic," and hyporarousal, or "trophotrophic," states. These represent the division between experiences and methods which aim at withdrawal and autonomy, similar to the *enstatic*, and experiences and methods that tend towards high degrees of cognitive, emotive and perceptive stimulation, similar to the *ecstatic*. Forman notes in the study of mysticism, and notably in the work of W.T. Stace and others, that another parallel to this is the division of experience into "introvertive" and "extrovertive" types, again referring to the content of the religious experience. However, care must be taken to avoid oversimplification, for some shamanic and yogic practices may not be easily interpreted by such black and white terminology. For example, a type of cataleptic fit on the part of shamans during ecstatic performances might demonstrate outwardly *enstatic* elements at work in the context of shamanic practice, despite the inward *ecstatic* elements. As we have noted, the experience of the *yogin* may not be so easily separable or isolated from *ecstatic* elements, but rather the *enstatic* and *ecstatic* may well be at work together in the development of *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Obeyesekere's theory of "hypnomantic" states is founded upon the notion that yoga and shamanism are, on one level, continuous with each other, and that shamanism contains a particular mode of knowledge hidden beneath the "superimposed ratiocinative speculations" of the traditions of Buddhism and yoga (Obeyesekere 1981: 169-82). One of the founding fathers of Buddhist Studies, Louis de La Vallée Poussin, similarly believed that Buddhism, among other Indian *śramaṇa* traditions, was initially founded upon a "pure yoga," an ecstatic technique later subsumed under broader scholastic and philosophical superstructures (La Vallée Poussin 1936-37). These cases demonstrate some of the ambiguity in a distinction hinging upon the outward appearances of *enstatic* and *ecstatic* manifestations of religious practice. In one

example, it is the outward manifestation of tranquility (catalepsis) beyond which lies a postulated inner *ecstasis*. In the other, it is an *enstatic* inwardness (meditation) that is said to represent the adaptation of what were once external *ecstatic* modalities in service of a soteriological orientation towards cessation. A more consistent interpretation of such phenomena would be that these dimensions are related dynamically, and demonstrate the tension between cosmological-mythic considerations and soteriological, ethical and liberatory concerns. In the context of Hinduism and Buddhism, these might be described as the tension between *numinous* and *cessative* tendencies found in the relationship between *samāpatti* and *nirodha* in the development of meditative praxis. In the broader context, it might be argued that the differing degree or relative degree of these factors may distinguish religious phenomena such as yoga and shamanism from one another rather than simply the inclination in one direction or the other.

The Dynamics of Practice and Experience

Eliade does address the fact that "heavenly ascent" with respect to yogic attainments has been thoroughly interiorized—thus stripped of its ecstatic character (1990: 326-27, 1972: 406-07). The reversal of the function of the ecstatic is at the center of Eliade's notion of *enstasis* and *ecstasis*, which distinguishes shamanic and yogic practices on the basis of their teleology. "Yoga cannot possibly be confused with shamanism or classed among the techniques of ecstasy...the goal of classic Yoga remains perfect *autonomy*, enstasis, while shamanism is characterized by its desperate effort to attain the 'condition of a spirit,' to accomplish ecstatic flight" (1990: 339). According to Eliade, these two goals are seen to resemble one another with respect to their hierophanic nature that provides for the abolition of history, but are ultimately irreconcilable as modalities of religious experience. However, as has been argued above, a strong case can be made for the *enstatic* and *ecstatic* modalities complementing one another, even if we agree that they have different teleological functions.

This characterization of shamanic and yogic experiences represents a fundamental dichotomy that is often made in the study of mysticism between types of religious practice and experience. The respective religious types are seen to differ in their ultimate aims, one of which is the experience of immanent mythical realities and the other which is an experience of complete cessation or suppression of all forms. This distinction is critically related the idea of contrasting *samāpatti* and *nirodha* aspects, characterized by their *numinous* and *cessative* qualities. Above all, according to Eliade, the *yogin* is seen to escape the cosmic cycle altogether, whereas the shaman is forced to repeat his endeavor indefinitely. Though this points out a crucial distinction with regard to types of religious goals, the role of the *ecstatic* within yogic practice and its antecedents still remains unclear. This is complicated by that fact that Eliade argues differently when referring to the

enstatic goal of autonomy versus that of *jīvanmukti*, "liberation in life," a yogic state that is characterized by ecstatic as well as enstatic qualities. In arguing the contrast between technique, he points to the *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction, whereas when referring to the *jīvanmukta*, "one liberated in life," and the shaman, he makes a different distinction, this time hinging on the relative permanence of the state.[5]

It might be asked here whether it is truly clear if the goals of *kaivalya*, the state of yogic liberation, and the status of *jīvanmukti* are in fact at odds with one another. Eliade seems to be construing *kaivalya* in its strictest sense, in which it means "aloneness," the complete separation between self and world in a radically dualistic fashion—a state that seems at odds with any sense of liberation in life. One of the most critical and problematic issues in discussing the soteriological path of the Classical Yoga tradition is the relationship or lack thereof between *kaivalya* and *jīvanmukti*.[6] Whicher has addressed what he sees as an overemphasis on the *kaivalya* aspect with respect of the development of yogic practice, one that could perhaps be construed as an emphasis on the negative aspect of liberation as opposed to the positive side of *jīvanmukti* (289-300). Vyāsa's commentary only seems to exacerbate this issue, as it seems to simultaneously support a strict Sāṃkhya (dualist) reading of *kaivalya* and, at the same time, provide greatly for the intersection between the philosophical concepts of the YS and mythological and cosmological figurations of the greater Hindu tradition. As T.S. Rukmani has noted, the concept of the *jīvanmukti* is not found in the YS itself, but only in commentarial literature, leaving the issue of the relationship of *kaivalya* to *jīvanmukti* problematic at best (Rukmani 1999, 1997).

Shaman, *Yogin*, Psychopomp

In connection with the apparent difficulties in reconciling the ecstatic elements of the two types of practice, Eliade asserts that little exists to support a connection with respect to the "psychopomp" role of the shaman within the Indian tradition (1972: 418-420). One finds scarce reference in Eliade of an attempt to discuss relationships between yoga and the shamanic role as healer. According to Eliade, the shamanic healer, through the initiatory experience, is able to understand the "drama of the human soul" and the causes of illness that are rooted in the "corruption or alienation of the soul."

> Everything that concerns the soul and its adventure, here on earth and in the beyond, is the exclusive province of the shaman. Through his own pre-initiatory and initiatory experiences, he knows the drama of the human soul, its instability, its precariousness; in addition, he knows the forces that threaten it and the regions to which it can be carried away. If

> shamanic cure involves ecstasy, it is precisely because illness is regarded as a corruption or alienation of the soul (216-17).

In the case of Classical Yoga and in much of Buddhism, one finds a similar mastery, a knowledge and power that allows for the alleviation of another order of illness, metempsychosis, the problem of *saṃsāric* existence. In the YS, the "seer" or *puruṣa* has become enmeshed in the material ground, *prakṛti*, thus causing a condition whereby suffering, sickness, and death fall upon the person.[7] The Theravāda system also suggests that *saṃsāric* existence is due to the clinging to the misconception of a self that exists in the phenomenal world as a distinct, unique, and permanent entity, as opposed to the reality of the process of dependent origination (Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda*, Pali *paṭicca-samuppāda*). The root problem in Buddhism is often referred to as *duḥkha*, translated as "suffering" but just as appropriately used as "illness" and "pain." The metaphor that the Buddha is a physician, whose noble truths are the diagnosis and the Buddhist *mārga* the cure, reifies the notion that illness applies to all dimensions of human existence. Ultimately, physical illness can be seen as rooted in the contamination of ignorance and desire.

This connection between conceptuality and *numinous* forces is most concretely represented in the interweaving of impersonal forces into the shamanic-mythic substratum of Vajrayāna Buddhism and Hindu tantra. In this context, peaceful and wrathful manifestations of deities are identified as manifestations of the principles of *karma*, "action," *karuṇā*, "compassion," *śūnyatā*, "emptiness,"*prajñā*, "wisdom," and so on, as well as with negative emotional and cognitive attitudes and principles. Agehananda Bharati, reflecting on the scope of tantric religion, notes that one should be careful in assuming a shamanic theology is somehow inferior to one based in a literary tradition (Bharati 1976: 146-47).[8] The tantric engagement of fearsome and wrathful deities seems particularly well suited for comparison with the often-frightening aspects of shamanic initiation, and may well demonstrate the re-emergence of the *numinous* dimensions of yogic practice from the ground of scholastic analysis and contemplation.

It has also been demonstrated that shamanic healing bears a striking resemblance in certain respects to psychoanalytic method, in terms of the physician-client relationship, the psychological constitution of the physician, and the alteration of consciousness, among other features (Beck 1962). As discussed earlier, there is much ground for reinterpreting cognitive and emotive dimensions of meditation in light of psychological and psychoanalytic principles. One might extend this comparison further by examining the possible parallelism between the physician-client relationship and the guru-disciple relationship. The idea that the Buddha was the "supreme physician," in that through his yogic powers he was able to provide the most effective form of treatment to a person based upon their psycho-

logical type, is an idea that is deeply rooted in the Indian notion of the *guru-śiṣya*, "teacher-disciple," relationship, as well as in Buddhist conceptions of *upāya*, "method." Inasmuch as one would grant "psychopomp" status to the *yogin* it must be tempered to the degree that in Classical Yoga and in Indian Buddhism, an individual's own efforts towards realization or liberation are usually considered the most significant. On the other hand, we must not forget that the guru is often considered of utmost importance in pointing the student in the right direction, the tantric idea of the *satguru* or "true guru," the teacher who gives the priceless gift of a glimpse of realization, being the epitome of this idea.

Reinterpreting the *Enstasis-Ecstasis* Distinction

Within the realm of Hinduism and Buddhism, few who have spent any time on the subject of meditation or yoga have not been influenced by Eliade's thought in this sphere. His definition of *samādhi* (and also *dhyāna*) as *enstasis* as opposed to *ecstasis* has become part of the language of academic work on meditation in the context of both Hinduism and Buddhism. Beyond the *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction, Eliade's conceptions of "religious specialization," "religious virtuosity" and "mysticism" are ripe for further examination and elaboration. Eliade "classifies" shamanism as being within the realm of mysticism:

> In other words, it would be more correct to class shamanism among the mysticisms than what is commonly called a religion. We shall find shamanism within a considerable number of religions, for shamanism always remains an ecstatic technique at the disposal of a particular elite and represents, as it were, the mysticism of a particular religion (Eliade 1972: 8).

Substituting "yoga" for "shamanism" here would seem coherent according to Eliade's definition. Similarly, Eliade elsewhere describes the shaman in terms that are applicable to yoga: "...they transform a cosmo-theological concept into a *concrete mystical experience*" (1972: 265). Eliade here forwards a conception of *mysticism* that functions as a framework for his broader understanding of religious experience, albeit one not developed substantially. It is possible that through further examination of Eliade's notion of *mysticism*, we may be in a position to further understand the motivations behind his postulation of the *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction and other aspects of his theory. As was noted earlier, Eliade's notions of "religious specialization" hinge upon ideas such as mysticism that suggest that particular individuals have special types of religious experience, a type of first-hand knowledge that gives them their unique status and reputed powers.

Questions regarding the utility of the idea of mysticism and of typologies of

religious experience and practice are currently at the heart of much controversy in religious studies. As we noted earlier, there are particular problems with postulating cross-cultural ideas of mysticism. Many difficult questions have been asked with regards to the need to contextualize religious phenomena and the degree to which privileging individual experience has ramifications as to the political implications of the study of religion. With respect to Eliade's work in particular, recent studies by Douglas Allen (1998), David Cave (1993), Carl Olson (1992, 1999), and Bryan Rennie (1996), among others, have brought about a substantive re-examination of Eliade's theoretical position and its viability as part of the methodology of the discipline of religious studies. Some of Eliade's more ardent critics have ranged from social scientists that view his theory as a sort of "prototheology," such as Ivan Strenski (1993) and Robert Segal (1990), to scholars that see Eliade's theory as a sort of exotic "secularized Byzantine Christianity" (Paus 1989). Other scholarship, exemplified by the work of McCutcheon (1997), has brought to the surface questions regarding the ideological foundations of Eliade's theory. Common in all of these discussions have been questions regarding Eliade's phenomenological emphasis and the problems of relativity, verifiability, and ideology associated with it. Such discussions of the viability of Eliade's theory may well reflect questions of the viability of the History of Religions methodology and of comparative religion on a broader scale. Comparative theory that addresses postmodernism and critical theory has begun to emerge in such works as *A Magic Still Dwells* (Patton and Ray 2000) and in a recent collection of essays entitled *Changing Religious Worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade* (Rennie 2001). Rennie's *Changing Religious Worlds* is probably the most representative of the range of contemporary scholarship trying to either move on with or move beyond Eliade's theory.

Following Rennie's assertions of the ongoing utility of the History of Religions as a methodology (2001: 8-9), it can be argued that a profitable direction to take this research is one that recognizes the valuable insights of Eliade's phenomenology while addressing the problems inherent in the individualistic and experiential focus that is characteristic of Eliade's History of Religions. Eliade's privileging of the subjective dimension of religious phenomena was based in an attempt to prevent the reduction of such phenomena to delusion, mental disorder, and ideology. While taking such an approach may have suited the academic milieu of Eliade's time, it is clear that the context and pretext of the study of religion has changed dramatically and as such it is much more suited to accommodate both critical and empathetic perspectives. A new phenomenology might be developed that moves beyond the uniquely psychological focus of Eliade's phenomenology towards one that recognizes the tension between psychological factors and sociological and environmental ones. In the context of yoga and shamanism, recent research on shamanism and ecstatic religion found in the work of I.M. Lewis (1989, 1996) and in the collections of Nils Holm, such as his *Religious Ecstasy*

(1982), provides much promise for such a task. Lewis has noted Eliade's admission that a sociology of ecstasy needs to be developed, and it is this task that Lewis has taken up in his own work on shamanism (1989: 22). Adaptation of the methodological approaches that have been developed in the context of these more recent studies of shamanism and ecstatic religion can bring additional precision to our understandings of the psychological, social and cultural effects of religious praxis in a manner that complements and expands upon Eliade's theory. Such an orientation may lead to a balanced analysis that recognizes the utility as well as the limitations of Eliade's *enstasis-ecstasis* distinction and the ongoing usefulness of the comparison of yoga and shamanism. This in turn would provide an expanded model of phenomenology that offers a more holistic view of religious practice. Such a model might integrate together the emphasis on the psychological and experiential dimension found in phenomenological approaches such as Eliade's with the socio-cultural analyses found in sociological presentations on ecstatic religion.[9] Together, the psychological and sociological approaches support a greater vision of phenomenology, one that has deep ramifications for both the study of shamanism and of yoga. It may as well provide a means for bridging the gap between what have been characterized as "experiential-expressive" and "cultural-linguistic" models in the study of religion (Yamane and Polzer 1994). It may also allow for greater balance in comparative religion between humanistic and social-science models, thus resolving an issue that has been at the center of much debate with respect to the History of Religions methodology and Religious Studies more broadly in recent years.

Notes

1 See also Liz Wilson's *Charming Cadavers: Horrific Figurations of the Feminine in Indian Buddhist Hagiographic Literature* (Wilson 1996: 41-71). Wilson documents the power and ambiguity found in the relationship between the body, death, and wisdom in the Theravāda and Post-Aśokan Buddhist contexts. Theravāda conceptions of the transformative potential of the cremation-ground greatly foreshadow the extensive elaboration upon such themes and imagery in Hindu and Buddhist tantra.

2 The relationship of liberation to *nirodha* in the Buddhist meditative context, and in particular to *nirodhasamāpatti* "the attainment of cessation" is a problematic one, due to ambiguity in Buddhist sources. Paul Griffiths has discussed a number of issues related to this problem in *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-Body Problem* (Griffiths 1986) and in *Indian Buddhist Meditation-Theory: History, Development and Systematization* (Griffiths 1983). It should also be noted that a *yogin* can traverse the states of *dhyāna* while alive and that such ascension does not require physical death, though meditative attainments do have implications for future rebirth.

3 See YS I.19, *bhavapratyayo videhaprakṛtilayānām*, "For the *videhas* and *prakṛtilayas*, the basis is becoming."

4 The strong parallelism regarding the development of *samādhi* in the context of

Indian Buddhism and in Classical Yoga, particularly with respect to notions of the conjunction of *samāpatti* and *nirodha* elements suggests otherwise. Both the Indian Buddhist traditions and the Classical Yoga tradition recognize both cooperation and tension in this relationship.

5 In his essay "The Longhaired Sage of Ṛg Veda 10, 136; A Shaman, a Mystic or a Yogi?" (Werner 1989: 33-53), Karel Werner criticizes Eliade's thought on this distinction, noting what he believes is an "evolutionary" bias in Eliade's analysis.

6 This is an issue that arguably plays out in the tension between Theravāda and Mahāyāna conceptions of soteriology as well.

7 YS II.12-17.

8 Bharati furthermore believes that the "mystic type" may exist within shamanic traditions much in the sense it does in more *enstatic* or *cessative* types, but that it may be that because the social aspects of shamanism take such precedent within the aboriginal context, "mystical" types of experiences, characterized by an emptiness of content, may be de-emphasized (Bharati 1976: 144-45).

9 Several of Lewis' key concepts may have direct parallelism to an *ecstatic-enstatic* or *numinous-cessative* dynamic. These include Lewis' idea of central versus peripheral cults (Lewis 1989: 22-30) where ecstatic dimensions of religious practice are seen to correlate with the social position and ethical orientation of a particular religious group. In the context of Hindu and Buddhist communities where yoga and meditation play a role, the shift from central to peripheral status or vice versa may have a strong relationship with the emphasis on the ecstatic elements of practice. Another important issue that Lewis discusses is that of "positive" versus "negative" possession (Lewis 1989: 52). Possession in the first case is seen as a beneficial and encouraged state, whereas in the second it is qualified negatively in a moral sense and identified by physical malaise. Positive possession might be compared to the *samāpatti* (attainment) notion of spiritual development, while the negative possession might be compared to the *nirodha* (cessation) dimension, indicating the degree to which one is respectively trying to encourage or escape certain physical and mental states.

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