



Ecstasy and Enstasy: two sides of the same coin?

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In his influential works *Shamanism: archaic techniques of ecstasy and Yoga: immortality and freedom* (Eliade 1951/1964; 1954/1969) Mircea Eliade argues that whilst yoga and shamanism share a number of common features, the differences between them are far more significant. These differences are highlighted by his choice of epithets to label and characterise the two systems: *ecstasy* for shamanism and *enstasy* for yoga. Both words come from the Greek term 'stasis,' which includes among its meanings the notions of to stand, or of a place, or of a "state" of a person. So *ek-stasis* is a state of standing outside of oneself (what we might call dissociation), and the Greeks often employed it to describe states of astonishment or entrancement. By contrast, *en-stasis* (Eliade's translation of *samādhi*) can be taken to refer to a state of being 'in' or 'within' oneself, though the Greeks tended to use it for conveying the idea of a plan or a beginning. For Eliade, this contrast highlights what he calls a 'structural difference' between yoga and shamanism. He writes, 'Although the latter is not without certain techniques of concentration ... its final goal is always ecstasy and the soul's ecstatic journey through the various cosmic regions, whereas Yoga pursues enstasy, final concentration of the spirit and "escape" from the cosmos. (Eliade 1964: 417)

For Eliade then, *ecstasy* is not to be understood in its primary English sense of 'a state of exalted pleasure or happiness,' (*Chambers Concise Dictionary* 1991) but as referring to trancelike states, during which the shaman 'is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld.' (Eliade 1964: 5) It is this out-of-the-body journeying of the soul which, for Eliade, lies at the heart of what he calls 'the shamanic complex' and renders the descriptor *ecstatic* appropriate. This 'complex' includes trances and dreams that involve various kinds of magical flight, mastery over fire, healing, and special relations with spirits. (Eliade 1964: 6- 8)¹ This 'complex' can be encountered in many parts of the world, from Siberia through Central and Southern Asia to Australasia, Oceania and America.

By contrast, the yoga 'complex' is unique to India, a creation of the Indian soil. (Eliade 1969: 361) It is 'a living fossil, a modality of archaic spirituality that has survived nowhere else.' (Eliade 1969: 361) The constituents of that 'complex' are not systematically listed or described by Eliade, though it is possible to discern something of what he had in mind when using the phrase from comments in various parts of *Yoga: immortality and freedom*. So, 'The word *yoga* serves, in general, to designate

any *ascetic technique* and any *method of meditation*.' (Eliade 1969: 4) More specifically, it has an initiatory structure: a guru is required; there is a *death* followed by a *rebirth*, a rebirth into an unconditioned mode of being, e.g. *kaivalya*, *nirvana*, (Eliade 1969: 5f.) which involves the yogin embracing 'the *opposite* of what life demands that he do.' (Eliade 1969: 362) All the yogic techniques, he claims, are designed to prepare the way for 'that final withdrawal from the phenomenal world.' (Eliade 1969: 96) So the yogin has to abandon both body and personality in recognition of the metaphysical "truth" that his true identity lies not in everything that he thought was himself but in something that was hidden *by* that understanding of himself. Finally, whereas the shaman cultivates ecstatic experience largely for the sake of accessing benefits for a community, the yogin *can* be understood as pursuing goals that require the abandonment of community altogether.²

To my mind, this contrast between ecstatic and enstatic complexes is far less pronounced than Eliade seems to think, and, as the title of this paper suggests, my own inclination is to regard these two 'complexes' as closely related expressions of the same underlying psychological processes. Before I present my argument in support of that view, however, I would like to consider the output of another influential writer, Roland Fischer, whose work purports to offer a physiological and neurological basis for Eliade's phenomenological intuition about the differences between ecstasy and enstasy.

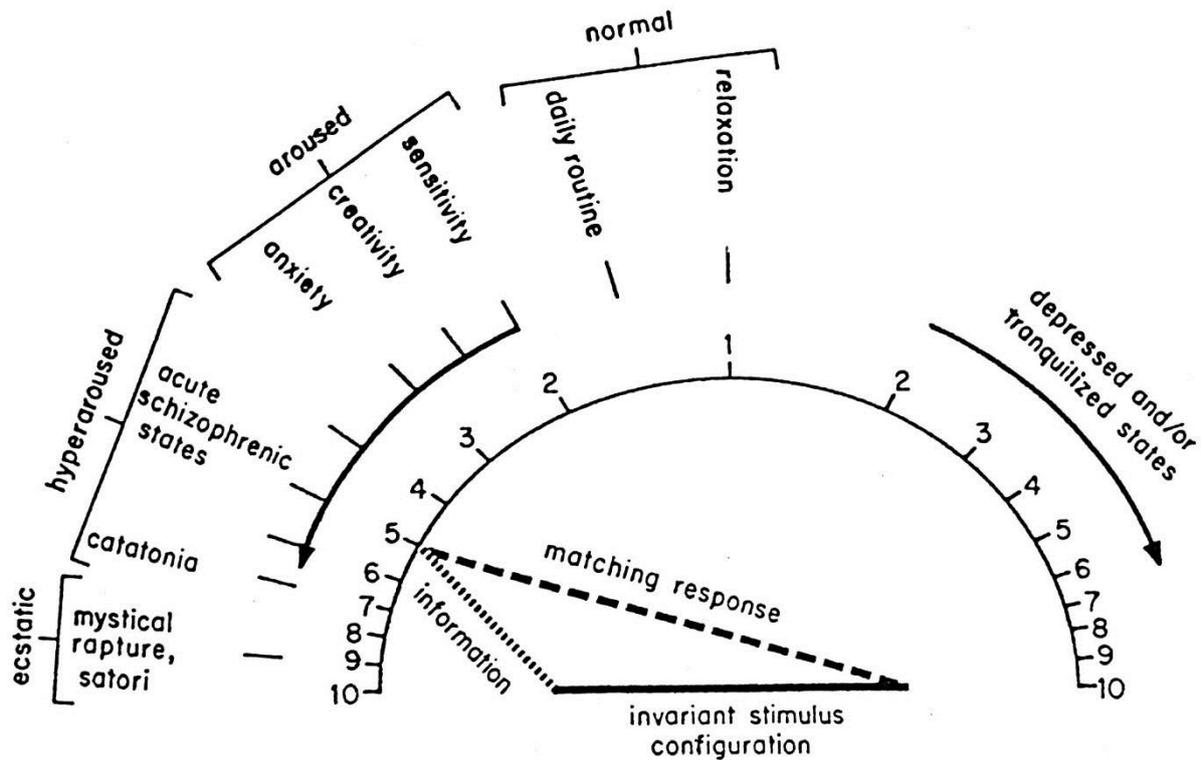
Over a period of around 20 years, from the late 1960s to the late 1980s, psychiatrist Roland Fischer developed in stages what he has variously called 'a cartography of non-ordinary states of consciousness', (Fischer 1986: 16) 'a cartography of conscious states', (Fischer 1978) and 'a cartography of the ecstatic and meditative states'. (Fischer 1971: 897-904) His two primary assertions about these states are:

- (1) that they can be arranged on a continuum, with ecstatic states, such as 'mystical rapture' at one end, yogic samādhi (*enstasis*) at the other and normal consciousness in the middle, and
 - (2) that these states are discontinuous with each other to the extent that our memory of events is tied to the state we were in when we first experienced them. 'The greater the difference between these states, the more difficult it is to recall in one state specifics learned in another'.
- (Fischer 1976/1980: 306-311)

Charles Tart calls Fischer's work 'an excellent example' of attempts to understand Altered States of Consciousness (ASCs) in neurological terms, though he goes on to qualify his approval by commenting that 'the conceptual gap between knowing that a certain neurological function changes during a given ASC, and understanding the experiential, psychological functioning of that ASC is enormous'. (Tart: 1972: 6) Other writers are less circumspect. Robert Forman, for example, simply assumes the accuracy of Fischer's model and defines the nature of mysticism on the basis of it. (Forman 1990: 5-7) This model is, then, one that is worthy of careful scrutiny.

The earliest version of the model was outlined in 1968 and summarised in the following diagram: (Fischer 1969/1976-77: 265)

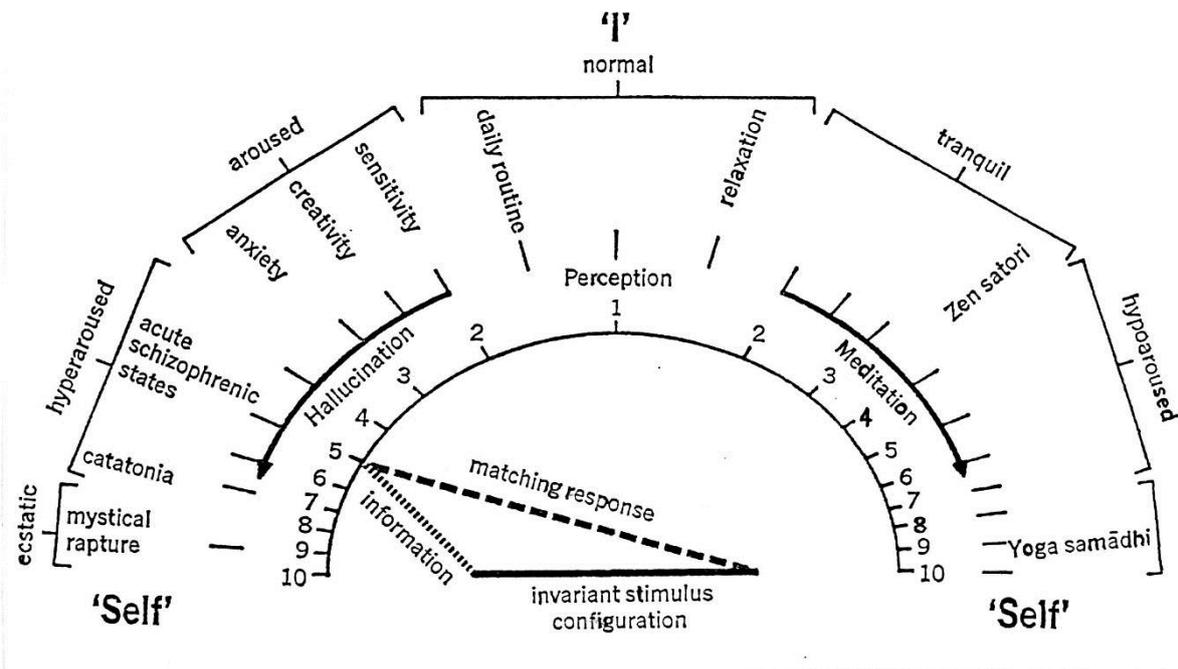
Version I



We may note, first of all, that the ten divisions on either side of the mid-point of the hemisphere indicate increasing or decreasing levels of arousal and movement away from what Fischer calls a state of equanimity or relaxation (number 1). Such movement is characterised, he claims, by '... the gradual withdrawal from physical space-time to a combined sensory and cerebral space-time and finally at scale 10 to a cerebral space-time only'. (Fischer 1969/1976-77: 251) We may also note that Fischer's main concern in the article from which the diagram is taken is to locate schizophrenic states on an arousal continuum which also embraces the experiences of people under the influence of a wide range of drugs and mystics having experiences of a rapturous or ecstatic nature. The connection between these groups is based primarily on the observation that all three demonstrated a pronounced invariability in their Electro-encephalo-graph (EEG) profiles, that is, all were unresponsive to a range of external stimuli. He also noted that the schizophrenics and the drug users exhibited an increase in saccadic eye movements during their periods of reduced responsiveness to environmental inputs, along with a reduction in the extensiveness of their environmental scanning. In other words, they were '... hyperattentive to *selected* aspects of the visual field while minimally responsive to many ordinarily attended to aspects of the environment'. (Fischer 1969/1976-77: 264) Discussions with colleagues led him to conclude, however, that the experiences of Zen and Yoga masters are not accompanied by increases in the frequency of saccadic eye movements, which, in turn, meant that the schizophrenics and drug users were in a *non-alpha state* (i.e. not displaying alpha rhythms on their EEG outputs). By contrast, the meditators were in a *high alpha state*.

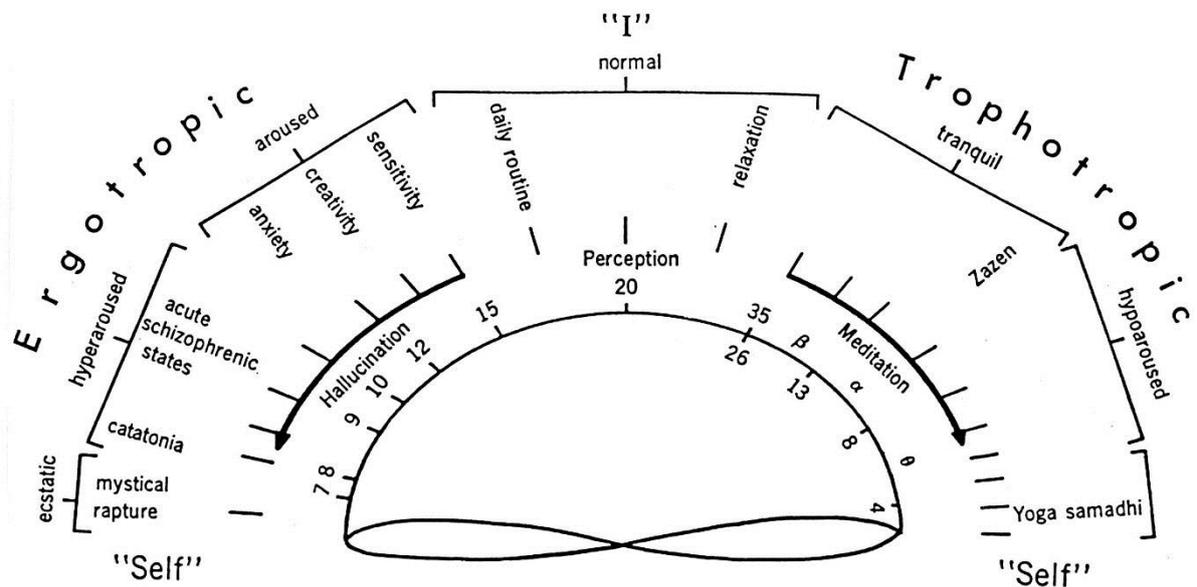
Fischer's reflections on this separation of schizophrenics and drug takers from meditators led him to develop a second version of the model. (Fischer 1969/1972)³

Version 2



Here we may note that the *satori* experience has shifted from the extreme left of the hyperarousal continuum and now occupies a position roughly halfway down the hypoarousal continuum on the right. This newly created hypoarousal continuum deletes the movement descriptors 'depressed and/or tranquillised states' and replaces them with 'meditation'. 'Hallucination' is added as a descriptor to the opposite continuum and 'Yoga samādhi' becomes the end point of the meditation continuum.

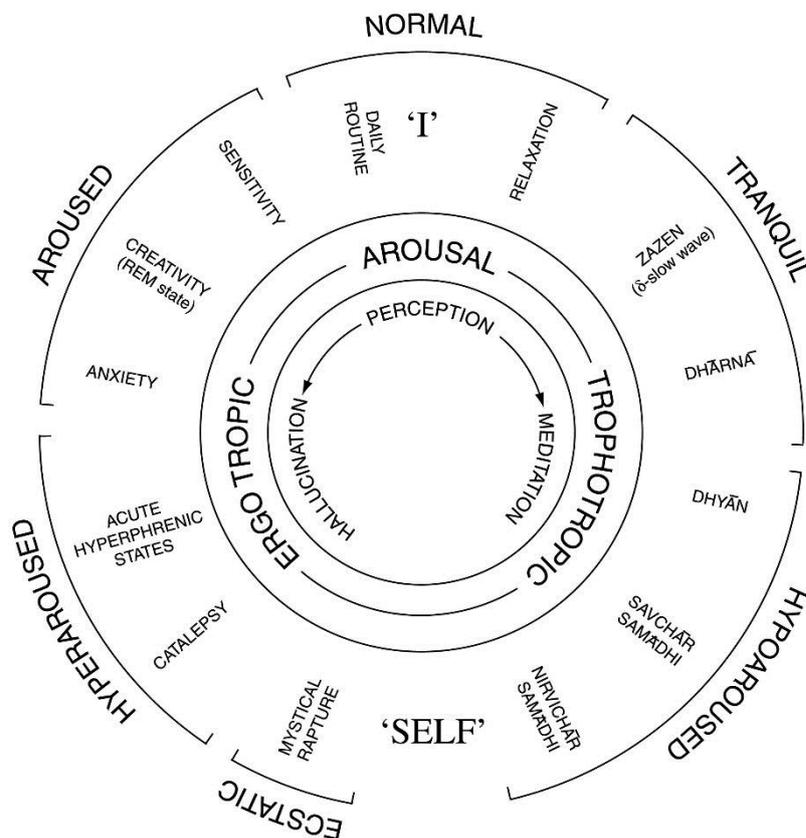
Version 3



The third version of the model (Fischer 1971: 898) adds the terms 'ergotropic' and 'trophotropic' to the hallucination and meditation continua respectively. 'Ergotropic' refers to increasing sympathetic nervous system activity (accompanied by a reduction in motor activity) whilst 'trophotropic' refers to increasing parasympathetic nervous system activity (again accompanied by a reduction in motor activity). The symmetry

of the stage two model is broken, however, by the substitution of the hemispheric curve indicating movement from physical space-time to cerebral space-time with one that is composed of two different measurement strategies. The first, which is predominantly on the left side of the diagram, runs from 7-35 and represents changes in Goldstein's coefficient of variation - which specifies '... the decrease in variability of the EEG amplitude ...' (Fischer 1971: 898) The second, numbers 26-4, '... refer(s) to those beta, alpha and theta EEG waves (measured in hertz) that predominate during, but are not specific to, these states.' (Fischer 1971: 898) By 'these states' he presumably means *Zazen* (which replaces *Zen satori*) and *Yoga Samadhi*. The final change in this version is the addition of a figure of eight loop connecting the two ends of the hemisphere. This, he states, '... represents the rebound from ecstasy to *samadhi*, which is observed in response to intense ergotropic excitation.' (Fischer 1971: 898) No mention is made at this point of the rebound from *samadhi* to ecstasy, though in later publications he describes this as the *kuṇḍalinī* experience. (Fischer 1976/80: 308) The final version of the model came in 1976 and remained stable for the next decade:

Version 4



There are few substantial changes here. The hemisphere pattern has been replaced by an almost circular one, the awkward EEG listings have been deleted and a number of Hindi/Sanskrit terms designating stages in yogic absorption according to Patañjali, author of the *Yoga Sūtra*, have been introduced to balance up the headings. Finally, the figure of eight loop is deleted because, as he had already claimed in connection with version number three, 'The "Self" of ecstasy and samadhi are one and the same'. (Fischer 1971: 902) The result is a once again symmetrical and easy to understand model of ASCs. But is it accurate?

To my mind, this model is reminiscent of the curate's egg: it is good in parts. Fischer seems to be on the right lines when he brings ecstatic and mystical experiences closer together, though my reasons for thinking that they belong together are rather different from his. The use of physiological indicators also seems to be a strength as it provides an empirical basis for comparisons. Yet it is also clear that the foundations of the model are shaky in places. An exhaustive critical scrutiny of Fischer's cartographic efforts lies outside the scope of this paper - his articles are extraordinarily complex - and indeed, unnecessary for my purposes. My aim here is simply to show that there are sufficient problems with this model to make it an unreliable guide to the territory of ASCs generally and to the relations between ecstasy and enstasy in particular. To this end, I shall focus on three threads or themes running through his work: (1) the tendency to lump together phenomena without giving sufficient consideration of the differences between them; (2) the limitations of the continuum style of representation and of Fischer's knowledge of Buddhism and Yoga; and (3) problems with the relationship between the states at the ends of his continua, namely ecstasy and *samādhi* (= enstasy).

Lumping Together

The perception-hallucination continuum of Fischer's model presents creativity, REM sleep, anxiety, schizophrenia, catatonia, psychedelic drug experiences (not displayed on the diagrams but significant in the texts) and mystical/ecstatic experiences as variants or intensifications of the same underlying processes. To my mind this is premature, to say the least. The postulated connection between these experiences has some plausibility but no more than that. Indeed, it would be fair to regard his first article on this subject as an attempt to explore the extent of that plausibility. The evidence he deploys to establish the feasibility of his continuum falls far short of what I would call a demonstration, however. Rather than developing a series of reasonably rigorous arguments Fischer weaves a net out of the tentative speculations of a number of writers.

One of the writers whose work is significant for Fischer is D.W. Mackinnon, who points out that the scores of many highly creative people on the eight clinical scales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) are very similar to those of people suffering from some kind of psychopathology. The difference between the two groups, he suggests, is that the creatives have developed adequate control mechanisms whereas those with mental illness have not. Fischer links this with Goldstein's speculation that creativity involves '... cancellation of parts of the environmental input to the brain.' (Fischer 1969/1976-77: 264) This was suggested to him by the relative invariability of EEG waves during creative activity. It is an invariability that is 'quite comparable' to that registered during dreaming. Schizophrenics also exhibit similar patterns of EEG invariability, as, apparently, do Zen and Yoga meditators.

These commonalities are certainly suggestive, but they are far from being conclusive, as Fisher's own evidence clearly indicates. For example, people under the influence of LSD, psilocybin and mescaline also display highly selective attention and share with schizophrenics a high frequency of saccadic eye movements. On the other hand, the meditators, he claims, do not exhibit these eye movements. This discrepancy eventually led him, in version two of the model, to move the meditators off the

perception - hallucination continuum altogether and locate them on one of their own: the perception-meditation continuum. But what about the creative thinkers, the dreamers, the anxious and the catatonic? Do any of them exhibit high frequency saccadic eye movements? We are not told. And what about the ecstatic mystics who were left behind at the end of the perception-hallucination continuum when the Zen and Yoga practitioners changed places? Did they, unlike their Zen and Yoga brethren, exhibit high frequency saccadic eye movements? Again, we are not told. Indeed, we are not even given a source for the claim that Zen and Yoga mediators do not exhibit these eye movements. This is still awaiting confirmation. There are certainly some similarities between these states, but there are differences too and Fischer does not supply the evidence to demonstrate that the former are more significant than the latter; and it is surely inappropriate - on the basis of links like these - to claim, as Fischer does, that '... daily we experience during the transition stages from waking to sleeping, and vice versa, a complete range of psychopathology - the features common to all psychoses.' (Fischer 1969/1976-77: 267) Indeed, in his construction of the entire perception-hallucination continuum Fischer appears to have committed the simple but significant error of going beyond the evidence.

The continuum pattern, Buddhism and Yoga

For Fischer not only are creativity, dreaming, anxiety schizophrenia, catatonia and ecstasy related states, they are related in a particular way. They constitute stages on a continuum of hyperarousal and hallucination. Given the nature of the evidence this is an amazingly bold claim to make. If the people experiencing creative thinking, dreaming, anxiety, schizophrenia, psychedelic drugs and mystic rapture all had their physiology measured in the same way, and there was a clear indication of directionality in the results then there might be ground for constructing a continuum. The foundations for Fischer's continuum are rather different, however. No one measurement runs all the way through. In his 1969, 1971 and 1986 versions of the model Fischer claims that the hyperaroused states are characterised by:

- (1) an increase in muscle tone;
- (2) a decrease in skin resistance;
- (3) fast habituation to alpha blocking;
- (4) mydriasis - extreme dilation of the pupil of the eye;
- (5) hyperthermia - an increase in body temperature;
- (6) piloerection - erection of head and/or body hair;
- (7) hyperglycaemia - increase in blood sugar;
- (8) tachycardia - an increase in heart rate.

If the states on the perception-hallucination continuum could be shown to display increases in these measures as they move towards the extreme then the case for the existence of a continuum would be a strong one. But Fischer does not show that they do. For many of the states that he locates on this continuum, which include glossolalia (speaking in tongues), automatic or mediumistic writing and the trance dance of the Shaker religion, no sources of information are provided. (Fischer 1969: 168) Where they are provided it is clear that not all the states were monitored for all the phenomena. What seems to have happened is that Fischer became so convinced of the validity of his model that he simply extrapolated findings about one or perhaps two states to all the rest.

We may note in this context that some of the writers who have studied the phenomena of glossolalia in considerable depth, Felicitas Goodman for example, argue that they are simply variants of a single trance state, the ecstatic religious trance, which also embraces experiences of possession by a spirit or deity. (Goodman 1988: 8)⁴ On Fischer's continuum this state would probably have to be located after anxiety but before catatonia as it involves a considerable amount of movement. Yet it is strange to think, as Fischer invites us to do, that someone who is moving around and speaking in the voice of a deity is in a less aroused condition than a catatonic or a mystic sitting quietly whilst experiencing hallucinations.

The measurements which differentiate the states on the perception-meditation continuum present us with a different kind of problem. Apart from a few small-scale studies of Zen and Yoga meditators, mainly with the EEG, Fischer's sources for the construction of this continuum are scholars seeking to describe the contents of some Hindu and Buddhist religious texts. They are not always reliable, and Fischer's statements about the relationship between Buddhism and Yoga are clearly based on misunderstandings. For example, he claims that 'The jhana of early Buddhism ... was not yet identified with meditation, contemplation or yoga. Jhana represented loneliness as a spiritual process...'. (Fischer 1978: 38) The fact is that 'jhana' was understood as a form of what we would call meditation or contemplation as can be seen, for example in the account of the Buddha's enlightenment in the *Mahā-saccaka-sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*. (Horner 1976: 291-305) Moreover, this and other early descriptions of the *jhāna* states divide them into stages or levels which closely parallel Patañjali's later accounts of the stages of yogic *śamādhi*. Fischer also claims that 'śunyata implies a philosophy of zero, which contains nothing in itself ... the mystical self and the concept of zero thus share a common meaning that may be infinitely enlarged or diminished as a function of place value.' (Fischer 1978: 42) This idea, that the Buddhist notion of *śunyatā* (emptiness) can somehow be equated with 'the mystical self' is completely misguided. For Buddhists 'the mystical self' has no reality, and *śunyatā* means the absence of self-existence (*svabhāva*) in all phenomena, not nothingness. The perception-meditation continuum is, then, constructed out of quite different materials from the perception-hallucination one and is substantially based on what is obviously a rather superficial acquaintance with the traditions to which he refers.

The ends of the continua

The people whose experiences are taken by Fischer to exemplify the state of ecstatic mystical rapture include St Theresa of Avila, St Francis of Assisi, Blaise Pascal, Sri Ramakrishna, (Fischer 1971: 900-901) and St Catherine of Sienna. (Fischer 1978: 35) These mystics are contrasted with the Zen and Yoga masters. Unlike these masters the experiences of the mystics are non-alpha states and are accompanied by an increase in saccadic eye movements. The obvious question here is 'who measured them?' and the answer is, of course, 'no-one'. No measurements support his location of these mystics at the end of the perception-hallucination continuum. He seems to have simply noted that they report having visionary experiences and decided that this is where they belong. Moreover, as Fischer himself observes, these ecstatic mystics have much in common with Buddhist and Yogic meditators. In one of his earliest articles on this subject he suggests that the descriptions of mystical rapture provided by St Theresa are 'well in line' with the results of EEG studies of Indian yoga

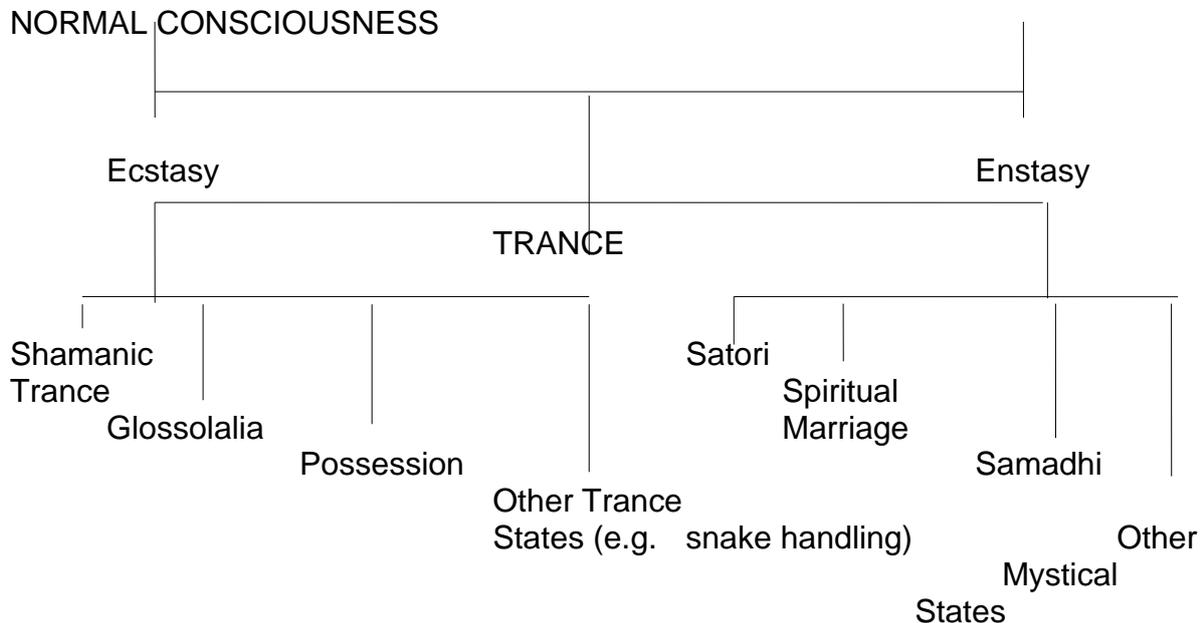
practitioners, (Fischer 1969/1976-7: 255) and in a later piece he argues that St Theresa, the teachers of the Upanisads, Jacob Bohme and Al Ghazzali all describe their experiences in a way that makes it ‘... very difficult to distinguish one from another.’ (Fischer 1978: 26) Later in the same article he also claims that Ignatius of Loyola ‘... provides methods of procedure that are for all practical purposes identical with some of the Eastern meditation practices ...’ (Fischer 1978: 50)

Fischer’s method for dealing with the fact that highly similar experiences occupy the two poles of his combined continuum is to employ the concept of ‘rebound’ and to bring them to a point of seeming unity in the idea of a deep or transpersonal self. This solution is, however, unsatisfactory - for a number of reasons. In the first place he is introducing the concept of rebound into accounts that have no place for it. For example, in the early Buddhist texts of the Pali Canon the attainment of right concentration (*sammā samādhi*) leads on to right knowledge (*sammā nāṇa*) and right release (*sammā vimutti*), not the *kuṇḍalinī* experience. Similarly, in Patañjali’s Yoga Sūtra - from where Fischer takes his Sanskrit terminology - the experience of *nirvicāra samādhi* leads to the arising of truth-bearing insight (*ṛtambharā prajñā*), which, in turn, facilitates the experience of *samādhi* without seed (*nirbīja samādhi*), and again there is no mention of the *kuṇḍalinī* experience. In short, the texts on which Fischer relies simply do not support his idea that pushing at the limits of the experiences he has placed at either end of his continuum produces a shift into the experience characteristic of the opposite pole.

A second reason for rejecting Fischer’s solution lies in the fact that the mystics and meditators to whom he refers are far from unanimous in proclaiming the experience of a mystical or transpersonal self as the pinnacle of their endeavours. St Theresa, for example, describes the final stage of her mystical path as an experience of union with God, the consummation of her Spiritual Marriage, ‘... it is like rain falling from the heavens into a river or a spring; there is nothing but water there and it is impossible to divide or separate the water belonging to the river from that which fell from the heavens.’ (Wapnick 1969/1980: 321-337) This is certainly similar to the kind of account we find in the Upanisads but quite different from the radical separation of self from matter that we find in the Jain, Sāṃkhya and Classical Yoga traditions. The Buddha, mystic par excellence, would also reject Fischer’s claim since his experiences of *samādhi* led him to a knowledge that everything, including the unconditioned *nirvāṇa*, was without self. The Self is a metaphysical entity, accepted by some mystics and rejected by others; it cannot, therefore, act as a common denominator for all mystical experiences. Nor can it be presented as the pinnacle of all mystical experiences without relegating those which lack it to a lower level - an unjustifiable metaphysical ploy from my perspective. How would one set about showing, for example, that the Buddha (who denied self) was less accomplished than Patañjali (who affirmed it)? As it stands, Fischer’s model contains too many tensions, inconsistencies and speculations to function as a reliable map of the terrain of ASCs.

If I were to attempt a revision of this model I would, first of all, take the category of mystical rapture from the end of the perception-hallucination continuum and place it somewhere along the perception-meditation continuum. The heading of ecstasy would also be moved across, though not attached to mystical rapture. This would place phenomena that are clearly similar to each other closer together on the map whilst, at the same time, distancing them from others with which they seem to have

only a tenuous connection. Then I would separate the two continua from each other and pass the job of determining whether the remaining components of the perception-hallucination continuum do, in fact, constitute a coherent progression over to those better qualified than I for such a task. Finally, I would rework the perception-meditation continuum as follows:



This arrangement does not constitute a continuum, a concept which, to me at least, suggests passing *through* the states closer to the centre in order to get to those at the extremes. Rather, this diagram attempts to show, first and foremost, that the experiences listed under the headings of *ecstasy* and *enstasy* (= *samādhi*) are all varieties of trance experience. Secondly, it indicates that some kinds of trance experiences are more closely related than others. The key question then becomes: 'Can this way of representing these experiences be shown to be accurate?' I think it can.

A distinction that is commonly made in the context of hypnotherapy is that between trance induction and trance utilisation. Induction refers to the methods employed for generating trance states, utilisation to the purposes for which they are employed and the techniques for achieving those ends. Trance states can be induced in many ways, including

'... rhythmic and repetitive movement (dancing, running, rocking, breathing exercises, etc); chanting (meditation, prayer, group rituals, chants at rallies or sports events, the repetitive self-talk of depression, etc.); attentional absorption (on a mantra, the hypnotist's voice, an image, an idea, the television, etc.); and balancing of muscle tonus (via relaxation processes, massage, drugs such as alcohol or valium, rhythmic movement, etc),' (Gilligan 1987: 42)

exposure to stress, (Sargant 1957: 12-13; Jaynes 1990/93: 347-353ff) extended periods of solitude (Storr 1989: 49-50) and loss of bodily equilibrium combined with a loud noise.' (Macdonald n/d)⁵ Often, the method of induction will have a significant effect on the kind of experience a person has once they enter a trance state, i.e. on utilisation. People who undergo traditional-style hypnotic inductions with suggestions

for relaxation and/or sleep (which may be administered by oneself: auto-hypnosis, or by someone else: hetero-hypnosis) tend to describe a deep sense of calm or tranquillity and sometimes a state of complete mental blankness. (Tart 1970:27-40; 1975: 81; Ludwig and Lyle 1964: 70-76.) By contrast, people who undergo active-alert style inductions are more likely to report having ecstatic (in the everyday sense) or peak experiences. Dream images tend to be more joyous and benign after active-alert inductions (Banyai 1980: 267) and post hypnotic amnesia more complete.⁶ Maya Deren, an American convert to Voodoo, contrasts the experiences of hypnosis and possession as follows:

‘... the entire experience of possession is in the opposite direction from that of hypnosis. Hypnosis could be described as going inward and downward, whereas possession is accompanied by a sense of explosion upward and outward. One might say that hypnosis is the ultimate in self-negation, whereas possession is the ultimate in self-realisation to the point of self-transcendence.’ (Deren 1975/1953: 286)⁷

She, like Eliade and Fischer, seems to regard these experiences as opposites. Different as they may seem, however, both kinds of induction procedure produce essentially the same kinds of alterations in consciousness, alterations to which many researchers apply the label ‘trance’. For example, when commenting on their experiments with what they call the hyperalert trance, Ludwig and Lyle state:

‘Although the subjects’ clinical state appeared opposite to that seen following standard hypnotic induction - i.e. relaxed and drowsy - subjects easily achieved all the hypnotic phenomena generally described for good hypnotic subjects and with the same degree of convincing behaviour.’ (Ludwig and Lyle 1964: 73)

They also point out that ‘... subjects could be trained to pass easily from the hyperalert trance to the “sleepy” hypnotic trance, and vice versa ...’ Ludwig and Lyle 1964: 74-5) Similar comments are made by Banyai and Hilgard (1976: 218-224), Banyai (1980) and Goodman (1988: 31).

I have argued elsewhere that both possession experience and mystical experience are best understood as forms of trance experience. (Connolly 2000a; 2000b) Traditionally, the induction techniques employed for the creation of possession states (e.g. by shamans, healers and members of religious groups such as Candomble and Voodoo) are typically those used to create a hyperalert/active-alert trance in the laboratory. And like some of the laboratory subjects practitioners of these traditional methods tend, when not amnesic, to report having ecstatic experiences. (Banyai & Hilgard 1976: 222; Banyai 1980: 266; Goodman 1988b: 38) For example, the experience of a Balinese Sang Hyang Jaran dancer, who dances on fire in trance, is described by Suryani and Jensen as follows:

‘When he saw the fire, he felt that ‘a power’ had entered his body. He was happy to see the fire and he felt physically big and energetic. As the fire got bigger, he became happier and more eager to begin his performance. While dancing, his body felt light, his movements fluid, and he enjoyed touching the fire. (Suryani & Jensen 1993: 112)’

In the course of describing her own experience of possession during a dance ritual, Maya Deren writes,

‘So focused was I, at that time, upon the effort to endure, that I did not even mark the moment when this cased to be difficult and I cannot say whether it was sudden or gradual but only that my awareness of it was a sudden thing, as if the pace which had seemed unbearably demanding had slipped down a notch into slow motion, so that my mind had time, now, to wander, to observe at leisure, what a splendid thing it was, indeed, to hear the drums, to move like this, to be able to do all this so easily, to do even more if it pleased one, to elaborate to extend this movement of the arms towards greater elegance, or to counterpoint that rhythm of the heel or even to make this movement to the side, this time.’ (Deren 1975/1953:) 243)

Likewise, the activities of mystics and meditators are essentially the same as those employed in traditional hypnosis: stillness of body, attentional focus on a single outside point or internally, gradual absorption in inner experience and loss of awareness of the outside world. Most meditators do this for themselves, though usually according to the directions of a spiritual preceptor/guru, or according to some familiar set of instructions. In some instances, however, the experience is achieved under the direct influence of the teacher, who leads the practitioner through the journey with verbal instruction. (Masefield 1986a and 1986b) The results are also strikingly similar. The progressive experience in Buddhist *jhāna* and yogic *samādhi* is one of a reduction in the content of experience which brings with it a fading of the sense of personal identity, exactly the kinds of experiences reported by subjects in deep hypnosis. (e.g. Sherman 1972)⁸

This, I think, explains in brief the nature of the link between these seemingly very different experiences. They are types of trance experience which are induced in quite different ways and employed for purposes that are often also quite different. It is, therefore, legitimate to bring mystical, visionary, ecstatic, enstatic and hypnotic experiences together under the general heading of **trance**. The relationship between trance and the other states referred to in Fischer’s model has, as far as I am aware, still to be determined. If this analysis is robust, and I think it is, then ecstasy and enstasy really are ‘two sides of the same coin.’

Notes

1 Op. Cit. p.6. Eliade claims that a shaman differs from a possessed person because he or she *controls* the spirits that *possess* others (1964, pp.6 and 328), though he does acknowledge elements of “possession,” (always printed in inverted commas), in the early stages of a shaman’s career (Op. Cit. p.82). I have argued elsewhere (*A Psychology of Possession*), contra Eliade, that possession is a central feature of many shamanic experiences, and I was pleased to find, in the course of my research for this paper, some examples in Eliade’s own work that challenged his claim. One of the most significant was the report of his experience by a Goldi shaman from the Amur region of Siberia (1964, p.28). He informed Leo Sternberg that ‘When I am shamaning, the “ayami” [tutelary spirit] and the assistant spirits are possessing me: whether big or small, they penetrate me, as smoke or vapour would. When the “ayami” is within me, it is she who speaks through my mouth, and she does everything herself. When I am eating the “sukdu” (the offerings) and drinking pig’s blood ... it is not I who eat and drink, it is my “ayami” alone’ (Op. Cit. pp.72-73).’ This, we may note, comes from an experienced shaman, not a novice. A similar point is made by Edward B Harper in his report on shamanism in South India: ‘The Savara shamanic séance consists in the shaman being possessed by the spirit of the tutelary or by the god, whichever is invoked, who speaks through his voice at great length. It is the spirit that takes possession of the shaman or shamaness that reveals the cause of the illness and tells them what action is to be taken...’ (Op. Cit. p.424). In commenting on this account, Eliade writes in a footnote, ‘These

are phenomena of possession and do not necessarily imply a shamanic structure or ideology.' I do not know why Eliade was so averse to acknowledging possession by spirits as a core component of his 'shamanic complex,' though I would argue that any phenomenologist who based his or her typology on the evidence as presented would have to admit its centrality.

2 I say *can* here because in the context of brahmanical social ideology the yogin can be seen to perform an important political function: that of providing an alternative to living within the rigid constraints of caste culture and, thereby, deflecting the energies of the socially discontent away from social reform or revolution and into the politically harmless pursuit of metaphysical freedom.

3 This diagram is taken from Fischer, R. 'On Creative, Psychotic and Ecstatic States' *Art Interpretation and Art Therapy: Psychiatry and Art* (Vol.2) Karger: Basel, 1969, reprinted in White, J. (ed) *The Highest State of Consciousness*, Anchor: New York, 1972. It is essentially the same article as that reprinted in the Allman and Jaffe volume, though somewhat abbreviated. The change in the diagram is perhaps the most notable feature, though I am uncertain about the place where this second version was first published. Its character, intermediate between the 1969 and 1971 versions, suggests a date of 1970 or thereabouts.

4 Whilst I think Goodman is making a valuable point here, I would argue that some of the phenomena she identifies as manifesting in the ecstatic religious trance also have their secular counterparts, e.g. spirit possession (religious) and multiple personality disorder/dissociative identity disorder (secular). Goodman also claims that sleep, the hypnotic state and the meditative state are altered states of consciousness different from the ecstatic religious trance. By contrast, it seems to me that ecstatic religious trance, the hypnotic state and the meditative state are all examples of what might be generally called trance phenomena. The case for this has been argued by me in Connolly (2000a & 2000b) and also in the present article.

5 Will Macdonald, co-author with Richard Bandler of *An Insider's Guide to Submodalities* Meta Publications: Cupertino, 1988, personal communication.

6 Vingoe, F. 'Comparison of the Harvard Group Scale of Hypnotic Susceptibility, Form A and the Group Alert Trance Scale in a University Population' *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 21:3, 1973, pp.176-7, quoted in Temple, R. *Open To Suggestion* The Aquarian Press: Wellingborough, 1989, p.101

7 is a reprint of Deren, M. *Divine Horsemen*, Thames and Hudson: London, 1953

8 See also Tart (1970); 'Discourse on the Ariyan Quest (Ariyapariyesanasutta)' especially pp.218-219 in Horner (1976); for a discussion of the Buddhist *jhānas* see Thomas, E. J. *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (3rd ed.) Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1949/1975, chs 6 & 13; Patañjali *Yoga Sūtra* 1.41 - 1.51 and 3.1 - 3.8, translations by Feuerstein, G. *The Yoga Sūtra of Patañjali*, Dawson: Folkstone, 1979 and Woods, J. H. *The Yoga System of Patañjali*, Harvard University Press, 1914, reprinted by Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1966. This version contains translations of the commentaries by Vyāsa and Vācaspatimiśra but not the Sanskrit text.

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