The Primordial Mandalas of East and West: Jungian and Tibetan Buddhist Approaches to Healing and Transformation

Judson Davis

ABSTRACT

A comparative analysis of Jungian depth psychology and Tibetan Buddhist Tantra reveals a fascinating array of similarities, which are united in their most essential form through the manner in which mythic imagery is employed in both disciplines as a powerful agent of inner transformation. Various forms of creative engagement with sacred symbols--including *mandalas*--are enacted in each tradition as a vehicle through which latent spiritual potentialities can be brought forth into consciousness, a process that is greatly enhanced through a number of dynamic artistic techniques and contemplative practices. It should be emphasized from the outset that both disciplines represent complex systems that include sometimes widely varying notions of a higher spiritual order or ultimate reality. However, despite any differences in ontological postulations or metaphysical precepts, they share a number of surprising and sometimes striking characteristics. For example, both emphasize the mind, or psyche, as the foundational basis of existence and the primary means through which liberation (in the tantric tradition) and psychic wholeness (as in Jungian psychology) are pursued. Each also emphasizes the realm of dreams (e.g., dream analysis in depth psychology and dream yoga in Tibetan Tantra), contemplative and creative visualizations (such as the focus on wisdom figures and sacred symbols), and an assortment of other practices that are designed to effect a reconciliation of opposites and the attendant union of masculine and feminine principles. Their respective methodologies thus represent essential avenues through which to deepen an understanding of human nature's far-reaching spiritual capacities while demonstrating the vital role that mythic imagery--and in particular the mandala--plays in the process of healing and inner transformation.

Key Words: mandala, Jung, depth psychology, Tibetan Buddhist Tantra, healing, spiritual transformation

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A mandala is compassion, it is form, it is infinite wisdom
expressing infinite love.
. . . It opens a door of liberation, a gateway to freedom,
a portal to the infinite.
– Denise Leidy and Robert Thurman (Leidy and Thurman, 1997, p. 130)

Introduction

For thousands of years the *mandala* has arisen as a central theme in the cultural expressions and religious manifestations of homo-sapiens. Variously understood to represent sacred space, cosmic unity, psychic wholeness, or the very essence of the life source, this primordial symbol holds a prominent place in an array of traditions as diverse as Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Jungian depth psychology. As a connecting link, it also serves as the basis for a comparative study of these two dynamic disciplines, a process that upon deeper analysis reveals a number of surprising and sometimes striking similarities.

It should be noted from the outset that both of these traditions represent complex psychological systems that possess their own distinctive characteristics and include sometimes widely varying notions of a higher spiritual order

Corresponding author: Judson Davis, Ph.D.
Address: Leopalace Espoir Maison, 2-26 Yabemachi, Machida City, Tokyo, Japan, 194-0214.
Phone: + 81-080-5884-9061
e-mail ✉ judsondavisphd@gmail.com
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or ultimate reality (the apparent incongruity between the Jungian *Self* and the Buddhist no-self being a primary example). However, regardless of the differences in ontological or metaphysical pronouncements, it can be said that both systems are committed to the treating and healing of human suffering as well as the inducement of spiritual awakening through creative and contemplative methodologies that share a number of intriguing characteristics (Moacanin, 2003). Artistic expression in both traditions, for example, acts as a vehicle for eliciting psychic healing and spiritual development, and both disciplines place particular emphasis on approaches in which mythic imagery–including the mandala–is utilized as a powerful agent of inner transformation. Both emphasize, the mind, or psyche, as the foundational basis of existence and the primary means through which liberation (in the tantric tradition) and psychic wholeness (as in Jungian psychology) are pursued. Each also emphasizes the realm of dreams (e.g., dream analysis in depth psychology and dream yoga in Tibetan Tantra), meditative visualizations (such as the focus on wisdom figures in both disciplines), and an assortment of other practices that are designed to effect a reconciliation of opposites and the attendant union of masculine and feminine principles. In addition, each discipline emphasizes a radical shift away from the ego as the center of one's identity toward the realization of an inseparable union with a timeless, all-encompassing psychic reality.

Whereas the Jungian tradition focuses on the bringing forth of unconscious material as a means of furthering the individuation process (with its reconciliation of light and shadow aspects and its impetus toward wholeness) through bridging ego-consciousness with the Self, the Tibetan tradition emphasizes the dissolution of the ego (as a separate self) and the ultimate awakening in the *clear light of bliss,* known as *Dharmakaya* (Moacanin, 2003). This process, it is believed, is aided by the bringing forth and extinguishing of adverse psychic forces (such as karmic traces) as well as the conscious realization of the practitioner's highest spiritual capacities, as signified in the mandala, mythic deities, and various other forms. Within this context, the psychic entities and numinous symbols that arise within the psyche--and which in many cases serve as the focus of creative visualizations and meditative practices--are understood as manifestations of the deep unconscious, and are thus viewed in both systems as symbolic representations of the individual's own inner processes and spiritual potentialities. The noted Jungian writer and psychotherapist Robert Johnson (1986) stressed that "when we experience the images, *we also experience the inner parts of ourselves that are clothed in the images*" (p. 25). Echoing a similar perspective, Lama Yeshe (2001), in referring to the practice of tantric visualization, emphasized that:

> the deity we choose to identify with represents the essential qualities of the fully awakened experience latent within us. To use the language of psychology, such a deity is an archetype of our own deepest nature, our most profound level of consciousness. In tantra we focus our attention upon such an archetypal image and identify with it in order to arouse the deepest, most profound aspects of our being and bring them into our present reality (p. 30).

The facilitation of spiritual development through such means is linked directly with an essential precept that lies at the foundation of each system—*the primacy of psychic reality* (Moacanin, 2003). Each system also posits the intimate interrelationship of all phenomena, and this notion of inseparable union, of the interconnectedness between all things and processes, is especially relevant as it pertains to the psychic relationship of subject and object (i.e., observer and observed). This is particularly well demonstrated in the texts of the Tibetan tradition, as John Clarke (1994) astutely observed in relation to the *Bardo Thodal, The Tibetan Book of the Dead*:

> The emphasis throughout the treatise is on the doctrine that the only reality is mind or consciousness, and that all things, including material reality, are mind-made. Furthermore, all minds, and hence all existing things, are manifestations of the Absolute or One Mind (p. 127).

The reading of the above work, combined with his exposure to another enigmatic Buddhist text, the *Tibetan Book of Liberation*, provided Jung with what he felt was significant validation for many of his own theories regarding the primacy of psychic reality. In Jung's (1992a) words:

> In the meditation it is realized that the Buddha is really nothing other than the activating psyche of the yogi—the meditator himself. It is not only that the image of the Buddha is produced out of 'one's own mind and thought,' but that the psyche which produces these thought-forms is the Buddha himself (p. 567).

Previous Research

A number of noted scholars and practitioners in both traditions have previously made contributions to comparative analyses of these two disciplines. Aside from Jung's rather extensive work in this area (1958; 1963; 1974; 1992a; 1992b), Daniel Meckel and Robert Moore (editors), in their book *Self and Liberation: The Jung/Buddhism Dialogue* (1992), provide an array of comparative viewpoints through numerous contributors, of which the editors' introduction and the work of Nathan Katz (1992), Harold Coward (1992), Peter Bishop (1992), and Radmila Moacanin (1992) are particularly relevant to this study. Other theorists and scholars such as Joseph Campbell (1962, 2003), John Clarke (1994; 1997), and Stanislav Grof (1998) have provided important but more generalized cross-cultural perspectives. In addition, there have also been some important publications from Western practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Lama Anagarika Govinda (1969), Christopher Bache (1994; 2000), and Rob Preece (2006) that variously integrate or acknowledge the intersection of depth psychology and Tibetan Tantra. The writings of Tibetan Buddhist scholars such as Giuseppe Tucci (2001) and Herbert Guenther (1994) also deserve mention, as does the work of Lama Thubten Yeshe (2001), who was among the first native practitioners to introduce tantric Buddhism to the West. However, despite the central place that the mandala holds in each tradition, very little of the above work has been devoted to a more in-depth comparative analysis of its respective meaning and usage, which in large part serves as the impetus for this study.

The Primordial Mandala

As a prelude to exploring the mandala's central position in both Jungian psychology and Tibetan Buddhism, an overview of its inherent meaning and widespread dispensation serves as an important foundational introduction. First of all, the word *mandala* is an ancient Sanskrit term that predated historical Buddhism by many centuries (Leidy and Thurman, 1997). Loosely translated, it means "circle," and "very early on, *mandala* had the generative meaning of a circle as a universal symbol for womb, for breast, for the nurturing source of life" (p. 130). This term may also pertain to:

> …any circle or discoid object such as the sun or moon. In etymological studies, it is sometimes divided into *manda*--best part, highest part, highest point--and *la*--signpost or completion. The combination is explained as a place or point which contains an essence. In the Vedic *Brahmanas*, some of India's earliest and most influential pre-Buddhist philosophical texts, *mandala* already signifies a sacred enclosure and is, at times, understood to mean a place created for the performance of a certain ritual or practice, or for the use of a great teacher or mystic (Leidy and Thurman, 1997, p. 17).

In addition to the Indian origins outlined above, the mandalic form has also arisen in a wide range of other cultural and religious contexts, and can be variously found in the vast tombs and monumental stone circles of the Neolithic period, in the healing rituals and artistic expressions of numerous indigenous peoples, and in the symbols and religious iconography of the world's most prominent faiths, such as in the great stained-glass windows and labyrinths of Christian cathedrals (Cunningham, 2002).

Apart from traditional religious and ritualistic representations, mandalas also appear ubiquitously in an array of other contexts. In her book *Mandala: Journey to the Center*, Bailey Cunningham (2002) presents a compelling variety of circumstances in which the mandala's basic archetypal form finds expression. From astronomical formations in the heavens to minute biological and molecular designs, and from geometric and atomic patterns to artistic, urban, and architectural expressions, the mandala manifests in a remarkable variety of forms and contexts. According to Leidy and Thurman (1997), this framework extends to the circle of one's physical, social, and interpersonal environments, and they thus emphasized that "every being *is* a mandala, rather than just a point

of awareness. We are the environment as much as we are the entity in the environment" (p. 128). The union of entity and environment (and of observer and observed) that is implicit in the above statement lies at the very heart of Tibetan tantric practice, a subject to which I now turn.

Tibetan Buddhist Tantra

Historical Origins

Buddhism, with its origins in the Indian subcontinent, was brought to Tibet in the seventh century C. E. during the reign of King Songsten Gampo (Tucci, 1980). There it merged, sometimes contentiously, with the native animistic and shamanistic tradition (later known as *Bon*), which Buddhism would eventually supersede as the primary religious discipline. The renowned mystic Padmasambhava (2005) and the great monk Santarakshita made significant contributions toward the acceptance and expansion of this new religious system, and in about the year 779 it became officially indoctrinated through the founding of the first great Monastery at Samye.

In the initial period of infusion, two distinct inclinations appeared, one espousing the tenants of Indian Buddhism, and the other favoring the tradition of Ch'an as taught by the *Hwa shang* (Chinese teachers) (Tucci, 1980). An attempt to arrive at a definitive conclusion regarding which of these divergent approaches was correct took place (c. 792-794) at the council of Samye. According to Tibetan sources, the Indian school of Santaraksita emerged triumphant, but would later suffer systematic repression at the hands of the already well-established political and religious orders. A gradual revival of the imported religion began to take root in the latter part of the tenth century, and during this second diffusion Tibet became almost exclusively dedicated to the importation of Indian Buddhism. According to the Buddhist scholar Edward Conze (1959), "the official Buddhism of that period was a mixture of Prajnaparamita and Tantra," a discipline that "combined metaphysics and magic… and in Tibet still continues as a living tradition" (p. 179).

During the next few centuries this tradition would evolve into a number of prominent monastic orders (which developed alongside the Nyingma school, the original sect) that would consolidate their influence and respective doctrinal precepts (Tucci, 1980). In the early decades of the fourteenth century, the work of the eminent scholar *Bu ston* resulted in the successful completion of the Buddhist canon in Tibet. This was part of a long-standing process that included the creation and expansion of the three still existent primary schools of this second phase, the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelugpa traditions, which collectively came to be known as *Sarma,* or "New Orders." Each school aligned itself with particular Buddhist teachings that traced their origins to specific Indian masters. This relationship between teacher (Skt., *guru*; Tib., *lama*) and student became an all-important and indispensable aspect of the transmission of the teachings. Despite certain differences in the manner of instruction and meditative practice, the four orders–Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelugpa–are united in their adherence to the fundamental precepts of Mahayana Buddhism, especially as they relate to the tenets of Madyamika as outlined in the doctrinal teachings of Nagarjuna. In the words of the Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama:

> In Tibet, due to differences in the time of translation of texts and the development of lineages formed by particular teachers, eight distinct schools of Buddhism arose. Nowadays, four are widely known, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelugpa. From the point of view of their tenets, they are all Madhyamaka. From the point of view of their vehicle, they are all of the Bodhisattvayana. In addition, these four schools are all complete systems of unified Sutra and Tantra practice, each having the techniques and quintessential instructions necessary for a person to achieve Buddhahood within one lifetime. Yet each has its own distinguishing features of instruction (Powers, 2007, p. 358).

Another fundamental precept shared by the four schools involves the distinction between relative truth and ultimate, or absolute truth. Much discussion and debate regarding questions of doctrine were permitted, and at times even strongly encouraged, during the formative periods:

> Doctrine was dominated by a realistic view according to which nothing has real independent existence, all is 'void' (*stong pa*, Skt. *sunya*) . . . all that appears

> superficially real can be shown to be without substance at the level of absolute truth. This was the position of the Madhyamaka school (Tib. *dbu ma*), the system developed by Nagarjuna, who was the central figure of the doctrine in Tibet. An alternative way which was open was that of Cittramatra, of 'thought-only' (Tib. *sems tsam*) ascribed to Asanga and Vasubandhu. According to this, apparent reality is nothing more than a representation made by our mind (*sems*, Skt. *citta*), which produces all representations out of itself, yet is in its own nature also pure radiance (Tucci, 1980, p. 31).

According to Tucci (1980), the various Tibetan sects "waiver between these two positions, and avoid fixing themselves definitely upon one system to the exclusion of the other" (p. 31). The tantric practices of Tibet thus focus on the extinguishing of relative truth–with its illusory appearances and attendant sense of a separate self–and the awakening to absolute truth, the nondual, omnipresent, all-encompassing emptiness and bliss of the Buddha-mind.

Vajrayana: *The Diamond Vehicle*

Tantric practices, which are thought to have emerged in India somewhere between 500 and 600 AD, appeared in the latter part of a long line of previous revisions and transformations in which Buddhism was consistently rethought, reworked, and revised in accordance with different philosophical systems and cultural lenses (Tucci, 1980). The tantric form of Indian Buddhism that developed in Tibet is known in Sanskrit as *Vajrayana*, the Thunderbolt or Diamond Vehicle, and involves the use of such contemplative practices as meditation, creative visualization, artistic expression, mantra recitation, the enactment of *mudras* (ritual poses), and dream yoga as a means of facilitating spiritual development and ultimate liberation. *Tantra* is a Sanskrit word "that means 'continuity.' Tantra refers primarily to the unchanging nature of the mind, which continues without interruption from beginningless time until final enlightenment" (Sherab and Dongyal, 2006, p. 95). The body exists as a vital component in this process, and through the activation of the vital energies of the *chakras*, plays a central role as a kind of alchemical container of inner transformation. These various methods, practices, and rituals all share one ultimate aim--the awakening to the truth of Dharmakaya, the timeless, indivisible, all-encompassing, and unchanging nature of the enlightened mind.

The Mandala, *Sacred Art, and Creative Meditation*

In the Tibetan tradition mandalas are produced in a number of different materials that include sand, thread, and even butter, but the most immediately recognizable forms are the brightly colored paintings, which are typically referred to as *palace architecture* mandalas (Leidy and Thurman, 1997). They are understood to represent a sacred precinct in which a center, or central point (typically occupied by a deity), constitutes the ultimate source of all that is – limitless and unbounded, yet containing a center. In an external sense such mandalas constitute a diagram of a cosmos, and in an internal sense they serve as a guide, or path, to spiritual liberation. Generally speaking, these complex and elaborate forms consist of:

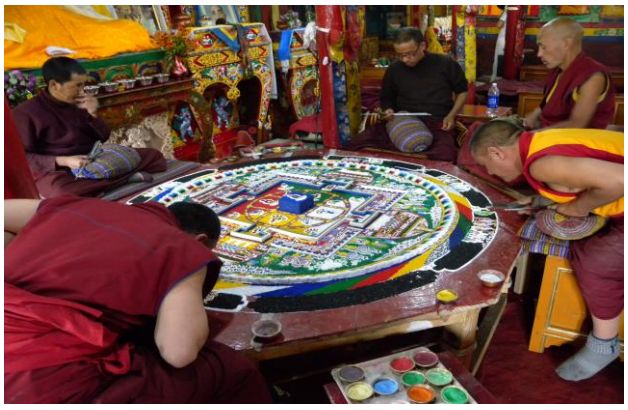
> …an inner circle containing a principle deity (or deities). Enclosed in a multi-level square palace with openings at the four cardinal directions. The palace is placed in a multi-tiered circle. Additional figures are generally found outside this large circle (Leidy and Thurman, 1997, p. 17).

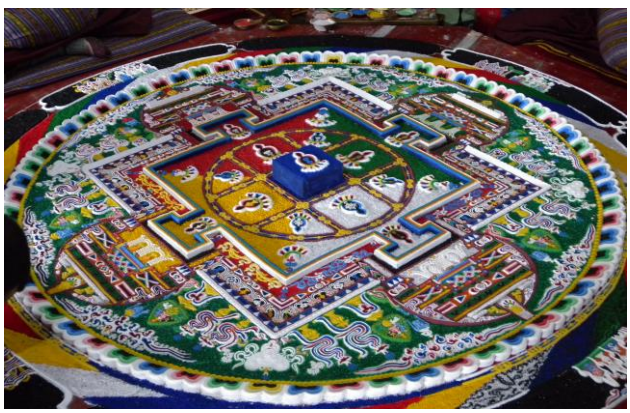
This sanctified space, which may also be depicted in the form of a temple, exists as a kind of sacred architecture that is designed as a generative womb, or container, of an utterly profound alchemical transformation (Leidy and Thurman, 1997). In addition, the mandala's inherent structure reflects "a matter of imaginal world-patterning directly affecting inner structuring of physical and mental senses through actual brain organization" (p. 143). It warrants further mention that:

> ...in Buddhist usage, a mandala is a matrix or model of a perfected universe, the nurturing environment of the perfected self in ecstatic interconnection with perfected others. It is a blueprint for buddhahood conceived as attainment not only of an individual's ultimate liberation, but also as the attainment of such release

> and bliss *by an individual fully integrated with his or her environment and field of associates…* Within the vision of tantra as a world-creating process, mandalas are models used for creating Buddha-worlds (Leidy and Thurman, 1997, p. 127).

Such mandalas are most commonly created in two-dimensional painted form, but may also be constructed in elaborate three-dimensional designs, such as the twelve-foot in diameter, multi-tiered *Kalachakra* mandala of gold that is found in the Potola Palace in Lhasa, Tibet (Bryant, 1992). The Kalachakra system, which according to the 14th Dalai Lama "was one of the last and most complex tantric systems to be brought from to Tibet from India" (Bryant, 1992, p. xi), serves as the basis for the Kalachakra initiation that includes the creation of a strikingly colorful, complex, and intricate sand mandala. This elaborate twelve-day ritual was first conferred by the 14th Dalai Lama in a cornfield outside of Madison, Wisconsin in 1981 and has since been repeated throughout the world on numerous occasions, which makes the Kalachakra mandala--with its direct association to the mythic Kingdom of Shambala--perhaps the most representative symbol of tantric practice found in the world today.





Although there are in fact numerous forms of tantric initiations and practices (which include the Action, Performance, Yoga, and Unexcelled Yoga tantras) and a vast array of deities (e.g., Vajrasattva, Shakyamuni Buddha, Amitabha, and Tara) which may serve as the focus of such practices, structures of divinity worship were established that have a broad application to such procedures (Conze, 1959). As Conze noted, "the Tantra worked out a system of meditation on deities which is marked by a sequence of four steps" (p. 185), which he outlined as follows:

> *First of all*, there is the understanding of emptiness and the sinking of one's separate individuality into that emptiness; *Secondly*, one must repeat and symbolize *germ-syllables*; *Thirdly*, one forms a conception of the external representation of a deity, as shown in statues, paintings, etc.; *Fourthly*, through identification, one becomes the deity (p. 185).

From this standpoint, in the first step of deity meditation the practitioner is encouraged to cultivate emptiness through the awareness that "I am, in my essential being, of diamond nature" (Conze, 1959, p. 185). Next, he employs syllables (e.g., AM, or HUM) as a means of invoking his chosen deity (particular syllables correspond to specific deities). In the third step, he forms a concentrated mental image of that deity in accordance with traditional artistic representations. And lastly, the meditator is absorbed in a direct merging with the deity in which:

> …the subject is actually identified with the object, the faithful with the object of faith. "*The worship, the worshiper, and the worshiped, those three are not separate."* This is the mental state which is known as Yoga, Concentration (Samadhi), or Trance (Dhyana) (Conze, 1959, p. 187).

This process of consecrated assimilation involves a merging of experiential dimensions, and in addressing this theme Tucci (1980) stated that "the meditation processes . . . evoke the divine being and draw him down on to the human plane . . . and at the same time they raise the human being to a plane beyond human existence" (p. 94). He further described this numinous unfolding as follows:

> The mystic himself becomes able to transform himself temporarily into a god (*lhar bskyed*), a process familiar with Indian liturgy: *na adevo devam arcayet*, 'he who does not change himself into a god cannot worship a god'. This principle has developed in an altogether extraordinary manner in the Vajrayana and within Lamaism. Beginning with the meditational formulae which describe the aspect and symbols of particular gods, the meditator concentrates on an individual form chosen by him, he transforms within his mind the place where he is into a paradise until this actually appears before his sight (Tucci, 1980, pp. 94-95).

A complete and unwavering commitment to this method, combined with a genuine belief in the heightened reality of the deity that manifests, are deemed absolutely essential to the efficacy of this process. David Snellgrove (2002) addressed this requirement as follows:

> It would be useless to invoke any form of divinity, higher or lower, without believing in such a being. The high point of any such right is the descent of the actual divinity (known as the 'wisdom-being" or *jnanasattva*) into the symbol of the divinity (the sacramental-being or *samayasattva*), which has been prepared for this mystical (or magical) conjunction. The practitioner is certainly taught that the divine forms are also emanations of his own mind, but they are not arbitrary imaginings and they are far more real than his own transitory personality, which is a mere flow… of consubstantial elements. In learning to produce mentally such higher forms of emanation and eventually identifying himself with them, the practitioner gradually transforms his evanescent personality into that higher state of being. Thus belief in them is essential; otherwise the means by which one would progress dissolve before the desired 'success' (*siddhi*) is achieved (p. 131).

The successful execution of these esoteric practices results in a truly remarkable transformation in which ordinary waking consciousness--understood in Buddhist teachings as the relative truth of dualistic perception, or Maya--dissolves into an awakening to timeless, non-dual awareness, the ultimate truth of Dharmakaya, which, as the all-encompassing Universal Mind, reveals itself as a glorious, boundless union of emptiness and bliss (Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, 1995).

Jungian Depth Psychology and the Mandala

Theoretical and Therapeutic Applications

Jung's (1992b) contact with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition proved instrumental in the confirmation and further development of a number of his major theories, including the universal archetypes. The mandala in particular took on special meaning as both a representation of psychic wholeness and as a therapeutic model, and he came to understand the significance of this archetypal form as having a primordial basis that ostensibly extends well into prehistoric times. According to Jung (1974):

> It seems to me beyond question that these Eastern symbols originated in dreams and visions, and were not invented by some Mahayana church father. On the contrary, they are among the oldest religious symbols of humanity… and may even have existed in Paleolithic times… The mandalas used in ceremonial are of great significance because their centers usually contain one of the highest religious figures: either Shiva himself--often in the embrace of Shakti--or the Buddha, Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, or one of the great Mahayana teachers, or simply the dorje, symbol of all divine forces together, whether creative or destructive (pp. 170-172).

Jung's (1963) first rendering of a mandala occurred in 1916 during the period of extreme psychological upheaval that followed his break with Sigmund Freud. This breach arose as a result of Jung's 1912 publication of his book *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido,* or *Transformation and Symbols of the Libido.* Subsequently renamed *Symbols of Transformation* (1956), this work delineates the postulation that "myth is the revelation of a divine life in man" (p. 340) and served as the basis for his theory of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. This revolutionary thesis stood in stark contrast to Freud's own theories and led to a disheartening and irrevocable breach in their personal and professional relationship,

for which Jung experienced a long period of immense psychic turmoil.

Toward the end of the First World War, the psychological pressure that had consumed Jung's (1963) life in such a trying but ultimately instructive manner slowly began to subside. This process was aided significantly by his painting of mandalas, which would substantially contribute to his still evolving notions of the Self and the process of individuation. Jung came to the understanding that the mandalic form represents psychic unity and completeness, but as he discovered through his own experience and that of his patients, this image also arises spontaneously in dreams and in creative expression as part of the psyche's inherent mechanism for the healing of psychic fragmentation. Jung reflected on his own experience as follows:

> I sketched every morning in a notebook a small circular drawing, a mandala, which seemed to correspond to my inner situation at the time. With the help of these drawings I could observe my psychic transformations from day to day… My mandalas were cryptograms…in which I saw the self—that is, my whole being—actively at work (1963, p. 195).

Such images are impressively portrayed in Jung's *Red Book (2009),* which contains numerous mandalas painted during the period of tumultuous upheaval described above. It was the creative manifestation of these images, and the resulting calm and psychic cohesion they produced, that led him to the conclusion that "the mandala is the center. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the center, to individuation" (Jung, 1963, p. 196). Within this context the mandala became for Jung (1972) the most representative symbol of psychic wholeness, and accordingly he stated that "a mandala is the psychological expression of the totality of the self" (p.20). In the above contexts, the mandala thus serves as both an instrument that furthers the individuation process through bringing cohesion to psychic disorder, and at the same time represents the self in a state of wholeness, or completion.

As a result of his own experience, Jung (1972) encouraged his patients to paint their own mandalas as part of the therapeutic process, and the works they produced were instrumental in helping him to procure a diagnosis of their personality disorders as well as their developmental inclinations and spiritual aptitude. This led him to the understanding that:

> Mandalas are important indicators of the process of personal growth that moves you toward fulfilling your particular identity and purpose in life. The mandalas we create indicate our premonition of a centre of personality, a kind of central point within the psyche, to which everything is related, by which everything is arranged, and which is itself a source of energy. The energy of the central point is manifested in the almost irresistible compulsion and urge to become what one is, just as every organism is driven to assume the form that is characteristic of its nature, no matter what the circumstances (Jung, 1972, p. 73).

As Jung (1972) would later discover, this notion of a central point to which everything is related is a key aspect of the tantric tradition as well, and Jung's understanding of the mandala as a mythic symbol representing both healing and wholeness served to further his growing interest in Eastern spirituality and its symbolism, especially as found in Tibetan Buddhism. However, Jung's therapeutic use of mandalas contrasts with tantra's well-established practices and techniques, with their focus on specific deities and symbols and their origins in the long-standing lineages that are passed down from teacher to disciple. According to Jung:

> Whereas ritual mandalas always display a definite style and a limited number of typical motifs as their content, individual mandalas make use of a well-nigh unlimited wealth of motifs and symbolic allusions, from which it can easily be seen that they are endeavoring to express either the totality of the individual in his inner or outer experience of the world, or its essential point of reference. Their object is the self in contradistinction to the ego, which is only the point of reference of consciousness, whereas the self comprises the totality of the psyche altogether, i.e., conscious and unconscious (Leidy and Thurman, 1997, p. 162).

In light of the above perspective, Jung (1960) chose to experiment with a variety of

techniques designed to help manifest the interplay between consciousness and the unconscious, and he viewed creative expression in particular as one of the primary means of facilitating this process. He discovered that drawing, sand play, and other imaginal exercises involving mythic imagery--especially as it pertains to that images and impressions that arises in the dream state--could be very effective in bringing clarity and form to vague feelings, images, and other manifestations of inner content. This proved especially useful in that "the whole procedure is a kind of clarification of the effect, whereby the effect and its content are brought nearer to consciousness, becoming at the same time more impressive and more understandable" (p. 82). The psyche's conscious engagement with the mythic figures and forms that arise from the unconscious consequently represents one of the most essential features of this alchemical healing and developmental process, as it signals "a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation… a quality of conjoined opposites" (p. 90). And it was Jung's (1963) application of creative techniques in his own healing process that would prove instrumental in bringing to clarity and fruition some of his most influential psychic experiences.

The Emergence of Philemon

Jung's (1963) engagement with the dramatic inner processes described above--which variously occurred in dreams, fantasies, and waking visions--took on further meaning through his encounters with the winged entity known as *Philemon*, whom he first encountered in a dream:

> There was a blue sky, like the sea, covered not by clouds but by flat brown clods of earth. It looked as if the clods were breaking apart and the blue water of the sea were becoming visible between them. But the water was the blue sky. Suddenly there appeared from the right a winged being sailing across the sky. I saw that it was an old man with the horns of a bull. He held a bunch of four keys, one of which he clutched as though he were about to open a lock. He had the wings of the kingfisher with its characteristic colors (pp. 182-183).

Philemon would become the most influential figure in Jung's development, and this mystifying and enigmatic psychic entity took on a living presence in Jung's life, becoming the central focus of numerous dialogical exchanges in which he would impart profound wisdom and reveal the deepest of eternal mysteries. Indeed, for Jung (1963), "Philemon represented superior insight… and to me he was what the Indians call a guru" (p. 183). Jung came to understand this psychic figure as a kind of spirit guide, which can be linked to the Tibetan notion of a *yidam*. These entities, which are usually conferred upon initiates by their lamas, serve as inner guides and are often the focus of tantric practices (Tucci, 1980). Such mediational deities, or tutelary spirits as they are sometimes called, may appear in numerous emanations (e.g., as Kalachakra, Hevajra, or Vajrayogini) and in either their benign or negative aspects in line with the developmental needs of the practitioner.

In the figure of the winged Philemon, Jung (1963) had met his own yidam, who, as a personification of the Self, manifested as an archetypal representation of the *wise old man* (or *magician*). This fantasy figure was directly linked to the entity of the same name who appeared in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and in Goethe's *Faust* (this latter work being especially influential in his life). Jung's attendant creative visualizations, which then led to pictorial representations and the full flowering of Philemon's teachings, are reminiscent of tantric practices in which visualization plays a key role in merging the meditator with the teachings and spiritual qualities of his or her deity (Preece, 2006).

The above example also serves as a means by which to clarify a key distinction in the respective practices and precepts of the two disciplines. In tantric practice, enlightenment can be attained in the course of human existence, and the realized adept *becomes the deity* in the sense of actually and fully realizing those very same attributes within himself in an ultimate awakening to timeless, omnipresent, nondual bliss. In Jung's (1963) psychospiritual model, ego-consciousness (i.e., the persona or number one personality) forever exists in a binary, dialogical relationship with the Self but never achieves a permanent state of nondual union. Thus, while the goal of Tibetan Buddhist practice can ultimately be achieved by the tantric practitioner, the goal of Jung's individuation process--ever

greater conscious realization of the Self--exists as a never ending psychic unfolding of spiritual potentialities that requires an ongoing dyadic relationship between consciousness and the unconscious. Both systems thus emphasize a radical shift away from the ego as the center of personal identity, with the Buddhist approach focusing on the dissolution of the ego as a separate self in line with the concurrent realization of boundless unitary wholeness. The Jungian approach, on the other hand, fosters an ever-increasing realization of the Self as the center and source of one's identity, a process that unfolds within the context of the continuing interplay between the ego and the unconscious.

The Tower

The Tower is a truly remarkable structure that Jung (1963) began to construct in 1923 and subsequently extended over a period of some thirty years. Although it is not a particularly large edifice, it has the unmistakable appearance of an enchanted medieval castle or mythic sanctuary. The original conception was that of a circular African hut with a hearth that would burn in the center and "concretize an idea of wholeness" (p. 224). Jung further stressed that "from the beginning I felt the Tower as in some way a place of maturation – a maternal womb or a maternal figure in which I could become what I was, what I am and will be" (p. 225). Jung also brought Philemon's presence to full effect through the painting of a massive mural in the Tower that closely resembles the original painting found in the *Red Book* (2009). This image bears the unmistakable likeness of a deity figure, and its dominant positioning on a bedroom wall upstairs in the central tower further emphasizes its consecrated status. Immediately adjacent in the room next door, a magnificent, nearly floor-to-ceiling blue and white mandala graces the wall above Jung's bed.

The above statements and circumstances, with their emphasis on a center contained within a circle that represents a kind of generative womb, are clearly suggestive of the aforementioned principles and designs found in Tibetan mandalas. Further, in the figure of the winged Philemon, placed in a central position in the tallest of the round towers, there is the conspicuous inference to the deity figure as being the central focus, or focal point, just as in the Tibetan tradition. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that Jung had, like the Kalachakra palace mentioned above, constructed a three-dimensional mandala in a kind of European palace architecture that served as the sacred dwelling of a deity with whom Jung communed and received divine instruction. Thus the Tower became for Jung (1963), in his own psychological terminology, a "concretization of the individuation process… a symbol of psychic wholeness" (p. 225). In Jung's words:

> At Bollingen I am in the midst of my true life, I am most deeply myself. Here I am, as it were, the "age-old son of the mother." That is how alchemy puts it, very wisely, for the "old man," the "ancient," whom I had already experienced as a child, is personality #2, who has always been and always will be. He exists outside time and is the son of the maternal unconscious. In my fantasies he took the form of Philemon, and he comes to life again at Bollingen (1963, p. 225).

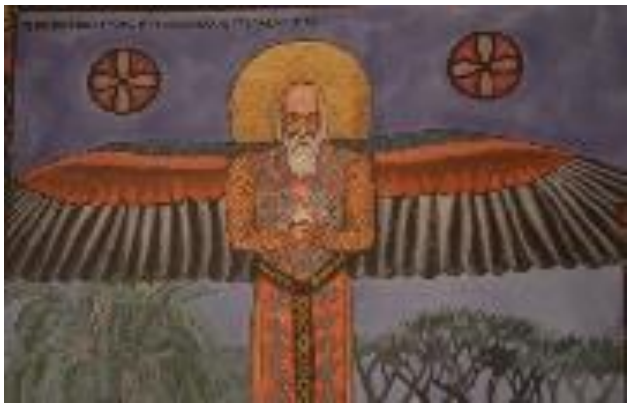
The number two personality about whom Jung speaks--that boundless, eternal, Self--existed for him in sharp contrast to his number one personality, the historically influenced and socially constructed persona of ego-consciousness that lived in the ordinary world of time and dualistic perception. The intimate sense of communion that Jung's experienced at Bollingen was, not surprisingly, accompanied by a sense of merging with the many animate and inanimate entities in the surrounding terrain, a deeply felt sensation that he revealed in the following passage:

> At times I feel as if I am spread out over the landscape and inside things, and am myself living in every tree, in the splashing of the waves, in the clouds and the animals that come and go, in the procession of the seasons. There is nothing in the Tower that has not grown into its own form over the decades, nothing with which I am not linked (Jung, 1963, pp. 225-226).

This sense of merging, of spreading out and physically and psychologically inhabiting one's environment, finds resonance with Leidy and Thurman's (1997) earlier quote that "every being *is* a mandala… We are the environment as much as we are the entity in the environment" (p.

128). Indeed, it warrants mention that in both depth psychology's numinous experience of the Self and Tibetan Buddhism's awakening to heightened states leading to enlightenment, there is a concomitant sense of merging with a totality, although the two disciplines emphasize different experiential aspects. And as Jung (1963) grew older and ever more attuned to the workings of his inner world, he came to the ever firmer conviction that his number two personality represented his true self and that the remarkable dreams and psychic experiences that he had encountered--and that are variously experienced by all human beings--represent an ongoing inner process that has a most profound objective:

> The aim… is to effect a reversal of the relationship between ego-consciousness and the unconscious, and to represent the unconscious as the generator of the empirical personality. This reversal suggest that in the opinion of the "other side," our unconscious existence is the real one and our conscious world a kind of illusion, an apparent reality constructed for a specific purpose, like a dream that seems a reality as long as we are in it. It is clear that this state of affairs resembles very closely the Oriental conception of Maya (p. 324).



The Indian notion of Maya (i.e., relative truth), which is so central to the precepts of Buddhism, is precisely the illusory state that Tibetan tantric practices are designed to dispel in order to awaken to the ultimate truth of Dharmakaya. Jung too, in the binary conception of his number one and number two personalities, arrived at a similar notion, with the number two personality (as personified by Philemon) representing his true self. Further, the Tibetan mandala, as the central vehicle of transformation that houses a deity in its center, is mirrored by its three-dimensional Western counterpart, the Tower, which stands as the sacred precinct of Jung's yidam, Philemon.

Conclusion

Jungian depth psychology and Tibetan Buddhist Tantra represent dynamic psychospiritual disciplines that both employ the creative use of mythic imagery as a powerful agent of inner transformation. Although their traditional precepts diverge in many respects, at the same time there exists a number of notable similarities, especially in relation to the mandala and its attendant symbolism. This primordial form, which has manifested in innumerable contexts throughout human history and is ubiquitously found throughout the natural world and cosmos, holds a special place in each tradition as a symbol of wholeness and a dynamic vehicle of healing and transformation.

In addition, although there are distinct differences in certain ontological precepts as well as the related use of mandalas between the two disciplines, there also exists a number of shared characteristics. The deity worship that is so central to Tibetan Tantra also has correlations in Jungian psychology, and so too does the emphasis on the primacy of psychic reality that serves as the basis for the creative and meditational practices that both systems employ. Such practices include the fundamental axioms of ultimate truth (as exists in Tibetan Buddhism) and the true self (i.e., the Self, as found in Jungian psychology), which, while differing considerably in metaphysical conception, both emphasize a dramatic shift away from the ego as the center of the personality toward union with an all-encompassing psychic reality. And within this context, both are concerned with the

reconciliation of opposites and the union of masculine and feminine principles.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many possible avenues for future comparative research in this area, which could include, for example, psycho-scientific studies that specifically measure changes in both physiology and brain-wave patterns in correlation with the creative rendering of mandalas in both disciplines. This could also be extended to the deduction of any measurable effects arising from meditational focus on mandalic forms in each system. A more in-depth means of identifying and assessing the various forms of mandalas that arise in relation to clinical disorders--and how these might be more broadly applied to mainstream psychotherapy--is another area of potential focus. Further, as there exists a broad consensus in both disciplines that the mandala represents an archetypal form with great inherent healing and transformative properties, a research study that seeks to find ways in which to actively integrate such images in concentrated numbers in a given experiential environment, combined with a careful psychological assessment of the short- and long-term effects on the inhabitants, could prove especially useful. And finally, further studies into human encounters or experience of the two ultimate realities posited by the two disciplines (i.e., Jung's Self and Buddhism's Dharmakaya) would be of immense potential benefit to humanity's understanding of its inherent nature and spiritual potential, a subject that has already received attention in the field of transpersonal psychology, especially in the work of Stanislav Grof (1998).

In closing, I would like to offer the last word to one of the pioneers in this comparative and cross-disciplinary study, a man who was well-versed in the ways of the Western world (having been born in Germany as Ernst Lothar Hoffman) but who found his true calling in the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in the final decades prior to the Chinese takeover in 1950. He would ultimately become known as Lama Govinda, and through his intimate first-hand experience in Tibet and India, combined with his astute understanding of depth psychology, would make among the most substantial contributions to the subject matter outlined above. According to his discerning observations and insights, it is precisely the practice of psychic engagement with sacred mythic imagery that serves as the foundational impetus of psychospiritual growth and reconciliation. And in deeply considering this profound inner process, one is reminded of his judicious counsel, that "such penetration and transformation are only possible through the compelling power of inner vision, whose primordial images or 'archetypes' are the formative principles of our mind" (1969, p. 91). Jung could not have said it better himself.

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