

Jung, Christianity, and Buddhism

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THROUGHOUT THE PAST generation of Christianity's encounter with Buddhism, the role played by Jungian psychology has been ancillary at best. True, Jung's ideas are cited with a certain regularity, but for some reason the systematic body of thought he left behind has not attracted Christians or Buddhists as a common forum for mutual criticism and enrichment. In this essay I would like to draw attention to what I see as an unnecessary closure in Jung's idea of the psyche and to suggest how its opening could nudge Christianity and Buddhism into closer contact with each other and with the shifts that have taken place in the general spirituality of our age.

The body of writings Jung left behind is at once forbidding and fascinating. The sheer volume of his output, which continues to grow as notes from his seminars and other unpublished material are added, makes it more and more unlikely that any but a small coterie of devoted specialists will take the time to become familiar with the whole. Even so, the academic background the specialist needs to read with understanding all but ensures that large blocks of his work will simply be skimmed over uncritically. For the same reason, general readers, in which group one must include the greater part of Jungian analysts, commentators, and critics, tend to dip into his writings randomly according to their needs and to rely on secondary sources for general outlines of his thought. As a result, Jung's influence, while it reflects the breadth of his interests, tends to flow in most cases from no more than a small portion of his work.

Still, the captivating quality of Jung's work greatly outshines the impossible demands he places on his readers. The maps he drew of the psyche and the wealth of clinical and historical material he snares with his interpretative nets have a way of relativizing one's ordinary way of thinking about the experiences of life and of lending depth to his frequent asides about self-actualization, culture, and religion.

And everywhere, between the lines, the unmistakable traces of personal experience that work a subtle seduction on the reader. Simply put, Jung's ideas cannot be approached from books about Jung's ideas. One has first to enter into the atmosphere of his thought and breathe it in, resisting the gullibility or hasty skepticism that it is wont to prompt from the unprepared. He is not the only thinker of whom this can be said, of course, but the way his disciples and critics have abused his work makes it worth repeating at the outset of yet another secondhand account of his ideas.

The Jungian Model of Religious Self-Realization

Basic to Jung's psychology is the idea that the psyche is equipped by nature with a "religious function" as universal and invariable as our biological functions. Just as the sexual drive is on a different order from the drive to eat, one that lifts it above the merely instinctual and engages the whole of the personality—an insight Jung accepted as sealed by the achievement of Freud—so the religious function of the psyche rises to a still higher order to embrace all of the lower instincts and channel them in the service of a quest for the meaning of life. The drive to religious expression was a kind of natural therapy for the most profoundly natural "pathology" of the human psyche, namely the pursuit of the ever-elusive ideal of self-realization. "I did not attribute a religious function to the soul," Jung insisted. "I merely produced the facts which prove that the soul is *naturaliter religiosa*."¹ What is natural to the soul, he insisted from his early writings, is not any particular set of religious doctrines, experiences, images, or rituals, but rather the drive to heal the wound that our nature has inflicted on us, to become a truer, fuller Self in symbols coincident with the religious symbolism encoded in language, culture, and art throughout human history.

Jung went further. This coincidence of innate desire for Selfhood with religious symbols was not restricted to what had been learned by personal acquaintance, but pointed to a common fund of images whose basic patterns were ingrained in the psyche from birth. To exercise the religious function was to pursue the highest task for which nature had equipped us and to discover a collectivity with men and women of all times and places. To be religious was not to undertake something particularly noble that set one off from the rest of people. It was to participate willingly in a law of nature as inexorable as the law of gravity.

To give this religious function its proper place in the psyche and not reduce it to a kind of paraphenomenon parasitic on other psychic functions, Jung had to remap the psyche. To do so, he had to break with Freud's hydraulic model of

¹ *Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961–), 12:13 (hereafter cited as CW).

ego–super-ego–unconscious in which religious conventions and practices served to channel, subdue, disperse, or otherwise occlude basic libidinal energies (of the unconscious) in order to prevent them from menacing the human relationships and social order (the super-ego) that are necessary for the individual (ego) to function in a community of other individuals. To Jung, Freud’s idea of the healthy individual as one awakened to the pathology of its unconscious *repressions* of instinctual drives and yet resigned to the need to consciously *suppress* those drives that, if left uncontrolled, would reduce human interaction to chaos and lawlessness, seemed too restrictive. Human life was not simply an unqualified tragedy in which the individual mind was trapped as an unwilling spectator; it was also a search for meaning that would awaken the individual mind to the wider reaches of mind. Jung’s view of the human condition did not in principle sweep Freud’s pessimistic wisdom under the rug; it merely insisted that his was not the whole story.

To distinguish the psychic “function” of the religious function from that of the biological and sexual instincts, Jung needed to demonstrate a teleology in the psyche that unfolded as part of a natural process. He called this process *individuation* and around it redrew his map of the psyche. In interpreting any particular product of unconscious mind, it was not enough to locate its origins in the past or translate it into the more objective terms of psychological theory; it had also to be seen as a step on an inner journey, retreating from the goal of true Selfhood or advancing towards it. The path of individuation gave a dynamism and orientation to the otherwise static structure of his map of the psyche. I suspect that this was why Jung resisted the two-dimensional diagrams of the psyche that his disciples have always been so fond of using to explain his thought.²

THE EGO-CENTERED PSYCHE

The central focus of all psychology, Jung’s included, is the familiar but mysterious phenomenon called consciousness. Like his predecessors in the new science, Jung accepted from philosophy the idea that consciousness is concentrated primarily in a central, controlling “ego” that is conscious of itself. (Jung himself cites Natorp, but the origins of the ego as a grammatical substantive go back to Fichte.) But while there is no consciousness without a conscious ego—in his somewhat confusing terms, an ego aware of consciousness as “the relation of psychic contents to the ego”³—Jung knew from his doctoral study of a case of multiple personalities that the ego is not the totality of consciousness. In time he came to speak of it as

² The classic diagrams can be found in Jolande Jacobi’s *The Psychology of C. G. Jung* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). I recall discussing these once with Dr. Jacobi at her home and learning how annoyed Jung has been with her attempts to systematize what he understood as a more fluid process.

³ *CW* 6:421.

an “ego-complex” to distinguish it from other complexes that can cohabit the psyche without being related to the ego in a conscious manner. Insofar as these non-ego complexes or “emotionally-toned contents having a certain amount of autonomy,” nuclei of meaning around which cluster memories, wishes, fears, duties, needs, or insights that frequently interfere with conscious life,⁴ are not related to the ego, they form a class of psychic events that Jung calls “the unconscious.” Just as consciousness as such is not understood as an entity but only as an activity that keeps psychic contents in touch with the ego, so, too, the unconscious is not an entity but an activity of the psyche that manages psychic contents not in touch with the ego, or at least not yet in touch with it.

From his clinical practice Jung realized that the realm of the unconscious is a manifold of phenomena that differ widely from one another in their origin, their meaning, and their importance for consciousness. The burden of his psychology as a “depth psychology” was to demonstrate that the unconscious is not a mere hodgepodge of items thrown together into the same pot, their only common element being their absence from ego-consciousness, but a structured process with its own conditions and its own aims for altering ego-consciousness. As time went on, he came to see that the unconscious contents were more determined and more goal-oriented in proportion as they were more removed from the personal history and experience of the conscious ego. This was reflected in his distinction between a *personal* and a *collective* unconscious.

PERSONAL UNCONSCIOUS

The personal unconscious is the repository of feelings, thoughts, memories, and other psychic events that had once appeared in conscious experience, even if only fleetingly, but had then receded from consciousness for one reason or another. The category is a broad one, including subliminal and semiconscious perceptions, memories that had slipped the mind, embarrassments and skeletons in the closet, traumatic memories repressed out of fear, and unwanted desires suppressed out of free choice. The manner of their fall into unconscious was one determining factor in their recovery. Certain of these contents could be retrieved by a simple focus of attention; others required hypnosis or some other relaxation of conscious control; still others demanded considerable conscious effort.

But there is another and more important determining factor: the unconscious can act on its own and throw these contents up to consciousness without any particular wish that this happen and often against the expressed wish that they reappear. This can take any number of pathological forms, from obsessive behavior to a splitting of consciousness where one or more complexes other than the ego tem-

⁴ CW 6:528.

porarily take over. But the paradigmatic instance of this is the dream or semiconscious state in which the critical controls of the ego have been relaxed and the mind is able to act with no more than a flicker or spark of ego to record what is happening. In this state, perceptions can move from the fringe of consciousness to the center, and contents lost in the deeper recesses of memory can reappear. These latter were what interested Jung in particular, as indeed they had captivated Freud, both because of the manner in which they made their reappearance and because they were a pathology that brought along the medicine to cure it.

When unconscious memories not normally within direct reach of ordinary, waking consciousness reappear to the eye of the ego that has relaxed its control of the psyche, they are less likely to appear as a perceptual replay of a prerecorded event than as an imaginary reconstruction. These reconstructions range from the obvious to the highly enigmatic, but in either case the alterations in dramatis personae, the addition of fantasy-imagery as well as of color, sound, smell, and action that accompany the memory present a cross-section of the current state of the personal unconscious. It is through the interpretation of these reconstructions that the contents of the personal unconscious are *appropriated* by the ego into consciousness. For Jung, careful attention to these reconstructions—for which one typically needs another to aid in insuring that the blindspots on the ego that kept the original memory out of consciousness in the first place do not reassert themselves in the interpretation—recovers what rightfully belongs to consciousness.

Clearly this requires an act of trust in the spontaneous working of the unconscious that sets the agenda for the restoration of its contents into consciousness. At first sight this might seem a rather perilous leap of faith, since there is no neutral standpoint from which one can look at conscious and unconscious mind and decide what the latter is up to with its intrusions into the former. A first and simple explanation is that there is nothing dire about recalling what has been forgotten, whatever the motives, since it is in the nature of consciousness to grasp the world of experience in its entirety and omit nothing; and in any case, what has been recovered is more likely to be accessible to judgment than what has been buried.

Jung wanted more. He wanted to show that appropriation of the contents of personal unconscious was not the goal of the psyche but only a stage along the way, and that the orientation to that goal would itself become clearer as the individuation process progressed. It was, he said, as if the light of ego-consciousness had a dark side, a *shadow* he called it, that stood in the way of the deeper mysteries of the psyche. Confrontation with this shadow was a necessary catharsis for the further stages of individuation, and required a sustained and often painful dredging up of unpleasant memories and aspects to one's personality that would rather be forgotten or at least hidden from the view of others. Clinical experience led him to conclude that the struggle with the personal unconscious was generally the business of

the “first half of life,” and that at some point—at an opportune moment that one was not free to choose—the struggle would open up the business of the “second half of life,” usually after the age of thirty-five, that of “finding a religious outlook on life.”⁵

COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

The idea of layering the unconscious did not come all at once to Jung; he always insisted it was something the data gathered in clinical experience had gradually driven him to as a scientist, but there was a good deal more to it than that. It is a complex tale—complicated by frequent discrepancies in the way Jung chose to remember the events from the way others did—involving his interest from university years in parapsychology and spiritualistic phenomena, his captivation by psychoanalysis and his eventual rejection of the role of Crown Prince that Freud had ordained for him, a longstanding resistance to theology and organized religion born of an unhappy relationship with his father, and, most importantly, the dreams and visions of his patients that did not fit the models of the psyche he found around him.

To make a long story pedantically short,⁶ somewhere around the age of thirty-five Jung began to notice that certain of the images thrown up to the mind in dreams or fantasies or free-association contained material that did not fit the model of the psyche he had inherited from Freud and his predecessors.⁷ In particular, he noticed symbolic representations whose form could not be accounted for by the patient’s past experience, education, or subliminal perceptions, and whose meaning seemed unrelated to the repression of libido or unresolved interpersonal conflicts.

Many of these representations he recognized as religious or quasi-religious in content. Some of them seemed obliquely related to familiar Judeo-Christian imagery, though even so in distortions that were suggestive of more than pent-up psychic pressures; others took forms completely unfamiliar to the patient but which Jung recognized from his avocational reading of esoteric and arcane literature. In time he came to see that this kind of imagery did not always appear in pure form but had been intruding regularly in the more familiar imagery he had been interpreting with the ordinary kit of psychoanalytical tools. It was as if something was being dredged up from a “deeper” level of the psyche and on its way to the surface of consciousness had affixed itself to complexes residing at shallower levels. He concluded that the unconscious was not merely working to *restore* to the tiny

⁵ CW 11:334.

⁶ I have made it considerably longer, though I fear no less pedantic, in my *Imago Dei: A Study of C. G. Jung’s Psychology of Religion* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1981, 2nd edition).

⁷ Freud eventually accepted the hypothesis of “the archaic heritage of mankind” that includes “memory traces of former generations.” *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Random House, 1967), 125–7.

island of the ego what had once been conscious but to *invite* the ego to previously unknown dimensions of the psyche, “a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness.”⁸

As he pursued this idea, Jung gradually came to see that this guidance was not arbitrary or haphazard but in fact goal-oriented. In addition to the buildup of pressure in the repressed areas of unconscious mind and its periodic eruptions into consciousness, it was as if there were other, profounder currents in the unconscious that were ready and waiting to guide the ego beyond the conventional confines of self-understanding. The presence of imagery equipped with its own intentionality but not able to be accounted for by individual experience led Jung to posit a layer of *collective unconscious* beneath the more personal unconscious that had occupied the attention of the psychoanalytic movement up to that time, and to posit a process of individuation that inclined the ego, by nature, to pursue an understanding of these inner psychic depths.

Jung regarded this dimension of psyche as inherited by each of us at birth in the same mysterious way that we inherit consciousness. At the same time, just as there is no way for ego to experience consciousness except through acquaintance with conscious contents, so, too, there is no way for ego-consciousness to experience unconscious mind in general except through acquaintance with particular contents. But acquaintance was not enough. The innate desire to know that drives ego-consciousness beyond mere perception to talk and reason about experience has always to cope with the tendency of the ego to satisfy itself prematurely rather than to exercise its critical faculties to the full. To appropriate the contents of the unconscious reasonably and to give them a place in the story of one’s life required effort. The exercise of this effort is further complicated by the fact that the manifestations of the collective unconscious tend to take highly symbolic shape not easily reducible to conventional psychological categories. Clearly a new hermeneutic had to be forged, and in this way Jung’s psychology took a decisive and irreversible turn towards the symbolic.

THE ARCHETYPES

As the name *collective* suggests, the contents and orientation of this deepest level of the unconscious are universal, common to all human beings.⁹ The personal expe-

⁸ CW 13:11.

⁹ Jung did not make any significant allowance for differences between the masculine and the feminine ego-consciousness. Male and female symbols in the collective unconscious were another matter, of course, but in consciousness as such the affect of gender is seen primarily via the *persona* that one presented in human society, a “mask” that is typically displaced by a figure of the opposite sex in the confrontation with one’s shadow side (see especially CW 10:113-33). He also suspected that the collective unconscious may show layers of ethnic, racial, cultural, and family particularities at its higher levels, and may even have affinities to the instinctual life of preconscious beings at its deeper levels, but these are ideas he never pursued to any length.

rience or development of ego-consciousness of the individual subject may dictate to some extent the secondary symbolic attributes of unconscious thrown up to it, but the matrix behind the symbols and their basic orientation is shared in common by all men and women everywhere. This matrix had evolved parallel to the general biological evolution of the species, and probably was still evolving, but at a pace so negligible that Jung had no trouble assuming it to be the same for a contemporary Tokyo fishmonger and an ancient Egyptian pharaoh.

Jung also referred to this level of the psyche as *objective* and *impersonal* in order to distinguish it from the personal subjectivity of ego-consciousness. It was as if each individual were fitted out at birth with a built-in tradition whose survival and evolution were relatively independent of the events and experience that would follow in the course of life. Unlike the contents of the personal unconscious, it was not invented, only discovered. As collective, universal, objective, and impersonal, this layer of mind could hardly be amorphous and random. At the same time, since its activity increased as the activity of the ego dimmed, its structure could not be observed directly but only be inferred from what floated to the surface of consciousness in the form of those emotionally-laden clusters of representations Jung had called complexes.

Now, in the same way that unconscious complexes form in the personal unconscious in opposition to the central complex of the conscious ego, the collective layer of the unconscious was also animated by complexes that erupted into consciousness, catching the ego off-guard in sleep or fantasy or otherwise “lowered thresholds” of ego-activity. The problem was how to distinguish them from the pathological contents of repressed consciousness, and, once isolated, how to organize them in such a way as to grasp the essential patterns that regulated the contents and activity of the collective unconscious. There had to be something about the quality of the imagery itself and the way it was dramatized that would alert us to its collective nature.

Jung was never too precise in defining this elemental stage of his heuristic. All indications are that, like so many creative ideas, he had leaped to the conclusion and worked out later the logical route that would justify it as a consequence. Borrowing the general outlines of mythological theory circulating among scholars of anthropology, folklore, primitive religions, and literature, he set out in search of more or less invariable patterns in unconscious material that did not seem to be tied to personal experience, patterns that would govern both the form of the imagery and the process of their interaction. The mind was a maker of myths, and he would be their interpreter. This was the basic insight that lay behind his postulation of *archetypes* that appeared in the form of *archetypal images* and *archetypal processes*. Once committed to seeing productions of the mind as mythological, he was in a position to turn his psychology boldly in the direction of religion. Given

his Christian predisposition to identify the core of religion as relationship to a divinity, all he needed to justify viewing the phenomena of religion as a natural function of the psyche was to identify the particular archetypal imagery and process that played the role of God.

SELF

Although a complete catalogue of the collective archetypes could not be made, Jung was convinced that their number was limited and that, like the rest of the human organism, they evolved very slowly. At the same time, the longer he used the idea to interpret unconscious phenomena, the more he came to see a hierarchy among archetypal images and an invariable tendency for one-sided images to generate their complementary opposites. From there he concluded that the psyche must be preconditioned to seek a kind of balance in which all the opposites are preserved harmoniously. Since this preconditioning is archetypal and not dependent on the experiences or beliefs of the individual, it is only natural that the psyche should express itself symbolically as an archetype of wholeness. This Jung called the *Self*.

Since it is the tendency towards wholeness and not the actual wholeness itself that is preconditioned, archetypal imagery that shows the psyche as a whole at work will reflect the shifts and imbalances of the advance towards wholeness, whereas the imagery of the completed whole will take the form of a more static harmony. In other words, the functioning of the Self is inherently ambivalent. As the psychic *totality* of the person, the Self is something real, refracted through images bound together by the logic of a play of opposites. As the goal of psychic *wholeness*, it is an ideal, imaginable but never fully attainable.

Clearly, the Self was the king of all the archetypes for Jung, the highest expression of the nature and purpose of the human mind. It embraced all the other archetypes as their final end and defined them as milestones on the path of individuation. As the supreme psychic reality, only images of unsurpassable supremacy could express it. At the same time, since the archetype was too big for any single image to satisfy, it could only be inferred from comparative study of images across time and culture. Given the way Jung had remapped the psyche and the data of unconscious imagery he had accumulated, his conclusion was foregone: archetypal imagery of the Self would naturally assume forms indistinguishable from the forms of supreme being or principle found in religious beliefs throughout history.

As he always insisted, it was archetypal *form* he was speaking of, not of any underlying ontological reality. Whether or not there turned out to be a higher reality that had fashioned the psyche to seek it by seeking itself, the science of psychology was not in a position to say. Jung was adamant on maintaining silence in this regard, to the point of begging all the questions that theologians and scholars of religion would throw up at him. His main concern was maintaining a position

beyond the reach of the canons of self-criticism that traditional religion had forged, so that he could draw freely on the data of religious studies, first, to interpret the unconscious imagery of his patients, and second, to turn the tools of psychology to consider the psychological merits and demerits of traditional religious imagery.

Not surprisingly, the major focus of Jung's study of the religious form of the archetype of the Self was the triune God of Western Christianity. Outside corroboration came in his study of Western alchemy. As he studied the texts, he became convinced that he had discovered the psychological key that unlocked the mysteries of this esoteric mixture of primitive science and theological speculation. By identifying the alchemical *opus* with the process of individuation, and the philosopher's stone with the Self, he was able to reread the apparent distortions of received doctrine as attempts to "complete" the God-imagery of Western theology in line with the natural workings of the psyche.

The complexity with which Jung worked this out belies the simplicity of the logical pattern behind it: any image of the Self must crystallize the fundamental oppositions of the psyche itself and hence must transcend the simple negation of any function of the mind by any other. Its ideal form would be that of the mandala structured as pairs of opposites joined at a unifying center. Hence, to a trinitarian God-image that was all light and goodness and justice and masculinity, Jung added the psychic balance of darkness, evil, arbitrariness, and femininity—an ideal of wholeness realized consciously in the God-man affixed to a tree that joined the heavens with the earth.¹⁰ By forfeiting the *perfection* of the Christian God, he had restored its *completeness*, and in so doing had satisfied his own demand for a Christian myth commensurate with the search for psychic wholeness.

Jung was far less direct when it came to criticizing images from traditions outside the Judeo-Christian sphere, but not in locating them on the map of the psyche or incorporating them into his critique of Christian self-understanding. "Living in the West," he wrote, "I would have to say Christ instead of 'Self,' in the Near East, it would be Khidr, in the Far East atman or Tao or the Buddha, in the Far West maybe a hare or Mandamin, and in cabalism it would be Tifereth."¹¹ This at the level of conscious speech; at that level of unconscious imagery, any of these, and a great many more, could represent the Self, independently of the previous knowledge of the subject. The soul had become a record of the religious history of humanity, not because of some genetically inherited database of knowledge, but

¹⁰ On the distinction between the *imago Dei* as potential or ideal and as actually achieved, see *CW* 9/2:37-8.

¹¹ *CW* 10:410. J. J. Clarke reckons that while the symbol of Christ appears frequently in Jung's writings as an archetype of wholeness, it is doubtful whether he personally derived much spiritual satisfaction from this image (*Jung and Eastern Thought*, 78). I had never thought of this before, but I have to admit, on second thought, that I have the same impression.

because the matrix of all religion has been given to all of us in the form of a natural inclination to wholeness. If the highest function of the psyche was to become a whole Self, and if the recognition of this function entailed awareness of religious images as natural attempts of the psyche to inaugurate this process, then the psyche is fundamentally religious.

Jung and the Buddhist-Christian Dialogue

Given Jung's own pioneering attempts to pry Christian tradition open to the truth of other religions and his considerable efforts to appropriate Eastern thinking into his understanding of the psyche, the neglect of his thought in interreligious dialogue is more than a little surprising. In addition to the many Christian thinkers who have acknowledged Jung's influence in their attempts to appropriate Buddhist ideas, there are any number of Buddhist thinkers who have picked up on his theory as a way to initiate contact between Buddhist teaching and the psychology of unconscious mind. The literature that reflects this is ample and widely translated. For all that, Jungian psychology as such has not been accepted as a rational foundation for sustained intellectual exchange among Christians and Buddhists.

JUNG'S EXCLUSION FROM THE DIALOGUE

Nothing in Jung's writings or correspondence, published or otherwise, seems to offer a suitable explanation. Even a review of the brief dialogue Jung held with the Zen Master Hisamatsu Shin'ichi at Küssnacht in 1958 leaves us empty-handed. Jung himself was profoundly dissatisfied with the meeting; he found the transcript so full of errors of translation and misunderstandings that he expressly forbade its publication.¹² In the end one has the impression that the participants were unprepared to learn much from one another, or at least that their resistance to the expectations of the organizers kept them at a distance from one another. At the same time, one is left with the sense of a vast, uncharted sea for which Jung's thought would at one future date provide useful tools for navigation.

For his part, Jung welcomed the dialogue with the East in general and was flattered by the suggestion that his thought might serve as a bridge. Indeed, in a letter dated the same day as his meeting with Hisamatsu, he wrote, "It has happened to me more than once that educated East Asians rediscovered the meaning of their philosophy or religion only through reading my books."¹³ At the same time, he

¹² The text was, however, reprinted in *Self and Liberation: The Jung/Buddhism Dialogue*, ed. by Daniel J. Meckel and Robert L. Moore (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), together with the responses of Jung and Hisamatsu and a transcript of a roundtable discussion held in Kyoto afterwards to assess the encounter (103–27).

¹³ *C. G. Jung Letters*, vol. 2: 1951–1961 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 438.

never abandoned his early suspicions about Western Christians rushing East in search of what is right under their feet:

Shall we be able to put on, like a new suit of clothes, ready-made symbols grown on foreign soil, saturated with foreign blood, spoken in a foreign tongue, nourished by a foreign culture, interwoven with foreign history, and so resemble a beggar who wraps himself in a kingly raiment, a king who disguises himself as a beggar?...

We are, surely, the rightful heirs of Christian symbolism, but somehow we have squandered this heritage. We have let the house our fathers built fall into decay, and now we try to break into Oriental palaces that our fathers never knew.¹⁴

This was written in 1934, when his knowledge of the East was still rather meager, the same year in which he turned down an invitation to go to China.¹⁵ In the following years, partly in preparation for a trip to India three years later, he began to read more widely, as reflected in his writings and correspondence. Still, his misgivings about the escape to the East remained with him to the end. The year before he died, Jung came across Arthur Koestler's essays on "Yoga Unexpurgated" and "The Stink of Zen"¹⁶ and found himself largely sympathetic with their critique of Western ideas of the East. (In a little known aside in a letter confirming his opinion, he says of the author of *Zen in the Art of Archery*, "It is just pathetic to see a man like Herrigel acquiring the art of Zen archery, a non-essential if ever there was one, with the utmost devotion...."¹⁷ Jung's comment should not be read as a criticism of the Zen art, but of a man whom he knew to have been a confirmed Nazi distracting his conscience through Eastern religion.¹⁸) But that Jung should have insisted on his own moorings in the Christian West hardly disqualifies his thought

¹⁴ *CW* 9/1:14–15. See also *Letters*, vol. 2, 247, where Jung advises a correspondent to do everything she can to get her son back to Europe from the monastery he had joined in India.

¹⁵ The proposal seems to have originated with Erwin Rousselle, then director of the China Institute in Frankfurt. See B. Hannah, *Jung: His Life and Work* (Wilmette: Chiron Publication, 1974, 1997), 240.

¹⁶ These would appear later that year in Koestler's *The Lotus and the Robot*.

¹⁷ *Letters*, vol. 2, 602.

¹⁸ In 1961 Gershom Scholem wrote an open letter in response to Koestler's criticisms of Zen, informing him of the "carefully hushed" secret that Herrigel joined the Nazi Party after the outbreak of the war. Although biographical notes prepared by his widow make no mention of the fact, Scholem learned of it in 1946 from a circle of former friends of Herrigel's who claimed that he had remained a convinced Nazi to the end. See *Encounter* 16/2 (1961): 96.

A recent essay by Yamada Shōji 山田奨治 has punctured the myth surrounding Herrigel's "Zen" with some rather definitive holes. Although Herrigel himself came to Japan in search of Zen and decided to pursue its connections with archery, his teacher, Awa Kenzō 阿波研造, had no experience of Zen himself and was not the advocate of Zen ideas he is made out to be. Further, on the evidence of Herrigel's interpreter, supported by other facts, Yamada shows that key spiritual episodes related in the book either occurred when there was no interpreter present or were Herrigel's distortions of what he was told. See 「神話としての弓と禅」 [The myth of Zen and archery], 『日本研究』19 (1999): 15–34.

from playing a role in the Buddhist-Christian encounter. If experience has taught us anything, it is that just such a sense of identity enhances the possibility of authentic dialogue.

Though it has only been a generation since Jung's death, the level of education in religious studies in the Christian West and a corresponding improvement in popular understanding have meant a more critical audience for the kinds of generalizations depth psychology imposes on data outside its field. That Jung's cloak as an authority on world religions should have frayed in the process is hardly to be wondered at. On the one hand, Western Christian participants in the dialogue with Buddhism are too well informed of the great advances that have taken place in Buddhist studies to consider Jung the authority on Buddhist ideas he may once have been considered to be.¹⁹ On the other, Buddhist thinkers entering into dialogue are aware that Jung's reflections on Christian dogma are held suspect by the majority of Christian theologians, and that his greater expertise in more esoteric and arcane currents of the Christian tradition is no substitute for confrontation with the Christian mainstream. Given the important role that the Christian mystical tradition has played in the dialogue, this amounts to no more than a short fall from a small pedestal; it is hardly enough reason to erase the wider possibilities for its deepening the intellectual encounter among the two religions. Whatever Jung's status as a representative of Buddhist or Christian thought—in any event, even his diminished authority as a scholar of world religions leaves him standing head and shoulders above most of those devoted to interreligious dialogue—surely the mysterious inner world of the psyche as such still offers an important forum where religions can meet, leaving their dogmas at the door, and pursue together the elusive quest for a common humanity that transcends religious differences. And as psychologies of the unconscious go, surely Jung's remains as respectable and accessible to the twentieth-century mind as ever.

It is often said, not without a hint of distrust, that the driving force behind the encounter of Buddhism with Christianity has come from the Christian West. Even if this were true, there is little cause for shame in accepting the accusation. The enthusiasm for dialogue with Buddhism, for all its failings in the concrete, is one of the major contributions of Christianity to the religious health of modern times, just as the repression of that enthusiasm has to be reckoned among the most pathological forces in Christian faith today. In my experience the initiative to dialogue is less a continuation of "orientalism" than its critique. What is more, the

¹⁹ See J. J. Clarke, *Jung and Eastern Thought: A Dialogue with the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1994), part 3. Although a number of broadsides and sideswipes are mixed indiscriminately with more serious appraisals, it is a good catalogue of Buddhist criticisms of Jungian thought. More complete bibliographical information can be found in John Borelli, "C. G. Jung and Eastern Religious Traditions: An Annotated Bibliography," in Harold Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 191–212.

sources of the inspiration are far more diverse than changes going on in the missionary ideal of Christianity. One has only to think of the many Christian scholars who have found a sure footing for their dialogue in Buddhist philosophies like that of the Kyoto-school thinkers Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani, a body of thought that has prompted as many Japanese Buddhists to take the initiative in the encounter with Christianity. And there are other examples from the Buddhist world that come to mind when the focus of the dialogue shifts from doctrine to religious experience and social ethics.

Even so, this is only part of the picture. In the end, the most decisive spiritual force behind the search of Buddhist and Christian scholars for a common forum to discuss questions of religion and to reassess their self-understanding may belong to the general spiritual atmosphere of our age in which people feel less affinity for traditional religion than for the kind of thinking that Jung represented. Yet why should so timely, cross-cultural, and open-minded a venture as this have reduced the psychology of religion in general, and Jungian psychology in particular, to so incidental a role?

In asking the question and then dismissing the obvious answers, my aim is not to clear the air for a better diagnosis and then suggest a forum for Buddhist-Christian dialogue grounded on Jung's thought. I want rather to shift the question in order to suggest another way of bringing Jung into the dialogue.

A JUNG-BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

The intellectual dialogue between Buddhists and Christians today—excluding encounters limited to a mere exchange of information—has concentrated itself in two models which we may call the comparative and the ethical.

The *comparative model of dialogue* consists of a common, more or less neutral, forum into which each side can enter to discuss selected ideas from their respective traditions. In addition to the general rules of rational discussion, such a forum typically structures itself around a specific set of ideas that provide a common focus and language. In principle this superstructure can range from the generalized concepts, more or less explicit, that define a particular discipline (such as philosophy, anthropology, hermeneutics, comparative religions, psychology, or sociology) to the more specific concerns of particular currents or schools of thought (such as phenomenology, structuralism, Marxism, or psychoanalysis), and even to particular thinkers (such as Tillich, Rhadakrishnan, Nishida, Eliade, or Whitehead). The range of possibilities, only a few of them explored in practice, is as wide as the study of religion itself. As long as comparative dialogue preserves this protean character, it protects itself from expropriation by the new breed of "specialists" nipping at its heels like sheepdogs trying to drive the flock into its own corrals.

The aim of the comparative dialogue is insight: an increased awareness of the variety of religious worldviews and values, a reawakening to things neglected or forgotten in one's own tradition, and eventually a reform of self-understanding in the light of what has been learned. It is a kind of experiment in mutual conversion whose success or failure depends not only on the academic level of the discussions but also on the receptivity of the participants to rethinking the conventions of their own belief.

The *ethical model of dialogue* brings Buddhist and Christians together by focusing their respective traditions on a common ethical concern. Though no less subject to the demands of reason, the ethical dialogue differs from the academic in taking its agenda from the injustices, oppressions, and environmental destruction at work in history. At times the agenda may take the more general form of the search for religious ideas to stimulate awareness or formulate principles. At times it may address a specific issue with a view to concerted action by the participants themselves. In either event, it looks beyond the metanoia of the academic to the world outside, to stimulate specific moral sensitivities or even concrete praxis.

Given the choice of these two forms of intellectual dialogue and the absence of a social ethic,²⁰ Jungian psychology seems better suited to serve the aims of the academic model than those of the ethical. (Admittedly its therapeutic techniques could also prove useful in forms of dialogue that concentrate on the practice of meditation). There is another option, however: Jungian psychology can enter the dialogue as a third partner alongside Buddhist and Christianity.

At first glance, the suggestion may sound mischievous, or at least somewhat odd. For one thing, psychology is not religion; for another, the writings of a single individual can hardly be expected to stand shoulder to shoulder with major world religions. But what if there were issues that challenge the future evolution of depth psychology itself, issues that can be clearly formulated in the context of Jung's work and that at the same time challenge the future of Buddhism and Christianity? In other words, say that there are certain religious questions arising in our time for which traditional religions like Buddhism and Christianity lack the doctrinal basis to reformulate or respond to; and say that these same questions demand a revision of psychological theory. In such circumstances, surely a psychology like Jung's, deeply committed to the importance of religion as it is, could be welcomed not as a common foundation for an ongoing dialogue but as a kind of tugboat to pull the Buddhist-Christian dialogue out of its harbor and into the open, uncharted sea.

²⁰ I have taken this question up at some length in 「ユング心理学と公的自己」 [Jungian psychology and the public self], 『南山宗教文化研究所報』 9 (1999). Elsewhere I have argued, in a contrast of James with Jung, that the idea of the "primacy of religious experience" does not of itself require a bracketing of general ethical questions of the age nor the exclusion of the moral dimension from the evaluation of the "truth" of a theory. "The Myth of the Primacy of Religious Experience: Towards a Restoration of the Moral Dimension," *Academia* (Nanzan University) 64 (1998):25-45.

Jung's original work began from a daring conviction that psychology had a great deal to learn from the data its theories had overlooked. Our aim in drawing his work into the dialogue is to emulate his courage, not his answers. The questions that I believe urge this *heuristic model of dialogue* on us, do not belong to the usual sorts of criticisms one hears Buddhists or Christians raising against Jung, nor to the criticisms Jung levels against them. They come from a religiosity of a different sort. A brief skepsis on his ideas of ego and Self can help specify what kinds of questions I have in mind.

A Skepsis of Ego and Self

UNDISCOVERED SELF, UNERADICABLE EGO

However much Jung insisted that ego-consciousness was only one part of the psyche, whose true center was the Self, in an important sense his psychology remained centered on the concrete individual as the subject of the first person singular. He always made it clear that his first duty as a therapist was to the individual. This was more than a statement about the therapeutic setting. It reflected his conviction about the "profound unimportance" of general events of world history in comparison with the "essential" life of the individual, which becomes more unreasonable, irresponsible, emotional, erratic, and unreliable the larger the group.²¹ As a result, Jung took a dim view of group therapy. But more than that, he completely excluded the notion of collective consciousness from his map of the psyche. He was not unaware of theories of the social determination of knowledge, not to mention Freud's notion of the super-ego, but he could not use the term without immediately railing against the dangers of "collectivism" and complaining of the "almost unbridgeable gap" between collective consciousness and the collective unconscious.²² It is one thing to argue that collectivity and consciousness are mutually exclusive. It is another to conclude that the shape that the public world of custom, law, social convention, and language give to individual consciousness is only important to the extent that it disrupts the work of consciousness, in which case it is a personal problem usually couched in symbolic form.²³ Apparently Jung did not see the difference.²⁴

²¹ CW 10:149; 18:571.

²² The longest passage I know in his works appears in CW 8:217–22.

²³ We see this reflected in a late letter in which he admitted that the problem of ethics "cannot be caught in any formula, twist and turn it as I may; for what we are dealing with here is the will of God.... Therefore I cannot reason about ethics. I feel it unethical because it is a presumption." *Letters, vol. 2, 379–80.*

²⁴ Barbara Hannah recalls Jung saying that he was aware how much his focus on the individual had moved him to the fringe of collectivity, rendering his approach too "one-sided." *Jung, 290.* And in a late interview, he is reported to have said that "it is absolutely necessary that you study man also in his social and general environ-

This sense of duty to the individual and distrust of the collective affected his thinking on the structure and teleology of the psyche. Consciousness by itself did not distinguish the human from the rest of the animal world, but the knowledge that one was conscious did. In the same way, it is not the mere fact of unconscious events in the mind that raised the collective unconscious above animal instinct, but conscious attention to these events. And the locus of this self-awareness, the one who did the knowing and the attending, was what Jung denominated the ego. It is therefore a mistake to think of the ego as an “everyday” knowing subject and the Self as another “truer” or “deeper” knowing subject that takes over in proportion as the ego is dissolved. The peculiar economy of Jung’s language, in which strict definition of terms so easily relaxes into metaphor, is partly to blame for this idea of one “center” displacing another in the psyche. At the same time, since it was not merely an objective account of how the mind works but the *transformation* of the individual’s self-knowledge that interested Jung, and since he saw this “individuation” as a confrontation with the imagery thrown up from the unconscious mind, it was inevitable that symbolic representations of the process would not coincide with more precise psychological theory. In any case, it is the latter that concerns us here.

Jung nowhere denies that all self-awareness and self-identity require a conscious subject. In the normal, healthy mind this means a single, unified, ego. When some other complex usurps control from the ego, self-awareness and self-identity disintegrate. This is normal in sleep or fantasy or some other lowering of consciousness; it is indeed the very definition of an unconscious event. In the waking state it is pathological. In this sense, there is nothing in principle to distinguish the working of the unconscious in the sane individual from the clinically insane. The difference is that the latter remains submerged in the unconscious while the former returns to the conscious ego. Jung’s aim was never to displace the ego with some other complex, however deeply imbedded in the collective recesses of the mind, but always to expand the self-awareness of the ego. The *impulse* to this expansion may come from outside the ego, but from start to finish, the encounter with the unconscious has to be seen as the work of one and the same first-personal, individual subject. Indeed, the unconscious “cannot be investigated at all without the interaction of the observing consciousness.”²⁵ On the contrary, “it must be reckoned a psychic catastrophe when *the ego is assimilated by the Self.*”²⁶

The idea of the Self did not, then, aim at uprooting the ego and replacing it with an alternate center of subjectivity. Jung’s aim was rather a different *form* of subjec-

ments.” R. I. Evans, *Jung on Elementary Psychology: A Discussion between C. G. Jung and Richard I. Evans* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 151, 221–2.

²⁵ *CW* 11:469.

²⁶ *CW* 9/2:24. Emphasis in original.

tivity. When he talks of overcoming the ego and making room for the Self, he means exchanging one way of seeing subjectivity with another. Only in this sense can we speak of the Self as an *alter ego*.²⁷ In other words, Self has to be seen as a transformation of the everyday waking individual—the ego—from a normal, narrow-minded awareness of itself and its autonomy over consciousness to the realization that there are reaches of the mind out of its control but essential to its development. The aim was not less ego but a reformed ego, less self-sufficient, less centered on controlling perception and experience, more open to unknown and uncontrollable dimensions of mind. Only in this sense can it be called a change in the core of consciousness.

Like the carving on the wall of the oracle's cave at Delphi, *Know thyself*, the idea of the Self served to remind the subject that knowledge of life's mysteries begins in awareness of the presence of superior forces. The task of the ego is to discern the meaning of these forces, to broaden the reach of its consciousness. At the same time, like the carving on the opposite wall of the Delphi cave, *Nothing in excess*, the idea of the Self was a reminder never to presume that the unknown and uncontrollable workings of the mind can be reduced without remainder to categories of rational meaning, nor to allow the powers of the conscious ego to be swallowed up passively by the nonrational realm of the unconscious. The totality of the psyche is not unintelligible, but only *inexhaustibly* intelligible.²⁸ In a word, Jung's idea of the individuated Self comes down to this: an integration of conscious and unconscious forces achieved in ego-consciousness.

THE MONARCHIC PSYCHE

The ontological status of ego and Self in Jung's writings is ambivalent at best, muddled at worst. Depending on the context, they are alluded to as energies, forces, functions, classes of phenomena, archetypes, or entities.²⁹ On the other hand,

²⁷ This is why Jung was able to speak in his own case of "an extension of the ego or consciousness achieved in old age." See *Erinnerungen, Träume, Gedanken* (Zürich: Buchclub Ex Libris, 1961), 229. The English translation, mistranslates the passage, omitting the reference to the ego. See *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Pantheon, 1961), 225.

²⁸ It is important to distinguish the nonrational here from the simply irrational. Jung was adamant in principle, though perhaps not always successful in practice, that sloppy logic or unclarity of thought were an impediment to confrontation with the unconscious. See my essay, "The Mystique of the Nonrational and a New Spirituality," David Ray Griffin, ed., *Archetypal Process: Self and Divine in Whitehead, Jung, and Hillman* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989): 167–201, 209–13. Recently the director of the French translation of Jung's works, Michael Cazenave, has published a remarkable work showing how Jung's resistance to the rationalizing ego was not a mere negative critique of the limits of the mind to comprehend reality but a positive attempt to give oneself over to the mystery of images as nature's invitation to the mind to transcend itself. *Jung: L'expérience intérieure* (Éditions du Rocher, 1997).

²⁹ Elsewhere I have argued that Freud and Jung confirmed *de facto* a reification of the ego which they had inherited from modern philosophy and which has also passed over into Buddhist appropriations of the distinc-

despite his strictures against metaphysical speculation, Jung often claimed that “the psyche alone has immediate reality,” that it is an “equivalent of the universe without,” “a cosmic principle... coequal with the principle of physical being,” “an objective reality,” a “precondition of being,” and “superlatively real.”³⁰ Whatever their status as distinct ingredients of mind—which question did not seem to detain Jung for very long—ego and Self participate in objective “reality” in virtue of a kind of cooperative partnership in the enterprise of the psyche. Behind this grand idea lies a simple logical process wherein the idea of the Self is constructed as a negative image of the idea of the ego.

For Jung, the psyche is structured as a field of force on which the contrary but complementary forces of consciousness and the unconscious interact with each other. The hypothesis of a “center” of consciousness in which “contents” of consciousness are retrieved from perceptual memory and processed—the ego—does not of itself require the positing of an unconscious mind with contents of its own. But once it *is* posited (the history of its “discovery” is indispensable for understanding the idea, but not for the point I am making here³¹), it needs a principle of organization of these non-conscious contents. For Freud, this principle was supplied by sexual libido; for Jung, by the archetypes. But since Jung assumed the unconscious to be a negative image of consciousness, he also needed a central agent in the unconscious to balance the ego of consciousness. In other words, unless he was to redefine consciousness as a field of energy without a core agent, Jung would have to hypothesize a central agent for the unconsciousness as well.

Now, while the core agent of the unconscious would reflect that of the conscious ego, as its negative image it would have to do so in a distinctively unconscious manner. That is, it would have to perform a function that complemented but did not contradict the essential functions of the conscious ego, lest the whole idea of psychic totality be forfeited. The defining function of this agent would be to promote the integration of unconscious contents in the ego, the subject of knowledge for the psyche as a whole, and thus serve as the bearer of a telos for the psyche as a whole. It is in these complementary, mutually reflective functions of ego and Self that Jung realized most clearly the “cosmic meaning of consciousness” as creator of objective culture: once the self-enclosed ego has awakened to its own illusory nature vis-à-vis the wider world of the unconscious, it is able to shake off

tion between ego and Self. “The Quest of the True Self: Jung’s Rediscovery of a Modern Invention,” *Journal of Religion* 77:2 (1997): 252–67; see also 「真の自己の探求」 [The quest of the true self] 『宗教学会報』 6 (1991): 32–50.

³⁰ *CW* 8:384, 347; 4:332; 10:271.

³¹ The classic text here remains Henri Ellenberger’s *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Allan Lane Penguin, 1970).

the conventional view of the world and give objective reality to the Self in the world of space and time, to “complete creation” by “living out one’s myth.”³²

In broad strokes, this seems to me to be the rationale at work behind the scenes of Jung’s distinction between ego and Self and of their ambivalent ontological status. Admittedly, absent the clinical data that Jung used to support his idea of the Self as well as the mythical and symbolic parallels he cites, the hypothesis of the Self looks more arbitrary than it should. At the same time, it brings into clearer relief certain tacit assumptions that those data tend to obscure. In particular, I would note three points.

First, however older and wiser the unconscious might be at its deepest strata, it is essentially a kind of consciousness, just not an *ego*-consciousness. We see this already from the two types of metaphor Jung used for the collective: as womb, matrix, or sea, the unconscious is the birthplace of the conscious ego; and as storehouse or mine its images and motifs hold in deposit centuries of experience that had once been conscious to the ego. Theoretically as well, without a wide basis of commonality in basic mental functioning, there would be no way for unconscious “contents” to be received in consciousness and processed by the ego into meaning.

Now if we accept the fact that the acquisition and exercise of consciousness is conditioned by the historical and cultural circumstances in which individual subjects come to birth, then there is no reason to suppose that the unconscious can sidestep these conditions and enter directly into consciousness in a pure form. Jung saw this in the case of the personal unconscious, which afflicts consciousness with a kind of scotoma that biases its perception of collective elements in the psyche. He assumed that once one had dissolved this subjective “shadow,” the ego could enter the objective unconscious as an impartial spectator. To question this assumption is not to question the fundamental stability of structure of the psyche across the centuries and therefore the possibility of innate, archetypal conditioning in the background. It merely introduces a permanent suspicion regarding apparent coincidences in symbolic form between the images met in the modern unconscious and those found in myths and religions of antiquity, and the conclusions that can be drawn from these coincidences.

Second, the idea of a solitary, “atomic ego”³³ at the center of consciousness feeds into the assumption that the psyche as a whole is also structured around a single center that takes the form of an individuated ego or Self. The experience of the body, bound by a single skin and centered perceptually in the head, leads naturally enough to the idea of a single mind with a single center. Subjectivity, self-

³² *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 256, 324–5.

³³ As far as I remember, Jung uses this phrase only once, but in a context intended to distinguish his position from the nondualistic position of Eastern thought. *CW* 11:505.

identity, self-reflection, memory, and so forth rest on this assumption and its continued reaffirmation by the uniqueness of the individual body. Accordingly, collectivity is restricted to participation in a common form. In the same way that the visible anatomical structure of the body with its perceptual apparatus is seen to have evolved and reproduced itself in more or less stable patterns, the invisible world of the mind can be assumed to have evolved into a stable structure reproduced in individual subjects.

Obviously Jung was guided by this assumption in his attempts to explore both the structure of the unconscious as well as its contents. In interpreting the imagery of the unconscious not only did he single out certain basic patterns of symbolic form—the archetypes—but he saw an underlying drama being worked out which culminated in the image of a single unifying archetype around which all other contents would revolve like planets around the sun. This archetype, the Self, he came to see, has as its “psychic equivalent” the image of God: “The symbols of divinity coincide with those of the Self: what, on the one side, appears as a psychological experience signifying psychic wholeness, expresses on the other side the idea of God.”³⁴ Changes in God imagery, whether within the psychic life of the individual or in general cultural history, run “parallel with changes in human consciousness” and are required by it to such a degree that “*the destruction of the God-image is followed by the annulment of the human personality.*”³⁵

Jung was careful not to make any claims in his public writings regarding which was first—the archetype of the Self or the image of God in the psyche—but he never faltered in the claim of a one-to-one correspondence. This correspondence is in fact the keystone in Jung’s monarchic psyche. The idea of a consciousness centered on the ego is offset by that of an unconscious centered on the archetype of the Self, and these opposites are embraced by a greater totality centered on the individuated ego or actualized Self. The first principle of order is therefore both center and totality, which lends itself readily to expression in monotheistic images of divinity.

Jung says this in so many words in an interesting comment that opens his study on *Psychology and Alchemy*: “The Self is not only the center, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the center of this totality, just as the ego is the center of consciousness.”³⁶ In another context he cites the Gnostic saying, which frequently appears in alchemical literature, that “God is an infinite circle (or sphere) whose center is everywhere and the circum-

³⁴ CW 10:339.

³⁵ CW 9/2:194, 109. Emphasis in the original. In other contexts, Jung objects that “there is no evidence that the unconscious contents are related to an unconscious center analogous to the ego” (CW 11:485; see also 17:190).

³⁶ CW 12:41.

ference nowhere,³⁷ without worrying that it challenges a statement made earlier in the paragraph identifying the God-image as the central point in the circle. In fact, nowhere in his study of myth, primal religions, or Eastern thought does Jung seriously entertain the idea that his archetype of the Self may be based more on a monotheistic preconception than on the actual data. That Jung identified the Self with symbols of God may be more than merely the humble submission to the facts that Jung would have us believe. In any case, the monarchic structure of the psyche and the monotheism of the Christian support the same tacit assumption.

A third assumption that corroborates the monarchic quality of the Jungian psyche is the idea that archetypal symbols of the collective unconscious tend to seek completion in their opposite (reflecting the tendency of conscious and unconscious mind towards wholeness), crystallizing in symbols of the Self that take the form of a union of opposites. As a logical form, the idea of relating polar opposites so that each maintains its identity without eliminating its other is one of the most primitive forms of abstraction, arguably grounded in basic experiences like the rising and setting of the sun or the interaction of the sexes. At least as far as a two-valued logic of affirmation and negation with its laws of contradiction and the excluded middle are concerned, there is no simpler way of avoiding a dualism, not to say a pluralism, of worlds. Little wonder that the pattern should appear with such frequency in ritual, myth, and other forms of symbolic activity representing the totality of the cosmos. Little wonder, too, that Jung should have adopted this logical form as the matrix for his map of the psyche of the whole and found it mirrored microcosmically in the interplay among psychic contents.

To make this “dynamic monism” work, all that was needed was to insure that such contents as reflected the elemental functions of the psyche be read as symbols, bracketing any literal reference to any outer reality, which would interfere with the purity of the form.³⁸ This Jung achieved by seeing the collectivity of an unconscious symbol as a measure of its truth, depth, and reliability. The archetype of the Self as a harmonious complex of opposites is not, therefore, a pure conclusion drawn from an objective presentation of the facts, but an a priori condition for interpreting the contents of the collective unconscious symbolically.

³⁷ CW 9/1:325. See also 13:336–7, 11:155. The saying is traced back to the *Liber Hermetis* (fourteenth century) or *Liber Termegisti* (1315), Cod. Paris. 6319 and Cod. Vat. 3060.

³⁸ In this connection Jung has been accused of expurgating from his edition of the Chinese *Secret of the Golden Flower* an image that suggests yogic sexual practices in order to preserve the purely symbolic-philosophic interpretation of the text. See Kenneth Rexroth’s Preface to A. E. Waite, ed., *The Works of Thomas Vaughan, Mystic and Alchemist* (New Hyde Park: University Books, 1968). For his part, Jung felt he was paying a tribute to Eastern thought in seeing them as “symbolical psychologists, to whom no greater wrong could be done than to take them literally” (CW 13:50).

Questioning the Frontiers of the Inner Life

Insofar as these assumptions are in fact at work in Jungian psychology, they suggest a much shorter tether to Western, Christian roots than is commonly associated with his thought. I hesitate to rush to the conclusion that slackening the ties to allow Jung's ideas more freedom to roam about Eastern and Buddhist ideas would produce a better, more universally applicable psychology. At the same time, I am persuaded that many of the criticisms that arise in stretching Jungian psychology to the outer limits of its relevance for the non-Christian West are equally relevant for Christianity and Buddhism, both of which know very well today what it is to be at the end of their rope and going around in circles, unable to reach the masses of modern men and women in search of spiritual meaning. What I would like to attempt in this concluding section is to point to a number of areas in the contemporary perception of the inner life where the influence of traditional Buddhism, traditional Christianity, and traditional Jungian psychology have been muted, but which offer the grounds for the sort of three-way heuristic dialogue suggested above.

With the volumes of Jung's scattered around me, and armed with the ordinary tools of logic and whatever common sense I have, I feel a certain sureness of foot tracing arguments to their sources and dodging conclusions that overreach their premises. When it comes to refreshing my view of the original experiences and events that this intellectual apparatus is supposed to have obscured, however, I find myself wobbling uncomfortable in the extreme. Add to this the fact that the context of these remarks is the Buddhist-Christian dialogue and I flush at the biases of my Western, Christian upbringing. In spite of myself, I will try to approach the heart of my thesis with as much objectivity as I can.

HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS, HIGHER REALITY

For all the ambiguity of usage and the tacit assumptions that entangle the terms, the question of a true Self different from the everyday ego continues to provide an important meeting point in the dialogue between psychology and religion East and West. Without a shift in the question, however, the dialogue is likely to idle interminably on the differences between their respective cultural and philosophical approaches to subjectivity.³⁹ William James, with his uncanny knack for catching the heart of the matter with just the right phrase, can help to point the way.

In drawing up his conclusions to *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James notes that the idea of the naturally broken, divided self, is not of itself enough to account

³⁹ An example of this impasse from a Buddhist perspective can be seen in Masao Abe's attempt to differentiate Jung's idea of the Self from the Buddhist, "The Self in Jung and Zen," *Self and Liberation*, 128–40.

for religious faith. The individual enters into the presence of something “more”—a relation of “the germinal higher part of himself” to a wider reality:

*He becomes conscious that this higher part is coterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him... Disregarding the over-beliefs and confining ourselves to what is common and generic, we have in the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, is literally and objectively true as far as it goes.*⁴⁰

In our normal, everyday forms of consciousness, we suffer from what James calls a “lifelong habit of inferiority to our full self.” Insofar as the self that encases the seed of a wider consciousness like a husk is seen as “conventionally healthy,” cracking it open to uncover the higher part leaves the individual exposed to neurosis; but then, as James reminds us, this may well be the chief condition for receptivity to these higher realms.⁴¹

This idea of a wider self walled in by the habits of ego-consciousness but equipped with the facility to experience higher realities was more than a figure of speech for James. His abiding interest in spiritualistic phenomena and the paranormal was reflected in his attention to Theosophy, the New Thought Alliance, Christian Science, and a host of other manifestations of the search for “higher consciousness” that seemed to offer America’s preoccupation with mental illness “new ranges of life succeeding on our most despairing moments.”⁴² For James, it seemed as if the country were in the grip of a spiritual revival of a different order from what was going on within the organized churches. “These ideas are healthy minded and optimistic,” James pronounced, “and it is quite obvious that a wave of religious activity, analogous in some respects to the spread of early Christianity, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism is passing over our American world.”⁴³ Always careful to keep the theoretical claims associated with this activity at arm’s length from his own psychology, one cannot read James without feeling the slow boil of this enthusiasm just under the surface. This is particularly true of his idea of the “wider self.”⁴⁴

Reluctantly, because there are so many more doors he could open, I take leave of James here and return to the main line of my argument with the following

⁴⁰ *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Modern Library, 1902), 498–9, 505. Emphasis in original.

⁴¹ *Varieties*, 26.

⁴² *A Pluralistic Universe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 138.

⁴³ “The Energies of Men,” *Essays in Religion and Morality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 143.

⁴⁴ In elaborating his theory of the conscious subject, for instance, he is sympathetic to the suggestion of multiple selves developed by Pierre Janet (with whom Jung had also studied for a brief period). *The Principles of Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), vol. 1, ch. 10.

proposition: it was precisely at this idea of uncovering a *higher* self equipped to encounter *higher* realms of reality that Jung drew the line for his psychology of religion—a line he did not need to draw and we would do better to erase.

Jung's idea of actualizing the full powers of the psyche (individuation) was controlled in large part by the image of a journey of the ego out of consciousness and into the deep, dark recesses of the mind. The inhabitants of this realm are more often shadowy figures blending themselves in and out of each other under the soft light of the moon, transforming and changing shapes against a nocturnal landscape. Things that appear pitifully discrete and separate in the bright light of the sun are "deepened" in the unpredictable, always slightly frightening, haze of the unconscious.⁴⁵ The stimulus to enter this inner world is also typically dark: despair, sin, failure, anxiety, finitude, nihilism, self-devastation figure more prominently than bright, exhilarating, oceanic, climactic explosions of emotion that open up a vaster consciousness with a sense of "grace abounding."

At bottom, Jung's objection to the idea of higher consciousness as he saw it in Eastern thought was that it tried to eliminate the suffering ego without which the revelations of the unconscious have no meaning. Blotting out the distinction between subject and object looked to him like a simple swallowing up of ego in the unconscious—with the difference that for the Easterner "the unconscious is above, with us it is below"⁴⁶—which only anaesthetized the subject from its suffering. Rather than lead to greater self-awareness, it amounted to a self-deception of having transcended the dark side of life (rather, I suppose, like Dickens's Mrs. Gradgrind, who "thinks there is a pain in her room somewhere" but "is not sure whether she is the one who has got it or not"). For Jung "I know that I suffer" is not only superior to "I suffer" but also to "I know suffering to be an illusion of the ego."⁴⁷

The upshot of Jung's position is that it begs the question of whether there is a "wider self"—or "selves"—capable of receiving a range of information inaccessible to the ego-centered psyche. The methodological decision to "symbolize" accounts of states of mind associated with spiritualistic phenomena, shamanism, astrology, alchemy, cabalism, divination, and even extraterrestrial manifestations in order to extract their "meaning" for the conscious ego casts aside the question of multiple centers or progressive stages of consciousness beyond the normal first-person, singular individual. It also relieved him of the obligation to pronounce judgment on their causes. Like James, Jung knew of experiences of "uncovering" so overwhelming to the experiencer that one is no longer sure if it is tracts of consciousness or reality itself that is being uncovered.⁴⁸ He knew what it was to trust in the revela-

⁴⁵ I have patched together phrases Jung himself uses to contrast the relational Eros of the unconscious with the discriminating Logos of consciousness. *CW* 14:179.

⁴⁶ "Psychological Commentary on the Kundalini Yoga: Part 1," *Spring* (1975): 12–13.

⁴⁷ See *Letters*, vol. 2, 248.

tions of dreams; he consulted the *I Ching*, used the services of a dowser (successfully),⁴⁹ and had more than the normal share of paranormal experiences. But rather than pursue the question of what was real and what not, or whether there were such things as higher states of consciousness, or whether consciousness had multiple centers or not, or whether in the end one had to suffer the humiliation of not being able to answer these questions satisfactorily, he found it enough to concentrate on “synchronicities” between events and their meaning for ego-consciousness. It was not the “more” as such that concerned him so much as the symbolic meaning that could be mined from phenomena that seemed to transcend the reach of the conscious ego.⁵⁰ All questions about reality and existence could be swept under the rug of “the unconscious” with the broom of scientific detachment.

Jung’s refusal to distinguish God from the collective unconscious *qua* psychic phenomena begins to look less and less loyal to the facts. In commenting on the direct continuity of structure between ego-consciousness and the unconscious in Jung’s map of the psyche, I suggested above that the model was basically monotheistic. This also helps explain why for Jung the “more” naturally came to take the form of an absolute One—a collective unconscious to cover all non-ego conscious functions, an image of God to cover the reality uncovered. In claiming his map of the psyche for science and leaving to theology and metaphysics the question of the existence or nonexistence of God, he excluded in principle the possibility of plurality in higher consciousness and higher reality.

What appeared to him a gesturing towards science and away from theology was in fact a severe constriction of thought. Behind the vast sweep of Jung’s idea of an *unus mundus* whose microcosm was the Self, lay a much more limited view of the structure of reality that contains the “immensity” of the one, absolute macrocosm. In describing the thought of William James, Henri Bergson notes that the needs of modern reason are fulfilled by imagining the world as *infinite*, in contrast to antiquity, which saw it as *finite*; James, on the other hand, saw it as *indefinite*, leaving reason less satisfied and diminished in importance but the totality of the human person “immeasurably enhanced.”⁵¹ In linking his theory to the finite classical world he met in ancient texts and symbols, Jung neither satisfies modern reason nor provides sufficient cause for it to suffer dissatisfaction.

⁴⁸ “A Suggestion about Mysticism,” *Essays in Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 157–65. Henri Bergson wrote to James in 1931 that whenever he would come close to this kind of “uncovering” he felt something dangerous “stretching and swelling in me” that he interrupted out of fear, but to his later regret. See Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1948), 350.

⁴⁹ In 1931, to locate a freshwater spring on his property. See Hannah, *Jung*, 154.

⁵⁰ On this point, see my 「超越的機能の超越：ユング思想における宗教的機能・本能と東西宗教問題をめぐって」 [Transcending the transcendent function: Instinct and religious function in Jung and religion East and West]. 『ブシケイ』 6 (1987): 88–102.

⁵¹ *The Creative Mind* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 250–1.

There is much in Jung's distinction between ego and Self that the Buddhist mind will find alien, just as much of the criticism of it will appear self-evident. Insofar as Jung stands accused of being deceived by coincidences of terminology and plying ideas without due concern for native context, the mere application of his concepts to more and more Buddhist material will not do.⁵² The easiest response is to debit the differences to Western Christianity's loss and credit Buddhism and the East with having treated the whole question more exhaustively. A more demanding, but in the end no less evasive approach, is to argue that the "Eastern mind" is not a mere variation on a common human psychic structure but requires its own definition of consciousness.⁵³ To cast the matter aside with so simple a wave of the hand and gloss over the efforts that have been made to study the value of Jung's thought as a bridge from the Christian West to the Yogic, Hindu, Taoist, Tibetan, Mahāyāna, and Zen, traditions of the East is likely to content only the most dogmatic of temperaments. Insofar as these questions belong to the history of ideas, a tougher, more patient approach, grounded in fidelity to the textual evidence, is in order. Its execution I leave to those more competent than I.

When it comes to a shift in the basic structure of worldview that is held in common by the traditions under scrutiny, however, the historical sources alone do not suffice. If, as I believe to be the case, the worldviews of Buddhism and Christianity are cut of the same cloth as the finite classical cosmos of Jung's thought, and if that worldview no longer forms the backdrop against which the spirituality of our times is taking shape, then the discussion of different ideas of Self and ego needs radical rethinking. Beliefs in higher reality and higher consciousness set against that background cannot be absorbed *tout court* into the available categories of traditional doctrine; either they are allowed to solicit new formulations or they replace them. What we see happening today—in both Christianity and Buddhism—is a tilt towards the latter, to which the interreligious dialogue may even be adding its weight. The openness to an *indefinite* view of the psyche and the cosmos, however menacing at first sight, may contribute to that immeasurable enhancement that James hoped for. In what remains I would like to give some idea of the extent of the requisite openness, free of any conjecture as to the conclusions to which it might conduce.

Since the middle of the last century new teachings about the place of man in the natural cosmos have made their way from the Orient, from ancient Pharaonic

⁵² Although I have learned a great deal from the work that Miyuki Mokuzen has done, I find his brand of Buddhism too far removed from the texts and cultural questions. See, for example, the work he coauthored with J. Marvin Spiegelman, *Buddhism and Jungian Psychology* (Phoenix: Falcon Press, 1987).

⁵³ On this question, see my "Self-Healing: The Dilemma of Japanese Depth Psychology." *Academia* (Nanzan University) 49 (1989): 1–24.

Egypt, from medieval mysticism and alchemy, and from the perennial undercurrent of arcane doctrines that have accompanied Christianity and Judaism from centuries past into the cultures of the West. At first these teachings spread among a small circle of philosophers and poets; from there they spread into spiritualist and esoteric movements, mainly at the fringes of psychology and religion. For at least a generation now, they have become part of the cultural mainstream. This shift from periphery to center is often misunderstood as a rise in the general level of superstition or interest in the perennial underground currents of organized religion. The difference is that these new teachings no longer define themselves primarily as a critique or filling out of established religion but as an alternative basis for religion. Even the scientific community shows a greater interest in these “whisperings from beyond” as a possible object of research than it does in the classical doctrines of established religion.⁵⁴

We are still too much a part of the story of what is happening to religious consciousness to assess its meaning. What seems clear, however, is that the cosmos and the place of human beings within it are not those of Christianity or Buddhism or Jung. It is as if the evolution of consciousness has turned circle on itself. In its infancy the mind mixed up feelings and fantasies with what it observed in the natural world. Self-awareness fashioned itself after the movements of birds of the air and the animals of the forest, of the sun, the moon, and the stars, by giving them human form. With the advance of civilization, the mind became aware of itself as the highest glory of the natural world, withdrawing into itself all but the most abstract projections of superior forces. The doctrines of the great religions followed other forms of the pursuit of true knowledge that this worldview opened up. However differently the observed data were jumbled into explanation, the superiority of the observer to the observed was not in question. This anthropocentric bias is no longer self-evident today. Today the mind has taken a turn towards an organic interconnectedness among all things in the apparent attempt to restore something in self-awareness that had been lost in classical scientific method and religious orthodoxy.

When Jung saw flying saucers as symbolic of a *desire* for salvation from without and belief in an afterlife as the symbolic anticipation of the *desire* for an ideal society,⁵⁵ he was thinking from the same basic posture as that which produced the Christian heaven or the Buddhist nirvana—just offering a different, more radically anthropocentric explanation of the phenomena. In refusing to entertain the possibility of any ontological reality at the other end of the raw mental intentionality, he

⁵⁴ A popular account of this history can be found in Jacob Needleman, *A Sense of the Cosmos: The Encounter of Modern Science and Ancient Truth* (New York: Arkana, 1988). For a more elaborately documented telling, see the volume edited by Antoine Faivre, *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (Crossroad: New York, 1992).

⁵⁵ *CW* 10:328, 526.

nonetheless reaffirmed the supremacy of human consciousness looking out at the rest of the cosmos.

Today, when we look at the starry sky above, we see something different. We have seen images from light years beyond our own galaxy and trust the mathematical extrapolations that everything in the space between us and them is no more than a few grains of dust in a sandstorm. The possibility of intelligent life, even qualitatively superior intelligent life, beyond earth has moved from science fiction to reasonable hypothesis. Even as the wonderland of the brain begins to yield more and more of its secrets to scientific method, the bonds between mind and body have loosened to the point of serious research into psychosomatic healing, extracorporeal consciousness, and life-energies. Along with animal communication, manifestations of disembodied spirits, former lives, dead souls, telekinesis, and other parapsychological phenomena, talk of ley-lines, extraterrestrial visitations, simultaneous universes, time-warps, and other paranatural phenomena are no longer merely fanatical trimmings of common sense.

The dislodgings of ego-consciousness from the center of the mind, the mind from the center of the galaxy, and the galaxy from the center of the universe leave Christian and Buddhist orthodoxy without the compass that had guided the development of their teachings. It is not only that most traditional religious responses to these phenomena no longer make sense to the vast majority of the people who know them through personal experience; Buddhist and Christian scholars carry on in dialogue with the modern world, and with each other, as if these things were not even happening, as if they were no more than symptoms of a mass neurosis that will work itself out in time. Like that part of the scientific community stuck in a classical, mechanistic view of science, but for different reasons, they bide their time until the nuisance passes and things get back to "normal."

Meantime, the quest of spiritual experience continues to move ahead. The growing dependency of culture on scientific knowledge has not suppressed the countermovement of a pervasive disillusionment with mechanistic explanations of the totality of the cosmos and human life within it. Of itself the critique of science does not, however, signal a revival of religion. On the contrary, to the extent that today's esoterica and search for new forms of spiritual experience confine themselves to the shadows of science, they promote a greater alienation of religion from the everyday world and strengthen the "normal," scientific-technological way of valuing the things of life.

Though not an old story, all of this is by now too familiar to belabor with still more generalizations. To the extent that the traditional Buddhist and Christian myths have fallen from grace, Jung has fallen along with them, repeating the sin he set out originally to avoid: excluding experiences or aspects of experience that contradict the accepted doctrine. For all that, Jung's psychology, by virtue of its foun-

dition on the primacy of religious experience and a critique of dogmatic religion, may be of assistance to Buddhism and Christianity in confronting this common problem. What shape this confrontation will take, and at which point it will come to a head, is hard to predict.

If I may state my own suspicion in the matter: *Buddhism and Christianity need to stimulate each other to a recovery of elements in their respective traditions that have been exiled in the name of orthodoxy or sectarianism, but that can speak more directly to the experience and phenomena that have captured the religious imagination in our time.*

I think it unreasonable to expect that the dialogue create new doctrine—or new psychological theory, for that matter—but it can help to thaw what has been frozen in self-understanding so that it may once again flow into the living tradition. A clear precedent of this exists in the way that Japanese Buddhist interest in the Christian mystical tradition has stimulated a more serious appraisal of these men and women and their writings among Christian scholars engaged in the dialogue with Buddhism. Might one not expect that a resurrection of interest in the doctrines and practices of Shugendō, Kundalini and Tantric Yoga, Kalacakra Tantra, and so forth could stimulate mainline Japanese Mahāyāna to reassess their historical distance from these traditions in the light of what is happening in religious consciousness in contemporary Japan?⁵⁶

One thinks, for example, of the idea that emotional and mental energies can be stored in the natural environment as a kind of nonconscious “memory” and effect a kind of “wisdom” outside of the human individual—an idea that has virtually no religious significance for Buddhism or Christianity (or Jungian psychology, for that matter, except as symbolic projections).⁵⁷ If the idea of harmony with the forces of earth resonates at all in the teachings of these “world” religions today, it is most likely as a faint echo of “secular” spiritualities of the age, the same spiritualities that have helped to kindle criticism of the ruthless scarring and disfiguring of the planet we see all about us. In any case, it is this kind of groping around in the twilight regions of religious traditions, that I have in mind by speaking of a heuristic model of dialogue.

As a rule Christian scholars engaged in the dialogue with Buddhism tend to take a more tolerant view of heresies in their own tradition than do scholars closer to the centers of orthodoxy. To many of these latter, the dialogue not only promotes relativism, it often feed a negative view of official doctrine as a musty baroque castle inhabited by pedants and eccentrics, unsuited to house the spirit of our times.

⁵⁶ For a good sample of research into these questions, see the special issue of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* on “The New Age in Japan,” edited by Haga Manabu and Robert J. Kisala, 22/3–4 (1995).

⁵⁷ Colin Wilson’s exhaustive overview of the relation between science and the paranormal, *Mysteries* (London: Grafton Books, 1989), is organized around the work of Thomas Lethbridge, where this idea figures prominently.

Although the majority of Buddhist scholars engaged in the dialogue with Christians may not feel in the same measure the sting of complaints by an orthodox establishment against their interest in “perverted and wrongly adhered to” doctrines, the dialogue does not seem to have stimulated among them a greater ecumenical attitude towards doctrines and practices of competing sects, let alone a review of their own discarded heresies.⁵⁸ It is possible that a more concerted confrontation with the non-affiliated religiosity of our times could propel them in this direction. As St. Paul says “There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (I Cor. 11:19). Among the possibilities that the dialogue opens up is that of converting the factions among us all to factions within us each. On the possibility of just such a metanoia I rest my suggestion of a three-way dialogue with Buddhism, Christianity, and Jung’s psychology of religion.

⁵⁸ See Takeda Ryūsei, “Mutual Transformation of Pure Land Buddhism and Christianity,” *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* 22 (1998): 8–40.

Jung's legacy to "Christian psychology", however, is both direct and indirect. Myself as a professing Christian, who has been influenced by Jung's teachings, wants to integrate aspects of Jungian theory into my own understanding of psychotherapy. To many Jung's legacy has not enhanced Christianity, as psychotherapy in general has supposedly undermined the doctrines of Christianity. If, as I believe to be the case, the worldviews of Buddhism and Christianity may be cut of the same cloth as the classical cosmos of Jung's thought, then the discussion of different ideas of Self and Ego needs some rethinking. Beliefs in higher reality and higher consciousness are allowed to solicit new formulations or they replace them. Jung, Christianity, and Buddhism. James W. Heisig. An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at a conference on Buddhism and Depth Psychology: Japan and America, held in Kyoto in May 1999. The fuller paper was prepared for presentation in Japanese at the 1999 annual meeting of the Japan Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies. Throughout the past generation of Christianity's encounter with Buddhism, the role played by Jungian psychology has been ancillary at best. True, Jung's ideas are cited with a certain regularity, but for some reason the systematic body of thought he left behind has not. Buddhism and Christianity were both founded by great Spiritual Masters who sought to offer a path to salvation. The terminology they used was often quite different. Also, given the different circumstances they incarnated in, they taught different paths and emphasised different approaches to spirituality. Buddhists have a different emphasis, they believe that an individual has to work for his personal liberation "a discipline that may take several lifetimes. A Buddhist holds that belief in the Buddha is not enough, the seeker has to experience nirvana for himself through transforming his nature and stilling his mind. Similarities Between Buddhism and Christianity. Founded by a spiritual Master who accepted disciples. Taught through the use of simple parables.