

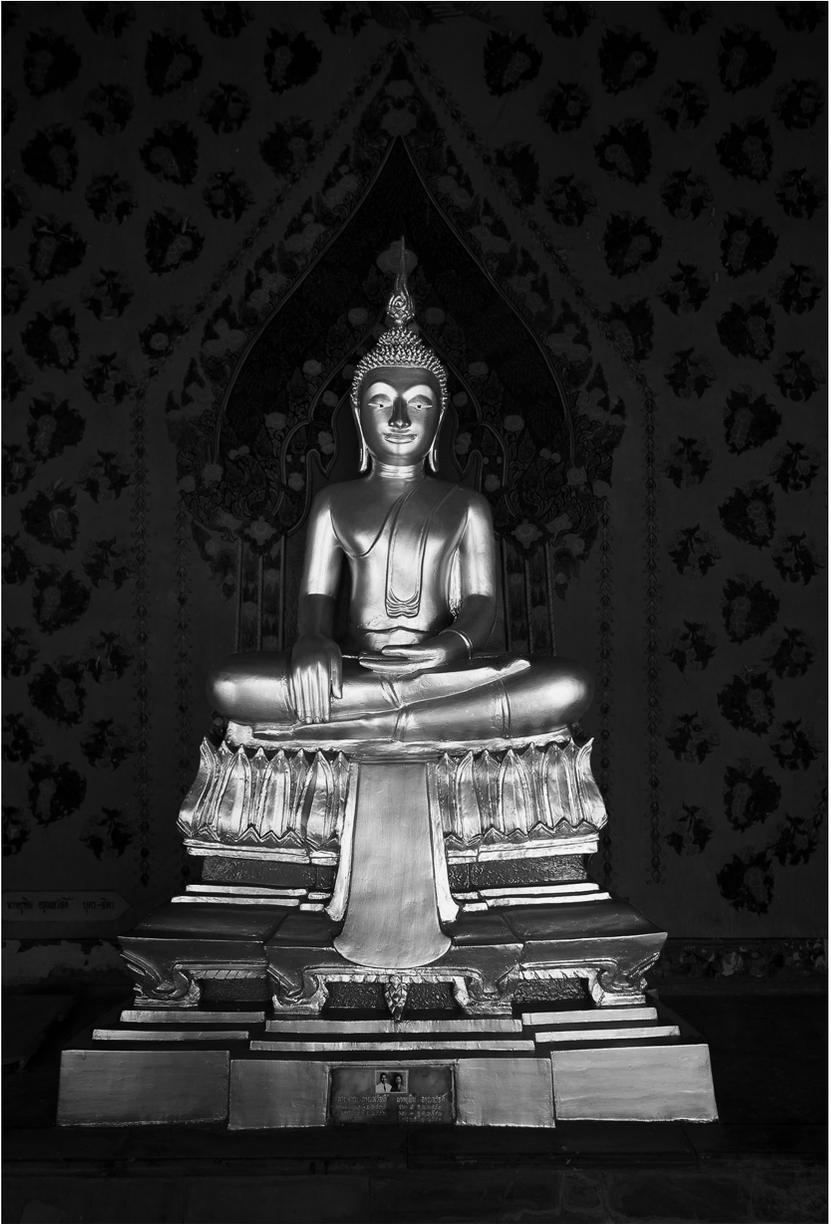
# Jung's Affinity for Buddhism: Misunderstandings and Clarifications

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Much of the West's understanding of Jung's thinking about Buddhism comes from reading his essays on Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, in which his commentary focuses upon particular doctrinal teachings of these two forms of Mahayana Buddhism. However, his writings about the figure of the Buddha and the Buddha's earliest sermons, as they are collected in the *Pali Canon*, are less well known. By looking closely at what Jung had to say about the Buddha, his early discourses, and his comments in other works that have a correspondence with these discourses, we can clarify some common misconceptions about Jung's thinking in this area. Such an examination offers a better understanding of Jung's depth of feeling for the essential teachings of the Buddha. In order to accomplish these aims, the article begins with a discussion of the historical and cultural background in which Jung was writing and his concerns about the West's infatuation with Eastern ideas. Moving from this discussion to an examination of Jung's reflections on Buddhism, taken directly from Jung's writings, conclusions are drawn regarding Jung's hermeneutic method of approaching the Buddhist canon.

Jung's dialogue with the East was a significant aspect in his own development as well as in his theoretical explorations. In early childhood, Jung's mother read to him from a book of stories depicting the Hindu pantheon; and from his letters, we find correspondence in the last 2 years of his life indicating that he was reading the Buddha's middle discourses in the *Pali Canon* once again (Clark, 1994). In between his early childhood and his last years, Jung wrote significant essays introducing and commenting upon a translation of the *I Ching* sent to him by Wilhelm, Evan-Wentz's compiled and edited translations of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and *The Tibetan Book of Great Liberation*, Suzuki's text on Zen Buddhism, and an essay, "The Discourses



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of the Buddha.” He also gave an entire seminar on Kundalini yoga and wrote essays titled “Yoga in the West,” “The Psychology of Eastern Meditation,” and “The Holy Men of India.” Beyond these coherent works, we find references regarding Eastern ideas “sprinkled like salt” throughout the *Collected Works* and various seminars; there are more than 60 references to Buddhism alone. However, it is not always easy to ferret out how Jung made meaning of the strands of Eastern thought that he incorporated into the corpus of his work. It also proves difficult to separate the strands from one another, because in his consideration of Eastern thought, he frequently made generalizations that did not differentiate between the many Eastern traditions or between different Buddhist traditions. These generalizations have been the source of ongoing debate and discussion.

In this paper I hope to illuminate a portion of Jung’s dialogue with Eastern ideas by focusing strictly on some of his writings about Buddhist thought. Much of the West’s understanding of Jung’s thinking about Buddhism comes from reading his essays on Tibetan and Zen Buddhism, in which his commentary focuses upon particular doctrinal teachings of these two forms of Mahayana Buddhism. However, his writings about the figure of the Buddha and the Buddha’s earliest sermons, as they are collected in the *Pali* Canon, are less well known. These writings suggest that Jung found much in these texts to be of value to his own thinking, saying that his studies of the Buddha’s discourses “were of great help to me” (*CW* 18, pars. 1575–1580). By looking closely at what Jung had to say about the Buddha, his early discourses, and his comments in other works that have a correspondence with these discourses, we can clarify some common misconceptions about Jung’s thinking in this area. In addition, we will be better able to understand Jung’s depth of feeling for the essential teachings of the Buddha.

## BACKGROUND

Clark, a historian of Oriental religions, tells us that Jung was less ambivalent about Buddhism than he was about other Eastern traditions. Jung’s writings affirm such a conclusion. He considered the Buddha to stand as a symbol for the wholeness of the individual, and he came to understand the Buddha’s life as an “embodiment of the self” (*CW* 9ii, par. 304). Jung says that his interest in these texts stemmed from his concerns as a physician in treating those states of suffering that are irremediable and that require what he defined as a “moral attitude” (*CW* 18, par. 1575.) He thought that the Buddha’s “principle theme . . . [of] suffering, old age, sickness and death” indicated a focus on developing such a moral attitude infused with understanding. He went on to say that the Buddha’s core ideas “trained one to observe suffering objectively and take a universal view of its causes,” an attitude that he believed

to be of “immeasurable help.” He points out that “according to the tradition, the Buddha was liberated because he was able to extricate his consciousness from the snares of the ten thousand things and to rescue his feelings from the entanglements of emotion and illusion.” These ideas, Jung writes, provided him with “immense help and stimulation,” and he considered the Buddha to be one of the “supreme helpers on the road to salvation” (*CW* 18, par. 1580).

The ambivalence that Jung does express regarding Buddhism reflects his ambivalence about Eastern religious forms, in general. He was particularly critical of Westerners taking up Eastern yogic practices that had as their stated aim, the merger of individual consciousness (or the ego) into a transcendent consciousness or state of oneness (*CW* 11, pars. 774–776). Although he wrongly included the aim of the Buddha’s teachings in this category, in his commentary on *The Tibetan Book of Liberation* Jung includes his general critique of Eastern thought, stating that an “ego-less mental condition can only be unconscious to us” (*CW* 11, par. 774). Here Jung states clearly that such a goal would be entirely inappropriate for Westerners.

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When Jung includes Buddhism in this critique of the adoption of Eastern thought by Westerners, he conflates ideas from multiple traditions in Buddhism with other Eastern traditions such as Hinduism and Taoism. For example, he presents the complex Buddhist idea of *nirvana* as a merger of consciousness with a universal, or “one mind,” requiring a complete dissolution of consciousness. However, we will see later that in other of his writings, he demonstrates a complex understanding of this core Buddhist concept, which in no way posits such a merger of consciousness. This confusion found in Jung’s writings regarding the notion of *nirvana* was a direct result of the flawed translations of Tibetan texts made by Evans-Wentz.

Martin Kalff also points out that part of Jung’s “reticence in relationship to the East” stems from the wrong connection that he made concerning the dissolution of consciousness (1997, p. 61). The Buddhist scholar Lopez, in his foreword to a recent edition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (2000), discusses the problems with the translations made by Evans-Wentz. According to Lopez, the “four books are fraught with problems: errors in translation . . . misstatements of fact, . . . and unjustified flights of interpretation” (2000,

p. G). Lopez writes that although Evans-Wentz presented himself as a devoted student of a Tibetan lama, he was “guided generally by his lifelong allegiance to what he [Evans-Wentz] termed Yoga and Theosophy.” These two traditions, unlike Buddhism, advocate such dissolution.

Jung’s critique of Westerners’ adopting Eastern spiritual practices and assimilating themselves to Eastern doctrines makes sense in the context of the Western European cultural milieu within which he lived. This was a milieu in which the Middle and the Far East were highly romanticized, holding an intellectual and emotional lure for Western thinkers. According to Clark, one historian summarized this lure with the term *Orientalism*, coined to describe a peculiar attitude that pervaded Europe during the end of the 19th century and early 20th century. Clark states that this attitude encouraged the belief that West and East represent “radically disengaged mentalities between which lie deep epistemological chasms” (p. 17). This notion of “radically disengaged mentalities” led to a commonly held belief among many thinkers of the time that somehow Eastern thought would supply what was needed to restore a lost state of universal peace to humankind. At the same time “Orientalism” encouraged a certain “cultural enclavism” (p. 16) that protected Westerners’ view of their superior intellectual and spiritual wisdom.

During this historical time period, the West eagerly and greedily sought out knowledge of the philosophies and religions of the East. Part of this search was an act of “cultural enclavism” in that such knowledge is a form of conquest. It served to bolster the sense of intellectual and spiritual superiority of Western thought. However, Clark and other historians make a good case for the idea that Western European thinkers also sought out Eastern ideas as an instrument for self-questioning and self-renewal (pp. 25–26).

This avid interest in the East was not a new phenomenon. From the time of the first Jesuit missions into China and India in the 16th century, ideas from these strange Far Eastern cultures were incorporated into the debates about the status of knowledge, beliefs, and values. After the Protestant Reformation, these debates contributed to, and fed a sense of, uncertainty and ambivalence in the European psyche that has lasted to this very day. World War II particularly resulted in the West’s challenging of its own cultural past and looking to other traditions for direction. However, regarding Jung’s dialogue with the East, it is worthwhile to remember that Western thinkers had been engaged in a process of accommodating and incorporating Eastern ideas since the 16th century (Clark, pp. 24–25).

This movement reached one of its peaks in the crucial period of Jung’s early development. The intensity of the West’s infatuation with Eastern ideas directly led to his reservations about Westerners seeking renewal by assimilating Eastern religions and thus losing their own cultural and intellectual values. In Jung’s view, the dissolution of the ego into a larger consciousness, or

“oneness,” encouraged people to bypass the psychological development that resulted in a more comprehensive and transformed consciousness. He expressed concern that such assimilation would lead to an abdication of personal responsibility and the necessary confrontation with one’s dark side (1992, p. 44). Jung particularly felt that such popular movements as theosophy, which “reduces everything to Indian metaphysics” and exalts everything to a transcendental and world embracing idea,” was a form of destructive thinking (*CW* 6, par. 595). In his view, theosophy involved “primitive projections of psychological factors.” He thought that such projections would considerably weaken the ego’s ability to differentiate itself from the archetypes encountered through yogic meditation practices (*CW* 18, par. 756).

### JUNG’S REFLECTIONS ON BUDDHISM

Perhaps Jung’s dialogue with the East, as well as his affinity for Buddhism and his ongoing interest in these texts, came about because he felt that these religious systems offered stimulation, insights, and significant parallels for his own evolving thought. When he was criticized for using an “insignificant text” for analysis in “The Psychology of Eastern Meditation” instead of a widely known Indian text, he replied

that his aim was to “analyze the psychology of the text,” not to “expound on Classical Buddhism” (*CW* 18, par. 1675). This aim applies to his writings on all Eastern traditions. Thus he sometimes referred to central Eastern ideas primarily for the purpose of illustration. He also conducted cross-cultural comparative analyses of similar ways of thinking and collective motifs similar to those found in the West. In addition,

he wished to point out the parallels with his own formulations of analytical psychology. Consequently, it is only through a close reading of all of Jung’s references to Buddhism that it is possible to separate the strand of his thinking about this tradition from his general thinking about Eastern religions.

As late as 1960, Jung wrote that he was studying the discourses from the “Middle Collection of the *Pali-Canon*,” translated by T. W. Rhys Davids

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in *Sacred Books of the Buddhists* (1970, Vol. 2, p. 548). Much earlier he had read the version of *The Discourses of the Buddha* that was translated by Karl Eugen Neumann in 1911. In 1955 Jung wrote a statement for the prospectus submitted to the publisher, recommending the later translation of these three volumes from the *Pali* Canon. This statement suggests that he valued these discourses because they offered “Western man ways and means of disciplining his inner psychic life,” and they answered a profound need to adopt “some kind of attitude to the problem of psychic suffering” that would be based upon understanding. As he came to understand the development of consciousness as the most efficacious method for alleviating psychic suffering, these particular aspects of the discourses continued to hold a deep attraction. He felt that the Buddha’s teachings offered a “deliverance from suffering through the maximum development of consciousness” (*CW* 18, par. 1577).

What Jung calls *consciousness* in the *Pali* Canon is referred to as *mindfulness* in Buddhist terminology. This idea was particularly significant to Jung, and he addressed it in many of his writings. In *Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, Jung said that reading the sermons of the Buddha, “chiefly those from the middle collection of the *Pali* Canon,” reveal “a most systematic education toward the utmost consciousness” (1988, pp. 1333–34). Jung considered such consciousness to represent a “realization” that he felt was lacking in Westerners. He specifically described it in this way:

He [the Buddha] says that whatever you do, do it consciously, know that you do it, and he even goes so far as to say that when you eat and when you drink, know it and when you satisfy your physical needs, all the functions of your body, know it. That is realization—not for one moment to be without realization. You must always know what you do. . . (Jung, 1988, p. 1344)

Jung felt that in Buddhism, this “consciousness of what is happening is a redeeming principle” (1976, p. 111). He noted that “Buddhism possesses the idea of a redemptive middle way which is attainable by means of a conscious attitude” (*CW* 6, par. 323). The very “essence” of Buddhism, Jung continued, repeated

. . . again and again by the Buddha, is that coming into existence causes such-and-such desires and illusions and that man proceeds through that chain of cause and effect, invariably ending in disease, old age, and death; and the only means to disrupt that inexorable chain of cause and effect is knowledge and understanding. (Jung, 1988, p. 1382)

Jung was influenced early on by Schopenhauer's writings. Buddhism, through Schopenhauer's work, "infected" the West with the idea that "man is capable of doing something for himself" (Jung, 1988, p. 345). This notion was appealing to Jung, as he too felt that any increase in consciousness leading to liberation from suffering only came about through individual effort. Thus, he identified two parallels between Buddhist thought and his own: (1) that "decisive action took place in the sphere of man," and (2) that Buddhism "accorded man a central place" (Jung, 1988, p. 97).

Jung made the point that "a correct application of the methods described in the *Pali* Canon . . . induces a remarkable extension of consciousness" (*CW* 9i, par. 520). The psychological effect of the Buddhist reformation within the Hindu context resulted "in a tremendous strengthening of consciousness" (Jung, *CW* 13, par. 292). He pointed to this accomplishment as particularly evident in the "mautic [Socratic] method of Shakyamuni," in which the monks demonstrate an increase in consciousness through a dialectical process. Jung summed up this required effort on the part of each individual:

. . . the central Buddhist belief [is] that we continue to circulate endlessly on the wheel of death and rebirth as long as we are not conscious, but if we become conscious through right meditation and right living—by following the Eightfold Path . . . then we shall eventually reach emancipation."<sup>1</sup> (1976, p. 114)

In considering the notion of "emancipation," Jung is entirely in accord with the texts of early Buddhist thought; he stated, "the assumption is in Buddhism that the attainment of perfect illumination or consciousness means nirvana" (1988, p. 132). He described nirvana as "positive non-existence" involving the complete withdrawal of projections upon the world. He noted that this is a project, which if perfectly accomplished, leads to the "state of complete consciousness that obliterates the world." He also described nirvana as the detachment of consciousness from its objects, saying "the detachment of human consciousness leads to Buddhist achievement: liberation from the opposites" (*CW* 15, par. 151). Because Jung understood the "opposites" as the bipolar constituents of perceptual reality, it followed that when one is liberated from the opposites, the world that one constructs through the senses ceases to exist (Jung, 1988, p. 132; *CW* 11, par. 769).

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<sup>1</sup>The Eightfold Path, which brings a cessation of suffering, was laid out by the Buddha in his first discourse. It is composed of eight factors: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. The Buddha referred to this path as the "middle way" (trans. by Bodhi, 2000, pp. 1843–1847).

Jung clearly stated that the “original Buddhist writings contain views and ideas which are more or less un-assimilable for ordinary Europeans” (*CW* 11, par. 877). However, he did try to provide some explanation of those ideas that he felt are difficult to absorb for one not born in the native cultural context. In the case of nirvana he further elaborated his explanation:

Buddha returns to the utter non-existence which is called *nirvana* or *nibbana*. But that is not what we understand by “not being” which is a mere negation. Nirvana is a positive non-being which we cannot render in our language because we have no conception of a thing which is positively non-existing. But, to the Buddhists, it is as if non-existence were just as much a quality as existence. (Jung, 1988, p. 325)

In another seminar, Jung discussed his understanding of *nirvana*, saying

... the Buddhist paradox is ... “the non-existent existence,” the being which is non-being or the consciousness that is absolutely void. The consciousness ... is not an empty consciousness as we would understand emptiness, but a consciousness that is not dominated by its contents. (1984, pp. 467–468)

The contents that Jung thought no longer dominated consciousness in the state of nirvana were those that “attack our consciousness with the fire of desire and we become possessed by them” (1984, pp. 467–468). In Jung’s understanding, the Buddhist idea of liberation in the early writings was that “we should not be devoured [by these contents], one should rather be their master.” Thus he thought that it was necessary to “empty the consciousness, as it were, of these overpowering contents.” He says that if there are any contents there at all, they should be like “fishes in a pond; they are not masters of the pond, they are simply contents and so they cannot rule it” (1984, pp. 467–468).

Jung noted that “Buddha made the extraordinary attempt to educate consciousness” (1988, p. 1290). This attempt was what the Buddha called the “middle way,” a way that Jung viewed as “redemptive” (*CW* 6, par. 326). Jung understood the middle way as one in which the Buddha “designated the way of being dissolved in the world and the way of being dissolved into the unconscious [as one would be in Brahman] as errors.” Jung was solidly in agreement with such a vision:

It is always the same old thing that Buddha says in his famous sermon about the two ways: the way of the world, fulfillment of desires without inhibition, and the way of the ascetic that denies everything. Both ways are wrong; there is a middle path, “the noble Eightfold Path.” Living without inhibition is wrong, denying everything is equally wrong; the right thing to do is what is right with the law [*dharma*]. So he says the Eightfold Path

consists of the noble eight-fold virtues or activities, the right devotion, the right thought, the right contemplation, the right action, and so on. (Jung, 1976, p. 414)

The notion of the middle way was established and elaborated by the Buddha throughout the 45 years of his teaching. Jung said that this middle way, through “many long lives on this earth,” eventually leads to the “perfect consciousness,” nirvana. However, although he noted that “we don’t know if perfect consciousness is possible” (Jung, 1988, p. 132), he also makes the following statement: “Consciousness redeems from the curse of continually flowing onward in the river of unconsciousness. It looks almost as if, through consciousness, one secures a position outside of time” (Jung, 1976, p. 111). This “most perfect condition of consciousness,” entirely detached from its objects and outside of time, is Jung’s understanding of nirvana. Such an understanding directly corresponds to that found in early Buddhist texts.

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It is clear that Jung understood nirvana as the result of practicing the “Eightfold Path.” Nirvana arrived as a culmination of what he referred to as the “eighth phase of the Eightfold Path,” a complete and perfected state of *samadhi* (concentration). He described *samadhi* as “a ‘withdrawnness,’ i.e., a condition in which all connections with the world are absorbed into the inner world” (*CW* 11, par. 918). The Buddha also understood the attainment of nirvana as resulting from the practice of the Eightfold Path. This is described exhaustively by Nanamoli (2001, pp. 225–247) and others (Harvey, 1990; Gethin, 1998; Williams, 2000) as the systematic practice of path factors that include “right view,” “right intention/resolve,” “right speech,” “right action,” “right livelihood,” “right effort,” “right mindfulness,” and “right concentration.” It is the last path factor to which Jung is referring with the term *samadhi*, and it is achieved through specific meditation techniques that lead to progressive states of concentrated consciousness.

Jung was fairly descriptive about how this transformation comes about. He pointed to the “*nidana* chain,” which describes the causal links that lead

to suffering, and noted that the Buddha's disciples were directed to meditate upon each feature of this chain of cause and effect (Jung, 1965, p. 280; 1988, p. 1315). He also specifically considered the notions of rebirth, karma, and the *klesas* (emotional afflictions) in relationship to his own ideas.

At the end of his life, Jung reported that he had a series of dreams about a colleague that depicted multiple reincarnations. He then began to consider seriously the possibility that reincarnation might be an empirical fact (Coward, 1985, p. 66; Jung, 1965, p. 317). In his earlier thinking, he pointed to the impossibility of empirical proof. He steadfastly considered these ideas to be universal themes (archetypal images) that appeared in all human cultures in one guise or another. As a result, his own formulation of the ideals and aims of analytical psychology was not developed within the context of an ongoing consciousness existing past the individual lifespan. In his final statement regarding reincarnation, he discussed some ways in which he had come to think differently about this matter. However, he still avoided asserting the concept as an empirical reality (Jung, 1965, pp. 317–319).

Jung's reluctance to consider the possibility of the phenomenon of rebirth as a physical fact extended to his view of the notion of karma. If there were no empirical evidence that he found acceptable in support of physical rebirth, then the notion of karma as an accumulation of personal traits that were concretely incarnated throughout lifetimes could only be speculative. However, Jung did not reject the notion completely. In a letter he said that "our life is not made entirely by ourselves . . . even complexes can start a century or more before a man is born. The main bulk of it is brought into existence out of sources that are hidden to us. There is something like karma" (1970, Vol. 1, p. 436). Jung (1965, pp. 317–319) discusses the fact that the Buddha would not answer questions regarding the possibility that karma is personal and results in a preordained destiny that occurs in a context of "personal continuity" and represents the "achievement of previous lifetimes." Rather, Jung notes, the Buddha directed his disciples to meditate upon the *Nidana* chain, the dynamic causal processes that describe how the world of suffering is built up. Later commentary on the Buddha's discourses took the position that the Buddha discarded the idea of a personal continuity and taught that karma was impersonal; no substantial entity with an identity continuously incarnates. What is "reborn" as a sentient being is an impersonal stream of habitual patterns, built up over lifetimes. Although Jung was well aware of this discussion, he concluded that even with such uncertainty we could still "cautiously accept the idea of psychic heredity in the very widest sense of the word," and his formulation does not pose any substantial disagreement with Buddhist thought (CW 11, par. 845). These forms could be described as ". . . *categories* analogous to the logical categories, which are always and everywhere, present as the basic postulates of reason . . . only [here] not deal-

ing with categories of reason, but with categories of *imagination*. As products of imagination, they have the characteristics of . . . typical images . . . which is why I call them 'archetypes' (*CW* 11, par. 845).

Jung pointed out that there is a "parallelism between the images and the ideas they serve to express" (*CW* 11, par. 845). The archetypes are "eternally inherited forms and ideas which at first have no specific content; the specific content only appears in the course of the individual's life when personal experience is taken up precisely in these forms." Thus:

Inasmuch as karma means either a personal or at least an individual inherited determinant of character and fate, it represents the individually differentiated manifestation of the instinctual behaviour pattern, i.e., the general archetypal disposition. Karma would express the individually modified archetypal inheritance represented by the collective unconscious in each individual. (Jung, 1970, Vol. 2, p. 289)

Coward noted that Jung was influenced in his thinking about archetypes by the notion of karma. However, Jung was careful always to demarcate precisely his empirical stance. He stated in this same letter that he avoided "the term of karma because it includes metaphysical assumptions for which I have no evidence . . . for such assumptions there is no empirical evidence that I am aware of" (1970, Vol. 2, p. 289). Consequently even in his speculations about what karma might mean for the individual or for himself, Jung always is clear that his images and ideas are, indeed, wholly speculative as to their empirical reality.

Jung understood the personal psychological state of undeveloped individuals to be best characterized by the notion of the *kleshas*. The early texts define *kleshas* as the emotional afflictions that arise from the primordial latent tendencies (*anusaya*) and energetic influxes (*asava*) of greed, hatred, and ignorance. Jung described the *kleshas* as "all urges of a natural instinctive form in which libido first appears out of the unconscious; that is the psychological energy or libido in its simplest form of manifestation" (*CW* 11, par. 912). He pointed out accurately

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that the “*kleshas* correspond to *superbia* (power) and *concupiscentia* (desire),” and that both power and desire were archetypal forces. It thus seems that the *kleshas*, as impersonally experienced by everyone, could be understood as archetypal representations. In Jung’s thought, they provide a means for describing how the impersonal, psychological “ancestral history” of an individual would be filled out in his or her personal, lived experience.

Jung thought that the *kleshas* had a psychological reality of their own. They needed to be transformed, and this transformation was addressed in Buddhism through the practice of the Eightfold Path. Jung noted that “in Buddhism everything is dissolved into consciousness. . . . The unconscious formative forces must be transformed through religious self-development.” Specifically, he noted that yoga disciplined “the instinctive forces of the psyche . . . that fetter human beings to the world” (*CW* 11, par. 912). Coward informs us that “yoga” was a general term used by Jung to designate all forms of Eastern religious psychological practice, including Buddhism.

In *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga* (1996) Jung discussed the *kleshas*. He accurately includes one of “dividing and discriminating, of becoming a personality, something that is centered and divided from other beings” (pp. 4–5). Jung wrote that this *klesha* is addressed by the dogmatic ground truths of Buddhism: “suffering and nonexistence, impermanence and not-self; signifying that all existence is full of suffering and that everything that clings to the ego is impermanent.” He also noted that that “not-being [nirvana] and not being ego [not-self] delivers us from these errors” (*CW* 11, par. 931). This understanding is entirely in accord with the Buddhist thought regarding the *kleshas*.

As discussed earlier, although Jung would never affirm rebirth as an empirical fact, he did realize that “the Buddhistic philosophies teach that consciousness forms the bridge over death” and that “the dying man should never lose consciousness, he should retain continuity [of consciousness] so that rebirth will not overtake him unaware” (Jung, 1976, p. 111). In his understanding, the true meaning of existence in the Buddha’s teachings was “consummated at its end,” and thus Buddhism, in one sense, represented “a complicated preparation for death” (*CW* 8, par. 804). Whereas this conception would not be entirely true for all Mahayana forms of Buddhism, it fits quite well for the Tibetan tradition and for early Buddhist formulations. Jung particularly valued this clear conception of what would take place after death. In his autobiography, he speaks of the necessity for a person to be able to do his or her best to “form a conception of life after death or to create some image of it, since not to do so” was a “vital loss” of one’s archetypal connection to a part of the psyche that was not subject to the laws of space and time (Jung, 1965, pp. 302, 304).

## CONCLUSIONS

This investigation of Jung's writings related to his interest in the Buddha and his earliest teachings, as found in the *Pali* Canon and in later forms of Buddhism, reveals a wise understanding of key concepts that form the underlying framework of Buddhism. This framework was considered essential by nearly all schools of Buddhism as they developed in the different countries and environments into which the Buddha's teachings were transported. In these writings, Jung demonstrates a decided affinity for Buddhism. However, although inspired by the life of the Buddha and by his teachings, Jung never fell into a *participation mystique* with this material. Not once did he adopt it, unexamined and undigested, into his own theorizing. Rather than speak of Buddhism's influence on Jung, perhaps it is better to consider Jung's method as hermeneutic. He opened himself up to an engagement with these texts and allowed them to transform his thinking. At the same time, he maintained his own individuality, while tolerating and retaining the individuality of Buddhist thought (Clark, 1994, pp. 47, 50).

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