

THE SACRED IMAGE  
C. G. JUNG AND THE WESTERN EMBRACE  
OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

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## Overview and Dedication

Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Jungian depth psychology represent two of the world's most dynamic psycho-spiritual traditions. This study explores their respective insights, cosmologies, and sometimes striking similarities, with particular emphasis on the manner in which mythic imagery is employed in both disciplines as a powerful agent of healing and transformation. With spiritual transcendence serving as their primary impetus, both traditions emphasize 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. The deeper meaning and implications of these precepts and practices are further explored through the lens of contemporary transpersonal theory, and the ontological status of mythic realms and entities is also examined. In the spirit of integral scholarship, a comparative methodology is employed that is elucidated by experiential accounts of mystical phenomena from the Jungian and Tibetan tantric traditions, findings from modern transpersonal research, and the author's own highly transformative experiences. This cross-cultural study is dedicated to all of the intrepid explorers of the sacred dimensions of life and to the pioneers, both past and present, who have contributed their wisdom and seminal insights to the still evolving dialogue between the esoteric spiritual traditions of East and West.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **The Western Embrace of the Tibetan Diaspora**

When the iron eagle flies and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered over the earth and the dharma will go to the land of the red man.

–Tibetan Prophecy

In the more than six decades since the 1950 Chinese invasion of Tibet, there has been a profusion of Tibetan Buddhist teachings dispersed throughout the world. This process has been especially prominent in North America and Europe, where centers of tantric learning have done much to promote the proliferation of this ancient tradition. Many scholars, including the historian Arnold Toynbee (1953), have suggested that for the West the most significant incident of the last century was its direct exposure to the practices and teachings of Buddhism. And this still evolving process has been greatly expanded through the ever-increasing influence of the Tantric Buddhist tradition known as Tibetan *Vajrayana*. As Philip Glass wrote:

The great Tibetan diaspora is recent history, having begun with the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the early '50s. In the decades that followed, the arrival in the West of many, many living masters of Tibetan Buddhism turned the tragedy of Tibet into an unexpected and spectacular windfall for Western devotees of spiritual discipline. (quoted in Yeshe, 1987/2001, p. vii)

For more than a thousand years, the spiritual treasures of this geographically isolated and theologically secretive region had remained largely inaccessible to the outside world. However, in the early decades of the last century a few intrepid Westerners such as Alexandra David-Neal and Ernst Hoffman (later to be known as Lama Anagarika Govinda) managed to penetrate these mysteries through their travels and subsequent encounters with prominent practitioners of this unique Buddhist tradition. Lama Govinda (1969), who studied for many years under the able tutelage of the eminent teacher Tomo Geshe' Rinpoche, described—in October of 1956—the implications pertaining to the diffusion of this esoteric knowledge:

The importance of Tibetan tradition for our time and for the spiritual development of humanity lies in the fact that Tibet is the last living link that connects us with the civilizations of the distant past. The mystery-cults of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece, of Incas and Mayas, have perished with the destruction of their civilizations. . . . The old civilizations of India and China, though well-preserved in their ancient art and literature,

and still glowing here and there under the ashes of modern thought, are buried and penetrated by so many strata of different cultural influences. . . . Tibet, due to its natural isolation and its inaccessibility . . . has succeeded not only in preserving but in *keeping alive* the traditions of the most distant past, the knowledge of the hidden forces of the human soul and the highest achievements and esoteric teachings of Indian saints and sages. But in the storm of world-transforming events . . . these spiritual achievements will be lost forever, unless they become an integral part of a higher civilization of humanity. (p.13)

One of the very first Tibetan masters to arrive in the United States was Geshe Ngawang Wangyal, who established the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America in New Jersey in 1958. Other prominent native practitioners would follow, including Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche, who founded the Nyingma Institute in Berkeley, California in 1969. In the early 1970s, America witnessed the arrival of a profusion of Tibetan tulkus, lamas, and rinpoches, and through the work of native practitioners such as Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Yeshe, and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, the guidance of proficient tantric meditators and teachers became widely accessible. Naropa University (the first four-year Buddhist college in America) was established by Chogyam Trungpa in Boulder, Colorado in 1974, and in the years that followed organizations such as the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California provided significant support through the hosting of workshops and retreats by traditional practitioners. During this time numerous American universities also established departments in Buddhist studies, such as the department at Columbia University in New York headed by the Tibetan Buddhist scholar Robert Thurman. And in the 1980s, Tenzin Gyatso, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, came to the United States to commune with Hopi leaders and the elders of other native American tribes, a meeting that, in conjunction with these earlier developments, brought a definitive sense of fulfillment to the age-old Tibetan prophecy described above. The significance of this adoption in the West of Tantric Buddhist principles was described by the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama as follows:

It has become clear that external progress alone cannot bring mental peace. People have begun to pay greater attention to inner science, the path of mental investigation and development. Through our own experience we have arrived at a point where there is a new awareness of the importance and value of inner mental qualities. Therefore, the explanations of the mind and its workings by the ancient scholars of India and Tibet are becoming increasingly valuable in our time. (quoted in Varela, 1997, p. 1)

The ever-growing influence of Tibetan Buddhism in the West has continued to flourish right up to the present day, and has increasingly become the focus of various cross-cultural and

interdisciplinary studies. The intersection of ancient Eastern spiritual traditions and modern Western psychology has in many ways dominated this East-West dialogue, a process that began many decades ago through the work of such early modern pioneers as Carl Jung.

### **Jungian Depth Psychology and Tibetan Buddhist Tantra**

Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Jungian depth psychology represent two of the world's most dynamic psycho-spiritual traditions. In the following pages their respective cosmologies, insights, and sometimes striking similarities are explored, with particular focus on the manner in which mythic imagery and archetypal forms are employed in both disciplines as powerful agents of healing and transformation.

Each of these disciplines—one revealing the wisdom of an ancient Eastern spiritual tradition and the other bringing forth insights through a modern Western psychological framework—are linked most readily through this shared emphasis on the creative use of mythic imagery and sacred motifs as a means of eliciting psycho-spiritual development. With spiritual transformation acting as their primary impetus, both traditions emphasize the mind, or psyche, as the foundational basis of existence and the primary means through which liberation (in the tantric tradition) or psychic wholeness (as in Jungian psychology) is pursued. Each 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 elements. 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 interrelationship with a boundless and all-encompassing psychic reality. Although the proficient guidance of an adept (i.e., lama or analyst) is considered essential in the formative stages of development, each system also stresses that ultimately “the psyche or mind of the individual—the only instrument through which one experiences reality—is the sole authority” (Moacanin, 2003, pp. 102-103). Joseph Campbell (1974) further articulated these overlapping characteristics in the following passage:

First, there is the idea that the fate of the individual is a function of his psychological disposition: he brings about those calamities that appear to befall him. Next, there is the idea that the figures of mythology are not revelations from aloft, but of the psyche, projections of its fantasies: the gods and demons are within us. And finally, there is the



knowledge that an individual's psychological disposition can be transformed through controlled attention to his dreams and to what appear to be the accidents of his fate. (p. 278)

It should be noted that both of these disciplines represent complex psychological systems that possess their own distinctive characteristics and include sometimes widely varying notions of a higher spiritual order or ultimate reality (the apparent incongruity between the Jungian *Self* and the Buddhist *no-self* being a primary example). Such issues are addressed in some detail in chapters two and four of this study, but the essential foundation and initial basis of this exploration deals with the overlapping features and sometimes arresting similarities that exist between the two traditions. In this sense, regardless of the differences in ontological or metaphysical precepts, 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 transformative methodologies that share a number of intriguing characteristics.

One such characteristic that holds great importance in both traditions is the emphasis on the authority of direct experience, the unmitigated discernment of psychic reality through penetrating experiential engagement and transformation. Ultimately, then, it is the evidence garnered through one's own transformative spiritual processes that is claimed to hold the ultimate authority, although in the Tibetan tradition those experiences that validate the Buddhist doctrine are considered preeminent, and as such the canonical precepts remain the guiding force (Tucci, 1970/1980). And Jung, who is widely considered the forefather of transpersonal psychology, has a special place in this dialogical exchange:

Carl Jung was the first clinical transpersonal psychiatrist and depth psychologist. His work remains pertinent both for clinical concepts that have proved invaluable to transpersonal psychotherapy and for its attitude of personal and cultural receptivity. Jung's attempt at a spiritual approach to psychology, as both a theoretician and a clinician, has had the greatest acceptance in the academic world of any such endeavor. . . . Jung's work in the transpersonal realm prefigured much of what is current in the field. (Scotton, 1996, p. 39)

Ken Wilber (1993) also addressed this theme, and qualified his perspectives with an emphasis on the need for a continued critical examination and expansion of Jung's theories:

For almost half a century, the Jungian paradigm has been the major—and only—viable theory of transpersonal psychology in the West. I personally believe that the Jungian model has many strong points—but even more weak points—and that this debate will in fact be the most heated area of discussion. . . . In any event, the dialogue between the Jungian model and the general transpersonal field will continue to be a source of rich mutual stimulation

and challenge, and will go hand in hand with the extremely important and even larger dialogue of transpersonal psychology with the other three major forces of psychology. (p. 262)

In this respect, while modern psychological theory moves beyond the increasingly conspicuous limits of such disciplines as behaviorism, there still remains the need for a comprehensive theory of human spirituality. And although contemporary Freudian psychoanalysis has begun to more readily embrace certain spiritual aspects, the influence of this mainstream tradition continues to exercise certain limits on this process (Walsh & Vaughan, 1993). As the philosopher Jacob Needleman aptly suggested, “Freudianism institutionalized the underestimation of human possibility” (quoted in Walsh & Vaughan, 1993, p. 2), and the persistent devaluation of deeper spiritual aspects epitomized in psychodynamic theory has done much to hinder other more progressive developments in mainstream psychology and the broader scientific community. Stanislav Grof (1998), one of the founders of contemporary transpersonal psychology, described the need to address these deeper aspects of human spiritual potential as follows:

Throughout centuries, these experiences and the realms of existence they disclose have been described in the context of spiritual philosophies and mystical traditions, such as Vedanta, Hinayana and Mahayana Buddhism, Taoism, Sufism, Gnosticism, Christian mysticism, Cabala, and many other sophisticated spiritual systems. The findings of my research and contemporary consciousness research in general essentially confirm the position of these ancient teachings. They are thus in radical conflict with the most fundamental assumptions of material science concerning consciousness, human nature, and the nature of reality. They clearly indicate that consciousness is not a product of the brain, but a primary principle of existence, and that it plays a critical role in the creation of the phenomenal world. (p. 3)

Jung (1960) also placed great emphasis on the primacy of psychic reality, and attempted to construct an empirically-based theory addressing the relationship between psyche and matter through his concept of synchronicity. Among the spiritual traditions described above, this notion of a unified interrelationship between consciousness and the phenomenal world is especially well explicated in the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet. Tantra’s emphasis on the reconciliation of opposites and the union of masculine and feminine principles lies at the foundation of Jungian theory as well, as does a focus upon the union of immanent and transcendent domains. Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan (1993) noted that “Carl Jung spoke of the importance of gnostic intermediaries,

those people who transmit a wisdom tradition by imbibing it themselves and then translating it into the language of another culture” (p. 267). Many such figures contribute to this comparative study, but it must be remembered that Jung himself, in his extensive and pioneering dialectical conversation with the East, was arguably the most prominent of such individuals (Clarke, 1994). And it was especially through Tibetan Buddhism that he found further impetus for many of his own theories, a process that has served to bring greater understanding to the enigmatic spiritual practices of Tibet as well.

### **Mystical and Dialogical Comparative Hermeneutics**

This form of cross-cultural comparative study naturally involves the potential for various types of cultural appropriation and projection, especially when one considers the widely varying socio-historical circumstances in which these two disciplines originated and developed. Scholars such as Edward Said (1979) have suggested that numerous foreign traditions have been subjected to a systematic process of appropriation and misrepresentation by the West, which raises important concerns regarding issues of interpretation and comprehension.

With these cautionary notes in mind, and with the acknowledgement of the need for a similarly mindful approach in my own course of study, I have attempted to balance my approach through the use of authors and sources that, especially in the context of synthesis, have direct experience or understanding in both disciplines. In the spirit of integral scholarship, Western and Eastern accounts of numinous states of consciousness, findings from modern transpersonal research, and elements of my own personal, therapeutic, and mystical experience are integrated in this study, especially when these aspects serve to enhance a given example or theoretical component. This is done in recognition of the need for,

a scholarship that realizes that these religious worlds are not dead corpses that we can dissect and analyze from a safe distance, but rather are vital, living bodies of knowledge and practice that have the potential to change completely our taken-for-granted notions of who we are, why we are here and what we could or should become. (Gunnlaugson, 2005, pp. 333-334)

The importance of integrating one’s own deeply transformative experiences into any related course of study is highlighted in Jeffrey Kripal’s (2001) emphasis upon a mystical hermeneutics, as “the modern, and now post-modern, study of mysticism . . . has been largely inspired, sustained, and rhetorically formed by the unitive, ecstatic, visionary and mystico-hermeneutical

experiences of the scholars themselves” (p. 3). Thus, in this treatise, for example, one of the author's own highly transformative mystical experiences in Tibet serves as the starting point for an exploration of the ontological status of autonomous dimensions and psychic projections.

The integration of such material presents both potential benefits (e.g., the substantiation of theory through direct experience) and pitfalls (e.g., the potential for personal projection and cultural appropriation), and these crucial considerations can be approached with greater clarity when considered through Hans-Georg Gadamer’s (1989) notion of a horizon, which he described as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (p. 271). The spiritual and theoretical horizons of both disciplines are thus explored in relation to their respective vantage points, a process that inevitably unfolds within the context of one’s own particular perceptions, insights, and experience. In Gadamer’s view it is precisely such resources that allow comprehension to take place, and in this sense understanding is not conceived as a final or fixed truth, but rather as an enhanced, deepened, and fluid perspective that reflects the fruits of such a dialogical inquiry—and its fusion of horizons—between observer, lens, and texts. In short, one must forever remain cognizant of the potential for bias, projection, and appropriation while also putting to good use one’s theoretical, cultural, and experiential insights and attributes. This is the spirit in which this comparative study unfolds, and as such it is intended as a concentrated form of cross-fertilization, or creative dialogical hermeneutics.

### *Wanderings in the Buddhist Himalayas*

A couple of the author’s experiential encounters in the Himalayas warrant special consideration in the above context, as they represent pivotal transformations in the range of vision—i.e., the horizon—that serve as the impetus for this study. The first of these experiences took place many years ago in Nepal, and occurred in the midst of a three-week trek in the remote and wild Solu Khumbu region of the Himalayas. The journey began in the ancient the city of Kathmandu, from which we embarked upon a rocky eight-hour drive over rough, winding dirt roads to the village of Jiri. From there we began an extended trek that would take us up and over snow-covered mountain passes and through tiny, isolated medieval settlements, which in some cases were more than a week’s walk from the nearest road-head town. This area is home to the Sherpa people, descendants of Tibetan tribes who have preserved their native Buddhist traditions for hundreds of years on the southern fringe of the highest mountains on Earth.

In this region landscapes often exist on a monumental scale. Immense mountain ranges intermingle with mighty river gorges and an endless expanse of valleys and roaming foothills, dotted here and there with isolated homes and hamlets. Thriving monastic communities also exist, such as the gompas of Chiwong and Thupten Choling, where one comes in contact with an enthralling blend of human kindness, alluring artwork, and age-old esoteric ritual. When approaching such settlements, or as one makes his way along the trail toward yet another arduous mountain pass, one is often graced by rows of ancient *mani* stones, with their sacred inscription *om mani padme hum—the jewel in the lotus*. At other times one is met by the serene and soothing presence of Tibetan prayer flags, which release their hallowed offerings to the ever-changing winds and currents.

Traveling through this captivating environment with its tiny villages and its warm and welcoming inhabitants, and being in the midst of a vast and immeasurable landscape of unfathomable reach, one began to experience an ever-deepening sense of awe and humility. This was accompanied by a deep sense of interconnectedness to the Earth, a process by which the usual boundaries of self began to fade. In their place there arose a calming, serene sense of being a small but vital part of a vast unity of seemingly separate manifestations that were, as one now sensed, not separate at all. In merging with this all-encompassing source, I communed with its vastness, timelessness, and joy, and experienced an accompanying sense of purity and rebirth. And in this state of being—that of sharing the same eternal energy with all other entities and forms—even the stones, earth, and mountains seemed *alive*.

It was this deeply moving encounter in the Himalayas that aroused a growing interest in the precepts of Tibetan Buddhism, with its emphasis on the interconnectedness of all things, its deep reverence for nature, and its repositioning of human existence within an immeasurable, timeless, all-embracing oneness. And although the intensity of this sense of unity with nature and the cosmos began to fade after my departure from the Himalayas, it had struck a deep cord within and set me on a path of exploration in which Buddhist precepts, intimate contact with nature, and aesthetic principles are intimately interwoven and aligned.

My fascination with this captivating mixture of spirituality, nature, and art was further inspired by another experience that took place some years later while flying over the great Himalayan range. A sudden and unexpected quietude had descended over the plane's inhabitants,

most of whom were now intently fixed on the passing scene below. Beneath us lay a vast expanse of snow-covered granite peaks that stood erect in a great calming silence. In this impregnable stillness time suddenly stood still, and one's fear of death—that of falling from the sky into the seeming abyss of this frozen immensity—receded into a sense of timelessness beyond death. This was accompanied by a penetrating sensation of peace and well-being, as though one were being held in the embrace of a totality with no beginning or end.

In the aftermath of this encounter I was reunited with not only the sense of boundless eternity that the mountains had induced some years previously in Nepal, but also of a most unusual incident that had taken place at the base of Mt. Everest on a subsequent journey to Tibet (which is outlined in detail in chapter four). In each of these experiences there existed an undeniable sense of the merging of one's inner and outer worlds—that in essence the mountain exists as both a physical entity and a deeply transformative psychic image. This transformative quality, one in which psyche and soma merge in an experience of spiritual transcendence, is most powerfully exemplified in the symbol of the World Mountain, which Jung (1959/1981) understood as one of the primary archetypes of the Self and which in Tibetan Buddhism is represented most prominently through the sacred mountain of Mt. Kailash. This merging of psyche and soma and the attendant expansion of consciousness into infinite and eternal states of being—these enigmatic phenomena serve as the essential basis of this comparative inquiry. This study thus focuses on the union of opposites and the inducement of heightened states as initiated through contact with mythic forms and entities, and includes an in-depth consideration of their ontological nature as explored through a transpersonal analysis of the two systems.

### **Synopsis of Chapters**

Following this introduction, chapter two introduces the pioneering theories and therapeutic practices that Jung developed throughout the course of his long and highly productive life, and outlines many of the personal experiences and cultural circumstances that contributed to their conception and development. His notions of universal archetypes, the collective unconscious, the Self, and other such aspects are also explored in accordance with his exposure to ancient Eastern spiritual traditions and how his own evolving theories were often influenced and deepened by this contact. Jung's tendency (as suggested by certain contemporary commentators) to at times overly generalize or misinterpret certain Eastern teachings is also examined.

Chapter three explores the fundamental origins, precepts, and cosmological components of Tibetan Buddhist Tantra, and enunciates the primary esoteric concepts (e.g., *no-self*) that exist in this tradition. The fundamental workings of the mind (i.e., its traits, tendencies, and attachments) are also given special attention, with an attunement to the deeper meaning and usage of sacred symbols and mythic imagery to elicit spiritual transformation through creative and contemplative meditation, constituents that exist as the very foundation of tantric practice. The existence of exalted psychic entities and innumerable experiential domains is also examined.

Chapter four presents a comparative study of the two disciplines, with particular attention given to their shared emphasis on the primacy of psychic reality and their attendant focus on the union of opposites and the merging of masculine and feminine principles. Primary focus is also applied to their distinctive approaches to the fostering of healing and psycho-spiritual growth through creative engagement with mythic imagery, as well as their respective ontological notions of the Self (as in the Jungian tradition) and *no-self* (as exists in Tibetan Buddhism), especially as it relates to unitive consciousness and the transcendence of the subject-object relationship.

Chapter five presents and a basic overview of the modern transpersonal movement, and then proceeds to implement the Tibetan Buddhist and Jungian depth psychological traditions within the framework of transpersonal theory. This includes an outline of the groundbreaking work of Stanislav Grof, as well as an overview of Michael Washburn's and Ken Wilber's theories of human development (with the former representing Jungian theory and the latter showing parallels to Tibetan Buddhist Tantra). The work of Jorge Ferrer and Richard Tarnas delineates the basic tenets of the transpersonal school known as the participatory vision, which is experientially enunciated through its application to a mystical encounter at a megalithic circle of standing stones known as the Ring of Brodgar.

Chapter six presents a summary of the findings and provides a basic overview of the meaning and implications of this comparative study. Suggestions for future research, which include key aspects of the work of Christopher Bache, Roger Woolger, and Jane Roberts, are also presented. The study concludes with some final reflections on the challenges and significance of the East-West dialogue and its seminal contributions to contemporary theories of spirituality, transformative practices, and the ever-evolving human potential movement.

## CHAPTER TWO

### JUNGIAN DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

#### Early Life and Primary Influences

The events and circumstances of Jung's early life played a decisive role in the formation of his psychological theories and in his more general outlook on human existence (Bair, 2003). He was born in 1875 in the village of Kesswil, Switzerland, the fourth-born but first-surviving child of Paul Achilles Jung and Emilie Preiswerk. Although his father held the position of a poor country parson, his extended family on both sides consisted of prominent ministers and doctors, and the underlying foundations of these two professions would figure significantly in Jung's early development as well as his later professional pursuits.

When Jung was about six months old his family moved to the vicarage of Laufen, near the city of Basel with its great Gothic cathedral (Jung, 1963). Among his earliest and most enduring memories (occurring when he was just a few years old) were the great falls of the Rhine and a blissful panorama of the glowing red Alps at sunset. These scenes would inspire an enduring love of the natural world and its mysteries, and the numinous quality he often sensed in its midst would inspire deep inquiries into its underlying essence:

Trees in particular were mysterious and seemed to me direct embodiments of the incomprehensible meaning of life. . . . but . . . the infinity of the cosmos, the chaos of meaning and meaninglessness, of personal purpose and mechanical law, were wrapped in stone. This contained and at the same time *was* the bottomless mystery of being, the embodiment of spirit. What I dimly felt to be my kinship with stone was the divine nature in both, in the dead and the living matter. (pp. 67-68)

Some three decades later, returning to his former childhood home as a recognized professional with a family and a well-established place in the outer world, Jung (1963) underwent a kind of sacred remembrance of these enigmatic early experiences. Jung spoke of this incident as a spontaneous immersion in the spirit of his youth, one that "illuminated in a flash of lightening the quality of eternity in my childhood" (pp. 20-21) and created a temporary sense of profound distance and dissociation from the circumstances of his adult existence. This recollection elucidates one of the primary aspects of Jung's early development, namely the distinction between what he described as his *number one* and *number two* personalities. The number one personality (which would later find expression through Jung's conception of the



*persona*) represented his identity in the outer world, the set of expectations and rules of family and social propriety that he adhered to and fostered as part of his process of adaptation. The number two personality, on the other hand, represented what he considered to be his true self, his own mysterious inner world in which, as he described it:

A breath of the great world of stars and endless space had touched me, or as if a spirit had invisibly entered the room—the spirit of one who had long been dead and yet was perpetually present in timelessness until far into the future. Denouements of this sort were wreathed with the halo of a numen. (p. 66)

From his earliest days dreams also had a tremendous and sometimes startling impact on his personal development. An especially potent and symbolically haunting dream that remained with him his entire life occurred when Jung (1963) was between the ages of three and four years old. In this dream he found himself in the meadow of an isolated village near Laufen Castle, where he discovered a stone stairway that led down a dark, stone-lined hole in the ground. He cautiously worked his way down the stairs and passed through a heavy green curtain, where he encountered a richly decorated chamber with a red carpet and golden throne. On the throne sat what at first appeared to be a tree trunk, which approached 15 feet in height and was roughly two feet thick. It was made of skin and bare flesh with a strange, rounded, hairless head that contained a single eye gazing upward. Jung stood before this ominous creature in complete terror, fearing that it might at any time creep toward him. Then, from outside his mother's voice exclaimed, "Yes, look at him, that is the man-eater!" (p. 12), which caused him even further distress. He then awoke in utter fright. This experience would haunt him for many years, and only much later in adulthood did he come to the realization that what he had encountered had been a ritual phallus.

The above example represents Jung's (1963) earliest recollection of a dream sequence, one that for him held a deep sense of mystery and significance right up until his death. It also set into motion what would eventually emerge as a greatly heightened sensitivity to psychic events and an unyielding dedication to uncovering the inner meaning of dream symbolism. As an adult, he came to interpret the hole in the meadow as representing a grave, and deduced that "the grave itself was an underground temple whose green curtain symbolized the meadow, in other words the mystery of Earth with her covering of green vegetation" (p. 13). He also observed with great curiosity that certain aspects of the dream (such as the vault) were beyond his direct experience, and as such could not be in any way traced to his memory. He further noted that he (especially at

less than four years of age) had no sense as to the immediate (i.e., personal) origin of the anatomically correct phallus with the single eye, and he thus concluded that “the interpretation of the *orifice urethrae* as an eye, with the source of light apparently above it, points to the etymology of the word phallus” (p. 13).

This dream had a profound effect on the little boy, who in his young imagination had always before envisioned “the king who sat on a golden throne; then on a much more beautiful and much higher and much more golden throne far, far away in the blue sky, sat God and Lord Jesus” (Jung, 1963, p. 14). But in this dream he had discovered something quite different inhabiting the golden throne, “something non-human and underworldly, which gazed fixedly upward and fed on human flesh” (p. 14). Some 50 years later he came upon a passage in a study of religious ritual dealing with the motif of cannibalism as the underlying symbolism of the Catholic Mass. Jung was struck by the overwhelming sense that a kind of superior intelligence was at work, one that revealed deeper truths that lie beyond exoteric religious dogma and suggested the presence of unseen and shadowy aspects of the divine that co-exist alongside the light:

Through this childhood dream I was initiated into the mysteries of the earth. What happened then was a kind of burial in the earth, and many years were to pass before I came out again. Today I know that it happened in order to bring the greatest possible amount of light into the darkness. My intellectual life had its unconscious beginnings at that time. (p. 15)

Jung (1963) continued to experience a number of formidable psychic events throughout his childhood, including one incident that served to epitomize his questioning of religious belief. Such doubts had arisen in part through observing the slow and ultimately tragic disintegration of his father’s faith and sense of personal meaning. For young Carl this had the effect of intensifying the distinction between mere faith and an actual, direct experience of the divine. The experience in question involved a tremendous build-up of psychic pressure during a period in his adolescence, a process that was further exasperated by his fearful and guilt-ridden resistance toward allowing these unconscious contents—which he felt were somehow inspired by God—to reveal themselves. Finally, when he could no longer defy this overwhelming and unrelenting power, he succumbed to its undeniable dominion:

I gathered all my courage, as though I were about to leap forthwith into hell-fire, and let the thought come. I saw before me the cathedral, the blue sky. God sits on His golden throne, high above the world—and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling new roof, shatters it, and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder. So that was it! I felt an

enormous, an indescribable relief. Instead of the expected damnation, grace had come upon me, and with it an unutterable bliss such as I had never known. (p. 39)

Jung (1963) felt that his father's rigid commitment to religious dogma and the lack of a genuine inner sense of spiritual meaning had resulted in a fragile and truncated faith that did not allow him to experience "the immediate living God who stands, omnipotent and free, above His Bible and Church" (p. 40). This contrast between his father's troubled devotion to the inherited dogma of the Christian faith and his own ever-deepening inclination toward the psychic processes of his inner world would become a primary theme in both his clinical work and in the development of his theoretical precepts. This would present itself most readily in Jung's extensive investigations of the exoteric and esoteric (especially gnostic) aspects of religion, and resulted in his assertion that adherence to conservative religious dogma typically serves to inhibit genuine religious experience, which ultimately can be found only within oneself.

During Jung's middle and latter teenage years he became engrossed in a wide array of intellectual pursuits, which involved an intimate exposure to the theories of the ancient Greek philosophers, the mysticism of Meister Eckhart, and the grand speculations of the German idealists (Jung, 1963). He was particularly impressed by Arthur Schopenhauer (1851/1913), whose work bore the unquestionable influence of Indian philosophy, especially Buddhism and the Hindu *Upanishads*. The author's conjectures on the *world-creating Will* and the tragic course of human history was interpreted by Jung as a refreshingly honest and realistic depiction of both the dark and light aspects of creation. Schopenhauer's work also introduced Jung to the writings of Immanuel Kant, who more than any other single individual influenced the epistemological underpinnings of Jung's psychological theories. Kant's seminal work, his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/2007), had dismantled the philosophical principles of both Cartesian rationalism and the French Enlightenment and had created further schisms in the already teetering theological foundations of the Christian Church. The basic tenets of this thesis are outlined as follows:

The nature of the human mind is such that it does not passively receive sense data. Rather, it actively digests and structures them, and man therefore knows objective reality precisely to the extent that reality conforms to the fundamental structures of the mind. . . . All human cognition of the world is channeled through the human mind's categories. The necessity and certainty of scientific knowledge derive from the mind, and are embedded in the mind's perception and understanding of the world. They do not derive from nature independent of

the mind, which in fact can never be known in itself. . . . In the act of human cognition, the mind does not conform to things: rather, things conform to the mind. (Tarnas, 1991, p. 343)

This framework of *a priori* psychic structures became one of the primary underlying principles of Jung's conception of the archetypes, and had a direct bearing on both his empirical and epistemological approaches to the study of the human psyche. Although from an empirical standpoint this framework greatly inhibited Jung's belief in the viability of metaphysical certainties, his trusted colleague Aniela Jaffe (as cited in Jung, 1963) was careful to point out that his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* represents the one work in which Jung reveals aspects of his personal experience of God, whereas in his other extensive writings he approaches the subject from a scientific standpoint and focuses on "the God-image in the human psyche" (p. xi). In the first example he is revealing his own personal experience as an individual, and in the second his approach is that of a scientist who purposely limits his speculations to that which can be supported by evidence.

When Jung was only twenty years old his father suddenly became sick and passed away, an event that Carl, who at the time was home on holiday leave from his university studies, witnessed in person (Jung, 1963). Six weeks after his death his father appeared to him in a series of dreams in which he spoke directly to his son, telling him that he had recovered and would be returning soon. The dreams were so real and their impact so profound that for the first time he was forced to seriously consider life after death. The passing of his father also stirred anew his lingering doubts about the traditional portrayals of God and Jesus that had held such a predominant place in his upbringing. Jung's latter emphasis upon the coexistence of light and dark characteristics was clearly present at an early age, and he had no difficulty applying this thesis to the Church's flawless and exalted icons, even when he found little agreement among his family or peers. For Jung, "Lord Jesus was . . . unquestionably a man and therefore a fallible figure, or else a mere mouthpiece for the Holy Ghost. This highly unorthodox view, a far cry from the theological one, naturally ran up against utter incomprehension" (p. 98).

This strong inclination toward unconventional (or esoteric) viewpoints would become the hallmark of Jung's seminal work in psychology, and it often led him into explorations of subject matter that extended into realms of the occult (Jung, 1963). Jung's mother always exhibited a sensitivity in this area, and members of his extended family had for some time been involved in

the practice of table-turning, aided by a teenage female medium. Jung began to regularly attend the group's Saturday evening séances, and his observations (lasting two years) of their various psychic manifestations became the basis of his doctoral thesis. Two years later he completed his dissertation, *On the Psychology and Pathology of So-called Occult Phenomena*, and he would later proclaim that this first-hand, experiential exposure to such phenomena "was the one great experience which . . . made it possible for me to achieve a psychological point of view" (p. 107).

Up until this time Jung had seriously entertained the notion of becoming a medical physician, but while preparing himself for the state examination it suddenly became clear to him "in a flash of illumination, that . . . the only possible goal was psychiatry" (Jung, 1963, pp. 108-109). In December of 1900 he took up an appointment under Dr. Eugen Bleuler at the Burgholzli Mental Hospital in Zurich. During his apprenticeship his interests and research were governed by an unyielding curiosity as to what actually occurs in the minds of the mentally ill, and these investigations would continue in earnest for nearly a decade, with particular emphasis on the study of complexes. Over time he also began to establish a notable professional reputation. This development was greatly enhanced through his association experiments (begun in 1903), which are "considered by many traditionalists to be his most important contribution to psychoanalysis because they followed scientific procedure and used rigorous experimentation to demonstrate the effects of the unconscious" (Bair, 2003, p. 85).

During this time the work of Sigmund Freud became vitally important to Jung, "especially because of his fundamental researches into the psychology of hysteria and of dreams" (Jung, 1963, p. 114). In Freud's (1899/2010) groundbreaking book, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Jung found many parallels to his own evolving ideas (including his conception of complexes), and early in 1906 he contacted the esteemed psychiatrist with the desire to deepen the correspondence between their respective theories and methodologies. The relationship that developed was from the outset that of a father/son affiliation (Freud being nearly twenty years older), one that the elder member saw as a means of furthering his own theories rather than as a genuine collaborative alliance (Bair, 2003).

Although their professional association brought ever-expanding accolades to their work and to the emerging field of psychoanalysis, over time the difference between their respective theories became increasingly apparent (Jung, 1963). This was especially true concerning the

nature and function of the unconscious, which Freud viewed as little more than the repository of repressed instincts. Jung, on the other hand, came to view the unconscious as possessing a religious function that contained a profound healing potential, a thesis that had arisen through intimate contact with his patients at the Burgholzli. One patient in particular, a schizophrenic by the name of Emile Schwyzer, produced a proliferation of mythic images (often expressed in an archaic language with no identifiable connection to his background or upbringing), which Jung was able to trace to ancient mythological themes that were often far removed from any probable link to the patient. These universal themes that arose in Schwyzer and other patients later became the basis of Jung's (1912/1977b) conception of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, which he outlined with the 1912 publication of his book, *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, or *Transformation and Symbols of the Libido*. Later known as *Symbols of Transformation* (after its 1952 revision), this work delineates the postulation that "myth is the revelation of a divine life in man" (Jung, 1963, p. 340), a view that stood in stark contrast to Freud's theories and led to an irrevocable and disheartening breach in their personal and professional relationship.

### **Confrontation with the Unconscious**

Jung was now largely estranged from the psychoanalytic community that had been established during his association with Freud, and what followed was a tumultuous period of personal introspection and psychic upheaval that would ultimately produce the *prima materia* that became the foundation for much of his latter work (Jung, 1963). This process began with a deep questioning of the containing myth of modern humanity, and it caused Jung to direct the inquiry squarely upon himself: "But then what is your myth, the myth by which you do live?" (p. 171). At a loss for a genuine explanation, the matter faded into the background; but then, during the Christmas season in 1912, he had a dream in which he found himself in a wonderful classical edifice of Italian design. He was surrounded by furnishings of great beauty, and was sitting on a Renaissance chair of gold in the company of his children. Then a white bird appeared, and was suddenly transformed into a little girl with golden blonde hair who joined the other children in play. This young girl later returned and embraced Jung before suddenly turning back into a dove, who then explained that "only in the first hours of the night can I transform myself into a human being while the male dove is busy with the twelve dead" (p. 172). Then she flew off.

Jung was mystified by this bizarre sequence of words and images, and he spent the rest of that night wrestling with the possible meaning of the number twelve as it related to the zodiac, the months of the year, and the twelve apostles (Jung, 1963). He then attempted to link the emerald table to the story of the Tabula Smaragdina, the alchemical legend “upon which the basic tenets of alchemical wisdom were engraved in Greek” (p. 172). None of these associations seemed quite adequate, but “one fantasy kept returning: there was something dead present, but it was also still alive . . . Corpses were placed in crematory ovens, but were then discovered to be still living” (p. 172). These fantasies continued until a resolution was reached in a subsequent dream in which he encountered a row of sarcophagi of different periods dating back to medieval times. The dead lay “in their antique clothes, with hands clasped, the difference being that they were not hewn of stone, but in a curious fashion mummified” (p. 172). When gazing down upon the figures present (which represented successive centuries of descent beginning with the nineteenth), each stirred and then came to life. The last figure, a crusader dressed in chain mail, was from the twelfth century, and although he appeared to be dead, in time he too began to gently stir. With this last series of images, a feeling of transparency and resolution came over Jung, and this interconnected series of dreams and fantasies became a further confirmation of one of his most compelling theories—the archetypes.

Despite this sense of clarity and substantiation, Jung remained in a state of inner pressure and disorientation, and in seeking to find some remedy for his condition, chose to simply surrender to whatever impulses would arise from within (Jung, 1963). The first thing to surface was a very emotional and elated memory of building small houses and castles as a young boy, and this recollection served to remind him of an enchanted creative life that he now lacked as an adult. He then began a routine of creative play in which, after the noon meal, he would engage in the building of tiny stone structures and villages, and he found that this activity brought him great satisfaction while helping to clarify the stream of fantasies that continued to emerge. This balancing of his psychic world was crucial for Jung, and provided him with “the inner certainty that I was on the way to discovering my own myth” (pp. 174-175). It also laid the groundwork for many of his therapeutic techniques, which emphasized creative expression as a central means of bringing clarity and meaning to unconscious contents.

During this period Jung continued to experience the spontaneous emergence of psychic material, and in October of 1913 he was subjected to the first of two dramatic episodes involving fantasies of an extremely disturbing nature (Jung, 1963). The initial incident occurred while on a train to Schaffhausen and involved a vision of Northern Europe being inundated by an immense and destructive flood, complete with a sea of blood, detritus, decayed corpses, and the rubble of destroyed buildings. The vision reoccurred two weeks later in an even more extreme fashion, and was accompanied by an inner voice that said “look at it well; it is wholly real and it will be so. You cannot doubt it” (p. 175). This was followed in the spring and early summer of 1914 by a reoccurring dream of Europe being taken over by a great and destructive deep freeze. The third and last dream in this series ended, however, with a fruitless but life-bearing tree “whose leaves had been transformed by the effects of the frost into sweet grapes full of healing juices. I plucked the grapes and gave them to a large, waiting crowd” (p. 176).

On August 1 of that year war broke out on the European continent, and the above series of dreams and fantasies could thus be understood as a striking premonition of the First World War (Jung, 1963). Despite the often overwhelming and disorienting effects of this ongoing psychic process, Jung was buoyed by the sense that he was “obeying a higher will” (p. 177), and he remained determined to find the meaning that lay within these dreams and visions. There existed an especially prominent emotional component in this process, and he linked this aspect directly to the importance of images as representative manifestations that can both pacify and heal.

Jung (1963) came to conceive of his “confrontation with the unconscious as a scientific experiment” (p. 178), and although he was well aware of the dangers of psychic dissociation and other potentially ruinous mental afflictions, he ultimately determined that: “in order to grasp the fantasies which were stirring in me ‘underground,’ I knew that I had to let myself plummet down into them. . . . down into dark depths.” (pp. 178-179). After landing in complete darkness, the distant entrance to a cave came into view, whereupon Jung squeezed past a mummified dwarf and into the dark enclosure. Wading through knee-deep, icy water to the other side of the cave, he discovered a glowing red crystal. He lifted the stone and found an opening underneath that revealed running water that carried a passing corpse, a blonde youth with a wound to the head. This figure was followed by “a gigantic black scarab and then by a red, newborn sun, rising up out of the depths of the water . . . Then a fluid welled out. It was blood,” and “the blood



continued to spurt for an unendurably long time. At last it ceased, and the vision came to an end” (p. 179). Jung acknowledged that he was, “stunned by this vision. I realized, of course, that it was a hero and solar myth, a drama of death and renewal, the rebirth symbolized by the Egyptian scarab” (p. 179).

Six days later, Jung (1963) had a dream of himself as “an unknown, brown-skinned man, a savage in a lonely, rocky mountain landscape” (p. 180). Then he heard the horn of the mythical hero Siegfried sounding over the mountains, and he knew that the hero had to be killed. Riding up over the mountains as the sun rose, Siegfried rambled down the slope at a tremendous speed, and was shot dead as he passed. Jung ascertained that “the dream showed that the attitude embodied by Siegfried, the hero, no longer suited me. Therefore it had to be killed” (p. 180). Jung also came to identify the brown-skinned savage as “an embodiment of the primitive shadow,” and suggested that the dream revealed that “the tension between consciousness and the unconscious was being resolved” (p. 180). In Jung’s view, the ego (i.e., the hero) was being superseded by the unconscious as the central pivot of the personality—and indeed, as the very source of consciousness itself.

In other encounters with his inner world, Jung (1963) would imagine a steep descent down into the depths of the unconscious, and there he encountered biblical figures (such as Elijah and Salome, who resided with a black serpent) with whom he would converse, sometimes in an ancient, unintelligible language. On another occasion, when considering the deeper meaning of recording his fantasies, a voice from within exclaimed that “it is art” (p. 185). Jung was struck by the feminine quality of this communication, and despite his inner resistance, the voice persisted. He was intrigued that a woman figure would intervene in his inner processes, and he concluded that “she must be the ‘soul,’ in the primitive sense,” and he began “to speculate on the reasons why the name ‘anima’ was given to the soul” (p. 186). Jung would later conclude that this inner female presence, the *anima*, plays a vital archetypal role in the unconscious processes and attendant development of the male, while its counterpart, the *animus* (as masculine aspect), performs the same function in the female through a merging of these two essential principles.

Jung’s (1963) engagement with such inner figures took on even more heightened significance through his contact with a winged entity known as Philemon, whom he first encountered in a dream. Philemon appeared above a great ocean as a wise old man with the

horns of a bull and the colors of the kingfisher. He carried a collection of four keys, with one being held as though he were preparing to open a lock. (pp. 182-183)

Jung (1963) chose to paint this dream-image in an effort to bring clarity to its meaning, and one day while he was occupied with this task he discovered a dead kingfisher in his garden by the lake. He was astounded, as these birds are extremely rare in the vicinity of Zurich, and such remarkable and seemingly unexplainable coincidences (for which Jung would cite many examples over the course of his long life) became the basis of his concept of *synchronicity*. Perhaps more significantly, however, Philemon became Jung's most revered inner companion and teacher, one who "represented superior insight" and who "at times seemed to me quite real, as if he were a living personality" (p. 183). Jung noted that "Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche that I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life" (p. 183). Some 50 years after his initial contact with this inner figure, Jung was visited by an older, highly educated Indian, who revealed that his own teacher had been Shankaracharya, the Vedic commentator who had died many centuries before. Jung was astounded at the man's assertion that there are both living and "ghostly gurus," (p. 184), a notion that resonated with deep solace in relation to his own experience. Philemon thus served not only as a trusted guide and an exalted teacher in Jung's inner world, but also provided the impetus for his conception of autonomous psychic aspects and entities.

Toward the end of the First World War, the immense psychic pressure that had consumed Jung's life in such a trying but instructive manner slowly began to subside. This process was aided by his painting of mandalas, which contributed substantially to his emerging notions of the *Self* (i.e., one higher nature, or psychic totality) and the process of *individuation* (i.e., psycho-spiritual development). In Jung's (1963) thinking, mandalas represent "'Formation, Transformation, Eternal Mind's eternal recreation.' And that is the self, the wholeness of the personality" (p. 196). He further suggested that "the mandala is the center. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the center, to individuation" (p. 196). The mandala thus represents psychic unity and completeness in Jung's view, 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. Such

images are impressively portrayed in Jung's (2009) *The Red Book*, which contains numerous mandalas painted by Jung during the period of tumultuous upheaval described above. It was the creative manifestation of these images that served to bring cohesion to Jung's psychic turmoil, a process that led him to his understanding of the mandala as a mythic symbol representing both healing and wholeness, and one that served to further his growing interest in Eastern spirituality and its symbolism.

It was also through this ever-increasing intimacy with the psychic core of his being that Jung (1963) would begin to solidify a sense of his own personal myth. His direct engagement with the dreams and visions that had asserted such a persistent presence in his life had proven instrumental in this process, providing "the *prima materia* for a lifetime's work" (p. 199) and laying the found for much of the seminal work that would follow.

### **An Overview of Jung's Major Theories**

The various psychic phenomena that Jung experienced throughout his early life, combined with an in-depth exploration of humanity's cultural and religious mythologies, provided him with the basis for his own unique conception of human psychology (Jung, 1963). From this earlier period until his death in 1961, Jung developed an array of concepts and theories that seek to bring clarity to a fascinating array of human experience and esoteric phenomena. At the heart of these concepts lies Jung's notion of *unus mundus*, a term deriving from his studies of medieval European alchemy that translates as *one unitary world* and "represents the original, inseparable union of all things, the nondifferentiated essence out of which all things arise and are given individual form" (Salman, 1997, pp. 53-54). The nature of *unus mundus* was also conceived as manifesting into separate parts such as subject and object in order to bring forth a condition of actuality from the potentiality inherent in the original, non-differentiated essence. Jung applied this concept to the study of the human psyche, and conceived that the differentiation of the conscious and unconscious contents of the psyche (i.e., separate parts or opposites) is necessary for the sake of growth and adaptation, but ultimately these aspects must be reunited in order to achieve a state of psychic wholeness. The deep symbolic processes depicted in medieval alchemy (e.g., the turning of base metals into gold—the philosopher's stone) became for him an important confirmation not only of his own theory but of a broader collective inclination toward the all-important condition of psychic wholeness.

Jung (1964) referred to the potential for this condition of wholeness as the Self (which encompasses the total psyche, and is aligned with Jung's notion of his *number two* personality), and development toward this state of wholeness, which involves the integration of conscious and unconscious material, occurs through what he termed the process of individuation. Central to this inner journey of discovery and its circuitous return to the origin of one's being (the Self) is the concept of the *archetypes*. Jung postulated that the various symbols and motifs that manifest on both a personal and collective level originate from the archetypes, which he described as follows:

The archetype is a tendency to form such representations as a motif—representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their basic pattern . . . but the motif itself remains the same . . . These manifestations are what I call the archetypes. They are without known origin; and they reproduce themselves in any time or in any part of the world—even where transmission by direct descent or 'cross fertilization' through migration must be ruled out. (p. 58)

Jung's (1963) initial development of the theory of archetypes followed a period of extensive scholarly study of the myths of numerous cultures and ancient religious traditions (aspects of which were variously manifested in the dreams and fantasies of his patients), which led to the aforementioned publication of the book *Symbols of Transformation* (1912/1977b). This work delineates his postulation of myth as a universal revelation of a religious instinct in humankind, and because of its challenge to psychoanalytic orthodoxy, it presaged his break with Freud. During this time he also developed his conception of the *collective unconscious* (from which the universal archetypes arise) as the boundless repository of humanity's cultural, ancestral, and mythic heritage. In conjunction with these theories, Jung developed the process of *amplification*, a method by which the deeper spiritual meaning of psychic images, symbols, and dream-figures are expanded through their association with mythological, cultural, and religious motifs and metaphors—a process that has particular application within a therapeutic context.

An in-depth attunement to the mythic images that arise through dreams, visions, and other psychic phenomena represents an essential component in this process, as such archetypal forms often evoke (or are used to induce) the experience of numinosity:

Numinous experience is . . . the feeling that one is in the grip of something greater than oneself, the impossibility of exercising criticism, and the paralysis of the will. Under the impact of the experience reason evaporates and another power simultaneously takes

control—a most singular feeling which one willy-nilly hoards up as a secret treasure no matter how much one’s reason may protest. That, indeed, is the uncomprehended purpose of the experience—to make us feel the overpowering presence of a mystery. (Jung, 1977a, pp. 154-155)

Jung (1964) also stressed the importance of sustaining a numinous link with nature (a perspective that has correlations to certain fundamental shamanic sensibilities, most notably the notion of spirit in nature and the agency of inanimate objects), which resulted from his deeply felt sense of the alienation of contemporary humanity:

As scientific understanding has grown, so our world has become dehumanized. Man feels himself isolated in the cosmos, because he is no longer involved in nature and has lost his emotional ‘unconscious identity’ with natural phenomena . . . No river contains a spirit, no tree is the life principle of a man, no snake the embodiment of wisdom, no cave the home of a great demon . . . His contact with nature is gone, and with it has gone the profound emotional energy that this symbolic connection supplied. (p. 95)

The phenomena of numinous (i.e., sacred) experience becomes especially pertinent within this context, as the mythic engagement with nature serves as a bridge between one’s inner and outer worlds, and suggests that unconscious processes are not purely subjective experiences but are at play in the *outer* environment as well. The archetype of the World Mountain, for example, is represented as both a psychical entity (e.g., Mt. Kailash) and as a psychic symbol of spiritual transcendence, thus bringing mind and matter, and heaven and earth, into union within the human domain (Eliade, 1957/1987).

Jung (1977a) stressed that these psychologically potent mythic elements are not creations of the conscious ego, but rather arise from the depths of the unconscious. For this reason, the phenomena of dreams are of primary importance in depth psychology “because dreams are the most common and most normal expression of the unconscious psyche . . . they provide the bulk of the material for its investigation” (p. 73). Jung also made an important distinction “between ‘little’ and ‘big’ dreams, or as we might say, ‘insignificant’ and ‘significant’ dreams” (p. 76):

Not all dreams are of equal importance . . . Looked at more closely, ‘little’ dreams are the nightly fragments of fantasy coming from the subjective and personal sphere, and their meaning is limited to the affairs of everyday . . . Significant dreams, on the other hand, are often remembered for a lifetime, and not infrequently prove to be the richest jewel in the treasure-house of psychic experience . . . I have examined many such dreams, and they contain symbolic images which we also come across in the mental history of mankind. This peculiarity is characteristic of dreams of the individuation process, where we find

the mythological motifs and mythologems I have designated as archetypes . . . which occur not only at all times and in all places but also in individual dreams, fantasies, visions, and delusional ideas . . . Thus we speak on the one hand of a *personal* and on the other of a *collective* unconscious, which lies at a deeper level and is further removed from consciousness than the personal unconscious. The ‘big’ or ‘meaningful’ dreams come from this deeper level . . . Such dreams occur mostly during the critical phases of life, in early youth, puberty, at the onset of middle age . . . and within sight of death. (pp. 76-77)

One such dream that is of particular relevance in this sense came to Jung (1963) in his middle years and proved to be instrumental in the creation of an expanded dialogical relationship with the Self. In the dream the sun was shining brightly, and he found himself walking along a country road with lovely views in all directions. He then came upon a small chapel, and upon entering he discovered, rather than the presence of Christian iconography, a beautiful flower arrangement, and at the front of the altar sat a yogi meditating in the lotus position. Upon closer examination, Jung discovered that the yogi had his face, and he awoke in shock with the realization that “‘aha, so he is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream, and I am it.’ I knew that when he awakened, I would no longer be” (p. 323).

Jung (1963) asserted that the purpose of such dreams 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” (p. 324). He chose to experiment with various 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 painted and regularly dialogued with eternal wisdom figures such as Philemon, and he developed and implemented other creative techniques designed to bring unconscious material into the realm of conscious focus. Jung also discovered that drawing, sand play, and other imaginal exercises involving archetypal imagery—especially as they pertain to that which 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 proves 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” (1960, p. 82). The psyche’s direct engagement with mythic imagery thus represents one of the most essential features of this alchemical healing 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). This intriguing phenomenon is well represented through the following dream (one of my own) and the process of psychic expansion and clarification that followed:

I am standing in a room and am engaged in a conversation that reveals with great certainty that at a later date I will be involved in the dissemination of Jung's theories to a wider audience. This realization is accompanied by a strong sense of personal pride at the prospect of professional accomplishment and recognition in the outer world. Then I suddenly pass through a curtain and find myself on a football field preparing to kick a field goal that will signify my success in this endeavor, but when I kick the ball, it hits the goal post, and falls short. Then I wake up.

I was left with the undeniable sense that this dream had special significance, and at the same time was confused by the seemingly contradictory messages it provided. So, intent upon uncovering its deeper meaning, I chose to engage in the practice of *active imagination*, which is an imaginal exercise created by Jung in which one reenters the dream in a conscious state by focusing upon the primary image and then allowing an *inner drama* to unfold of its own accord. In this case, the goal post was clearly the most prominent figure, and so, with this image firmly in mind, I proceeded to close my eyes, concentrate my focus, and then experienced the following:

In a short time I found myself again on the football field, this time playing quarterback. Each time I tried to pass the ball, I was quickly tackled. Finally, I decided to keep the ball and attempt to cross the goal line by my own volition, and was then able to maneuver my way through the defense, ultimately being brought down as I successfully crossed the goal line. As the football I was carrying touched the ground, it suddenly turned into an enlarged, glowing blue diamond, and this was accompanied by a wordless telepathic communication that can only be described as a sacred revelation, one that arose from a deeper part of myself that I rarely have direct access to, and yet somehow instinctively know to be my true self. And what this communication revealed to me was that the *goal* in life is not about achieving success or status in the outer world, but rather, the true meaning of this life is to reconnect, to return *home*, to the very source of one's being.

The above experience clearly delineates the dynamic interplay between consciousness and the unconscious, and the initiation of this highly-charged exchange between these two primary aspects of the psyche was described by Jung (1960) as "the beginning of the transcendent function, i.e. the beginning of the collaboration of conscious and unconscious data" (p. 82). He greatly emphasized this psychic dynamic as central to the healing process (and to the broader process of individuation), and stressed that "the suitably trained analyst mediates the

transcendent function for the patient, i.e. helps him to bring conscious and unconscious together and so arrive at a new attitude" (p. 74). This experience also further supports the notion of numinous universal archetypes, as the diamond exists as one of the primary representations of the Self (Jung, 1951/1981), and has manifested as a sacred symbol of spiritual radiance, purity, and indestructibility in an array of diverse cultural traditions, including Tibetan Buddhist Tantra, or *Vajrayana*—the Diamond Vehicle.

These discoveries proved to be a compelling confirmation of how the unconscious acts in a regulatory capacity, compensating for the misguided direction of the ego through the spontaneous manifestation of psychic imagery, a process that combines aspects of one's contemporary personal existence (i.e., the goal post) with the universal symbolic imagery of the collective unconsciousness (i.e., the blue diamond), resulting in a sense of deep personal meaning and psychic wholeness (Jung, 1960).

The mythic forms and figures that so often appear in dreams, visions, psychic projections and other such phenomena include such manifestations as the anima and animus, the shadow, and of course the Self. Each plays a significant role in the on-going developmental process of individuation, and can appear in both personal and collective representations. To the male gender, the anima acts as the inner feminine counterpart to the conscious male identity (just as the animus, as masculine essence, serves to balance the female personality), and performs the pivotal task of guiding the male inward:

Vital is the role that the anima plays in putting a man's mind in tune with the right inner values and thereby opening the way to more profound inner depths. It is as if an inner 'radio' becomes tuned to a certain wavelength that excludes irrelevancies but allows the voice of the Great Man to be heard. In establishing this inner 'radio' reception, the anima takes on the role of guide, to the world within and to the Self. (von Franz, 1964, p. 193)

Further, the anima represents "a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche" (von Franz, 1964, p. 186), and in dreams, religion, and mythological depictions she can appear in various positive guises (e.g., the Greek Goddess Athena, or Tara in Tibetan Buddhism) or in her negative aspects (e.g., the Lorelei of Teutonic myth, or the evil sorceress of innumerable cultural manifestations). The positive aspect leads a man toward his true inner nature, while the negative features lead him astray. Both aspects are also commonly projected outward, so that they "appear to the man to be the qualities of some particular woman" (p. 191),



which naturally creates the potential for all manner of fantasy and psychic transference. Thus, it becomes an essential part of the individuation process that an individual learns to recognize such projections as representations of his own inner processes, and to withdraw, resolve, and integrate these aspects into his inner world in the service of spiritual growth and psychic wholeness.

One of the greatest obstacles to this process on both a personal and collective level presents itself in the form of the shadow, which represents “unknown or little known attributes and qualities of the ego—aspects that mostly belong to the personal sphere, but “can also consist of collective factors that stem from a source outside the individual’s personal life” (von Franz, 1964, p. 174). This typically manifests as the negative projection of “those qualities and impulses he denies in himself but can plainly see in other people” (p. 174). Consequently, the inability to *own one’s shadow* can have predictably disastrous results, from various forms of arrested personal development to dysfunctional and convoluted interpersonal relationships to the conflicts that so often characterize the political and religious spheres and the armed conflicts between nations. On the other hand, through the conscious acknowledgement and integration of one’s shadow aspects, the individuation process is deepened and enriched and one is able to offer himself, and the world, greatly enhanced levels of understanding, insight, and compassion.

Another of Jung’s (1921/1976) primary theories were articulated in the 1921 publication of *Psychological Types*, which “many scholars consider to be his most important contribution to the literature of psychoanalysis” (Bair, 2003, p. 246). This work represents Jung’s initial attempt at a unified theory of typology, and in it he conceived of human personalities as exhibiting primary tendencies that pertain to one of two basic groups. In this system, an individual can be categorized as being either an *introvert* or an *extravert*, the essential distinction being that the introvert tends to perceive the world through an identification with inner processes, whereas the extravert is inclined to view the world through his association with exterior events and circumstances. Theoretically, these two basic attributes are further distinguished by four functions of perception, which include sensation, feeling, thinking, and intuition. In the words of Jung (1964):

These four functional types correspond to the obvious means by which consciousness obtains its orientation to experience. *Sensation* (i.e., sense perception) tells you that something exists; *thinking* tells you what it is; *feeling* tells you whether it is agreeable or not; and *intuition* tells you whence it comes and where it is going. (p. 49)

The two attributes of introversion and extraversion, combined with these four functions, make for eight possible personality types. It warrants mention that such classifications are understood to represent only basic tendencies containing multiple variations that are colored by unique personal proclivities and inclinations. At the same time, this method of ascertaining fundamental personality types has been institutionalized in the form of the Briggs-Myers Test, which remains perhaps the most respected and widely used system of character assessment in use today (Bair, 2003).

Finally, Jung's (1960/1973) investigation into the phenomena of synchronicity deserves special attention, as it represents a systematic attempt on his part to empirically and experientially demonstrate the unity of psyche and matter; or in his words, to develop a theory which "possesses properties that may help to clear up the body-soul problem" (p. 90). Jung attributed his initial notion of synchronicity to the influence of Albert Einstein, who met with Jung on numerous occasions in the early years of the twentieth century. Many decades later, in an effort to more fully demonstrate the efficacy of his emerging hypothesis, he collaborated with the physicist Wolfgang Pauli and integrated J. B. Rhine's statistical analysis of psychokinetic experiments into his still evolving theory. He also found inspiration in Schopenhauer's (1851/1913) treatise, *Transcendent Speculations on the Apparent Design in the Fate of the Individual*, and in the Wilhelm/Baynes' (1931/1950) translation of *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, a text that expanded Jung's already increasing interest in Eastern esotericism.

The hypothetical basis of synchronicity—and the premise to which all of the above influences are linked—lies in Jung's (1960/1973) conception of a "*meaningful coincidence*" (p. 10), a theme that continued to arise throughout the course of his psychological investigations:

The problem of synchronicity had puzzled me for a long time, ever since the middle twenties, when I was investigating the phenomena of the collective unconscious and kept on coming across connections which I simply could not explain as chance groupings or 'runs.' What I found were 'coincidences' that were connected so meaningfully that their 'chance' concurrence would represent a degree of improbability that would have to be expressed by an astronomical figure. (p. 21)

Further significance lies in the understanding that "the synchronicity principle asserts that the terms of a meaningful coincidence are connected by simultaneity and meaning" (Jung, 1960/1973, p. 69), which conflicts directly with the laws of causality that insist upon the

relationship between cause and effect. In this sense, synchronicity posits an acasual principle that is neither subject to the tenets of causality nor the usual restrictions of time and space. Jung further described this phenomenon as “the simultaneous occurrence of a certain psychic state with one or more external events which appear as meaningful parallels to the momentary subjective state” (p. 25). He came upon many such examples in his life and work, and one particularly evocative case involved a young woman who remained estranged from her inner life due to her rigid adherence to a rational Cartesian outlook. At a crucial time in her treatment she revealed to Jung that a golden scarab had been given to her in a dream, and at just that moment he heard a gentle tapping noise on the window behind him. There he found a scarabaeid beetle (the nearest analogy to the golden scarab at this latitude), and upon opening the window he caught the flying insect and presented it to the woman as a confirmation of the significance of her dream. She was utterly astounded, and Jung noted that “when the ‘scarab’ came flying through the window in actual fact, her natural being could burst through the armour of her animus possession and the process of transformation could at last begin to move” (p. 23). Indeed, from that point forward she began to make tremendous strides toward a healthy recovery, and Jung was acutely aware of the archetypal components that had played a central role in this process:

Any essential change of attitude signifies a psychic renewal which is usually accompanied by symbols of rebirth in the patient’s dreams and fantasies. The scarab is a classic example of a rebirth symbol. The ancient Egyptian Book of What is in the Netherworld describes how the dead sun-god changes himself at the tenth station into Khepri, the scarab, and then, at the twelfth station, mounts the barge which carries the rejuvenated sun-god into the morning sky. . . . The psychologist is continually coming up against cases where the emergence of symbolic parallels cannot be explained without the hypothesis of the collective unconscious. (pp. 23-24)

Through this example and others Jung (1960/1973) arrived at the conclusion that “certain phenomena of simultaneity or synchronicity seem to be bound up with the archetypes” (p. 21). Thus, the workings of synchronicity can be understood as not only suggesting a principle that exceeds the laws of causality, but in certain circumstances it also appears to play a key role in the process of individuation. As shown above, this can involve a remarkable correlation between inner and outer events, as the presence of the scarab in both the dream state and in physical reality aptly demonstrates.

## Contact with the East

During Jung's long life he traveled extensively and regularly engaged in dialogical exchange with scholars, researchers, and religious practitioners from a wide array of disciplines. He was particularly fascinated by and readily acknowledged what he viewed as the superior spiritual development of the ancient Asian traditions, and wrote a number of essays on various aspects of Eastern esotericism, including *The Psychology of Eastern Meditation* (1936/1958), psychological commentaries on *The Tibetan Book of Great Liberation* (1992a), *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1992b), and *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (1931/1962), and forewords to D. T. Suzuki's (1934/1964) *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* and the Wilhelm/Baynes (1931/1950) translation of *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*.

Jung (1963) discovered in these Eastern traditions a holistic approach and an affinity with nature that was especially appealing to him, and the complex symbolic world that was revealed through many of these disciplines resonated with him deeply. His encounter with the Taoist alchemical text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (Wilhelm, 1931/1962), was a particularly significant event in his life, as he found in this work confirmation for many of his psychological theories that were largely absent in traditional forms of Christian and Western thinking. This included further support for his conception of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, a very controversial hypothesis that, through the symbols of psychological processes found in the text, provided Jung with "exactly those items I had long sought for in vain among the Gnostics" (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 83). What was especially significant for Jung was the fact that *The Secret of the Golden Flower* emphasizes the legitimacy of the imaginal and mythic elements of human existence, and it provided a powerful symbolic representation of wholeness through its central notion of the *tao*:

The *Golden Flower* offered a model of balanced psychic development in which the externalizing forces of *yang* are balanced by the rooted inwardness of *yin*. The concept of *tao*, which is central to Chinese thinking and to this text in particular, signifies a union of opposites, 'a reunion with the unconscious laws of our being,' and hence represents an image of wholeness. The key to this psychic balance and wholeness lies in the release of the power of fantasy and imagination. (Clarke, 1994, p. 84)

Jung (1963) was also greatly inspired by the Indian spiritual traditions, and he found special relevance in the Hindu cosmological precept involving the relationship between *Brahman* and

*Atman* (the latter of which he associated with his own notion of the Self). He viewed their mutual correspondence as confirmation of the essential oneness of the world's inner and outer domains, and suggested that "the fusion of the self with its relations to the object produces the identity of the self (*Atman*) with the essence of the world (i.e., *Brahman*) so that the identity of the inner and outer *Atman* is cognized" (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 105). Jung saw in this relational dynamic an analogous process of differentiation and integration that closely paralleled his concept of individuation.

Jung also discovered in the rich symbolic yogic disciplines of kundalini and tantra a wealth of "valuable comparative material for interpreting the collective unconscious" (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 104). Jung's reading of J. G. Woodroffe's (1918/2003) *The Serpent Power* introduced him to the tantric *chakra* system with its representations of the stages of psychic growth, which is symbolized by the rising kundalini, or serpent power. Its meditation techniques, which focus on the purification of the body-mind continuum (as an integrated whole) through the unification of male and female vital energies, was of special interest to him, as was its holistic outlook and "positive, life-affirming view of the body, the passions, and the shadowy regions of the psyche" (Clarke, 1994, p. 111). Jung also maintained that the symbolic and psychic aspects were of primary importance in expanding human awareness beyond the limits of consciousness itself, and stated that "the symbols of the chakras . . . afford us a standpoint that extends beyond the conscious. They are intuitions about the psyche as a whole, about its various conditions and possibilities. They symbolize the psyche from a cosmic standpoint" (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 113).

Jung (1963) expressed a particular affinity for Buddhism, a preoccupation that remained with him from the period of his early adulthood until his death at the age of 85. During a trip to India in 1938 he visited a number of sacred sites, and was profoundly affected by the religious complex of Sanchi:

The intensity of my emotion showed that the hill of Sanchi meant something central to me. A new side of Buddhism was revealed to me there. I grasped the life of the Buddha as the reality of the self which had broken through and laid claim to a personal life. For Buddha, the self stands above all gods, an *unus mundus* which represents the essence of human existence and the world as a whole. (p. 279)

Jung (1963) felt that the image of the Buddha represented a more complete and accessible representation of the unmitigated human being than that of Christ because it integrated both the light and dark aspects of human nature, whereas in the Christian tradition the image of Christ was depicted in purely benign form, with the dark aspects being split off and assigned to the figure of the Devil. In addition, the life and teachings of the great Eastern master were much more closely aligned with the introverted religious path that he deemed so essential to genuine spiritual development. In the Buddha's emphasis on the inner path, of finding one's own way toward realization through direct engagement with inner processes (rather than depending on an external agent of divine intervention, as in Christianity), he found meaningful correlations to many of his own theories. Jung stated that "Buddha became, as it were, the image of the development of the self" (p. 280), a representation that he believed was directly reminiscent of the process of individuation and its movement toward an ever-increasing integration with the Self.

Jung (1992b) was intensely drawn to the highly articulated and complex symbolism of tantra, especially as it is found in the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. In 1927 the American scholar W. Y. Evans-Wentz published an English-language translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, or *Bardo Thodal*, which was enthusiastically absorbed by Jung and remained a text to which he would regularly return as a source of continuing inspiration and insight:

For years, ever since it was first published, the *Bardo Thodal* has been my constant companion, and to it I owe not only many stimulating ideas and discoveries, but also many fundamental insights. . . . Its philosophy contains the quintessence of Buddhist psychological criticism; and as such, one can truly say that it is of an unexampled sublimity. (1992b, p. 82)

In addition to its profusion of psychic images, what was particularly intriguing to Jung (1992b) was its emphasis on the doctrine of One Mind, which posits that all things (including the material world) are in reality mere reflections of this Absolute or Universal Mind and as such all manifestations are in effect *mind-made*. In this mode of discernment "the path of liberation . . . does not lie in the external world, which must be seen for what it is—a sort of dream—but in the inner path of self-knowledge" (Clarke, 1994, p. 127). Jung viewed this approach as a much-needed counterweight to the extraverted and materialistic orientation of the modern West, and according to Clarke he "saw the Tibetan text as presenting us with a conception of the mind in which, by contrast with the typically Western view, the psyche is taken to be the fundamental

datum of experience, the material world being in a sense a projection of it" (p. 124). Along these lines, Jung (1992a) stated, for example, that "the psyche and its structures are real enough. They even transform material objects into psychic images" (p. 58). It should come as no surprise, then, that he would correlate the Self with Buddhism's Universal Mind, and drew associations between the latter's tenet of formlessness and the nature of the unconscious:

Because the unconscious is the matrix mind, the quality of creativeness attaches to it. It is the birthplace of thought-forms such as our text considers the universal Mind to be. Since we cannot attribute any particular form to the unconscious, the Eastern assertion that the universal Mind is without form, yet is the source of all forms, seems to be psychologically justified. (p. 62)

Elaborating further upon this theme, Jung suggested that "the psyche is . . . the Buddha-essence; it is the Buddha-Mind, the One, the *Dharmakaya*. All existence emanates from it, and all separate forms dissolve back into it" (p. 54).

The ultimate symbol of this Buddha-essence, or psychic wholeness, is the mandala, which of course holds a central place in the meditative practices of Tibetan Buddhist practitioners. As outlined previously, Jung (1963) encountered this symbolic form in dreams (both in his own and in that of his patients) and encouraged the painting of mandalas as part of his therapeutic approach to psychic healing and transformation. He also suggested that specific archetypal symbols manifest in direct correlation with one's spiritual development, and observed that as the Self increasingly assumes a central position within consciousness, the mandala becomes the most prominent and consistent symbol. Jung stated that this age-old archetypal image "signifies the *wholeness of the self*. . . . which spontaneously arises in the mind as a representation of the struggle and reconciliation of opposites" (pp. 334-335).

The reconciliation of opposites and its direct correlation to spiritual transformation remain among Jung's most significant contributions to the field of psychology and human development. His contact with the East, especially with the tantric tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, served to further deepen his sensitivity to this crucial aspect of psychic processes, and his exposure to the vivid and abundant mythic imagery found in this discipline provided significant support and confirmation to his conceptions of the archetypes and the collective unconscious.

### *Misinterpretations of Eastern Precepts*

A number of modern commentators have offered critical analyses of Jung's interpretations of certain Eastern tenets, and as such a consideration of his existing preconceptions and overall hermeneutical approach to the East requires further examination. In the words of Clarke (1994):

Part of the problem here lay . . . in Jung's failure to address adequately the whole cultural and historical context in which religious and philosophical ideas arise. . . . He paid little heed to the social, political, and economic environment in which these ideas flourished, and there was on the whole little attempt on his part to recover the meaning of the texts he studied by examining their place within the relevant cultural matrix. He approached these texts as if they provided an unmediated, albeit imperfect, insight into the Eastern psyche, a direct illumination of the Oriental mind. . . . This omission on Jung's part certainly sits ill with his own stated commitment . . . to the need for historical awareness in psychology, and with his belief that "it is absolutely necessary that you study man in his social and general environments". . . . Statements such as these have a clear hermeneutical ring about them, and no doubt Jung would have concurred in principle with Gadamer's assertion that "the meaning of the part is always discovered only from the context, i.e., the whole," . . . but his actual practice with regard to Eastern texts and ideas does not always confirm this. (p. 164)

The above passage raises a number of concerns, not the least of which being the question of "whether Jung's approach allows sufficient space for the East to speak for itself" (Clarke, 1994, p. 166). This important consideration leads to additional questions regarding any agenda and/or preconceived notions that Jung brought to this process. One well-known aspect in this regard was his desire to foster a Western yoga, but one that would be uniquely Western in character and not directly tied to the traditions of the East. In this sense he would, on the one hand, heap praise upon certain aspects of Eastern spirituality, and, on the other hand, dismiss certain precepts and practices as wholly inappropriate for the Western mind. Radmila Moacanin (as cited in Clarke, 1994) outlined this tendency as follows:

At times Jung is speaking in favor of Eastern traditions, praising their ways of approaching the psyche and their intuitive wisdom, which the West lacks, and at other times he warns Westerners against the dangers of embracing a system that is foreign to their culture. (p. 158)

In light of this and other factors, contemporary critics have suggested that Jung's reflections on Eastern spirituality sometimes display ambiguities, inconsistencies, and paradoxes, sentiments that are based in part on the fact that "all the evidence suggests that by and large the yoga techniques of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism can be successfully integrated into Western



culture and that their effects can be beneficial” (Clarke, 1994, p. 159). Jung also attempted to explain the perceived gulf in these traditions as pertaining to psychological differences between East and West, which has led to charges of cultural stereotyping (e.g., his notion of the *introverted East* and the *extraverted West*) as well as the propagation of sometimes overly simplistic generalizations, such as when “kundalini yoga is compared to individuation” (p. 167).

It has also been suggested that Jung interpreted texts in a manner that would support his own hypotheses, and this includes his theory of universal archetypes (Clarke, 1994). As mentioned previously, his exposure to the Chinese alchemical text, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, had a profound effect on his emerging theories regarding mythic imagery, which in his thinking “enabled him to not only construct a bridge between East and West but to confirm his theory that the human mind is innately conditioned toward certain universally identifiable modes of thinking and experiencing—the archetypes” (Clarke, 1994, p. 166). His later readings of certain Tibetan texts, in particular *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, subsequently “led Jung to boldly affirm the existence of archetypes for the first time in his writings” (Coward, 1992, p. 268). Approaching such spiritual literature and the phenomena they portray through the prism of his psychological theories sometimes resulted in vocal opposition from such prominent figures as Martin Buber. Such resistance was based on the strong conviction that “the transcendent nature of religious experience—its relationship to an essentially ‘other’—means that it is inherently different from one that is properly termed ‘psychological’” (Clarke, 1994, p. 168).

Another area of critical concern involves Jung’s exposure to, and subsequent commentaries on, religious texts that are today seen as having received inadequate translations (Coward, 1992). This notion not only applies to *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, but also to Jung’s commentary on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Today the Evans-Wentz translation (which often involves paraphrasing) from the original Tibetan is viewed as insufficient, and the text also suffers from inaccurate dates, questionable interpretations, and certain other misrepresentations—including a lack of distinction between Buddhist and Hindu Tantra, with the latter too often being presented in the guise of the former (Clarke, 1994).

Jung was of course unaware of such discrepancies when he read the translated texts and then wrote his subsequent commentaries, but there were other notable problems in his manner of interpretation as well (Coward, 1992). The subject of nondual awareness and its relationship to

the chakra system, the precept of reincarnation, and certain other Buddhist principles were sometimes either misunderstood or rejected as wholly improbable by Jung. His approach to reincarnation, for example, can be understood as follows:

In his 1935 *Psychological Commentary on the 'Tibetan Book of the Dead,'* Jung clearly rejects any notion of personal rebirth. In response to the Buddhist notion of reincarnation, Jung observes that neither scientific knowledge nor reason can accept the hypothesis of personal rebirth assumed in the Tibetan understanding of Bardo *karma*. (p. 264)

A number of contemporary scholars have also speculated that Jung's own experiential horizon, while revealing tremendous insights in its own right, did not allow him to adequately comprehend the Eastern principle of nondual awareness and its relationship to the *chakra* system (Coward, 1992). In this sense he could not conceive of a state of complete liberation—as experienced in the seventh *chakra* in the clear light of dharmakaya—and concurrently could not accept the Eastern notion of an egoless, nondual, unitary state of heightened consciousness:

Consciousness is inconceivable without an ego; it is equated with the relation of contents to an ego. If there is no ego there is nobody to be conscious of anything. . . . The Eastern mind, however, has no difficulty in conceiving of a consciousness without an ego. Consciousness is deemed capable of transcending its ego condition; indeed, in its forms, the ego disappears altogether. Such an egoless mental condition can only be unconscious to us, for the simple reason that there would be nobody to witness it. . . . I cannot imagine a conscious mental state that does not relate to a subject, that is, to an ego. (Jung, 1992a, p. 56)

Indeed, Jung considered the psychic stages represented by the last two *chakras*—especially the awakened nondual state of the seventh *chakra*—to be levels that existed beyond any notion of human consciousness. In this sense, he referred to sixth chakra as a state in which “the ego disappears completely,” and considered the seventh chakra to be “beyond possible experience” (as cited in Clarke, 1994, p. 115).

Despite these various shortcomings, Jung's contributions to the East-West dialogue cannot be underestimated, and the critical themes he explored, and the psychic phenomena he examined and articulated, remain deeply consequential within the broader context of the long-standing and far-reaching encounter between these diverse religious and cultural traditions. In the words of Clarke (1994):

His contributions must be set firmly within the context of an historical development that has been continuing for several hundred years at least. He learned from and stood on the shoulders of many giants, who, from the Age of Enlightenment onwards, sought to place

European thought within a wider, global horizon, and thereby to subject it to penetrating criticism. His own special achievement lay, first, in his attempt to illuminate contemporary psychological questions by means of a detailed comparison with religious and philosophical ideas from China and India, and, secondly, in his attempt to confront what he saw as the crisis of Western culture by engaging in a dialogue between the cultures of East and West. (p. 179)

It is this all-important dialogue that serves as the basis of this present comparative and cross-cultural study, and having examined Jung's European heritage and his attendant psychological theories, I now turn toward the East and to an exploration of Tibetan Buddhist Tantra.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TIBETAN BUDDHIST TANTRA

#### Indian Origins and the First Diffusion of the Dharma

Buddhism, with its origins in the Indian subcontinent, arrived in Tibet in the seventh century C. E. during the reign of King Songsten Gampo (Tucci, 1970/1980). 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 new religion would retain, however, many of the existing indigenous beliefs and practices, and in the course of this integration and development “all native gods already inhabiting the local mountains, the forests, the lakes and rivers, the sky, and the underworld were adopted into the pantheon and made protectors of the Buddhist religion” (Pal, 1990, pp. 42-43). The renowned mystic Padmasambhava 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.

A number of competing interests directly influenced these developments, and nearly every aspect of Tibetan life—social, political, economic, religious, and environmental—played a pivotal role in this often fractious process (Tucci, 1970/1980). In the initial period of infusion, two distinct doctrines 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). Adding to the tensions between these two schools were the adherents to Tibet’s long-standing indigenous tradition, many of whom were members of the priestly class or leaders of the country’s most prominent aristocratic families. Conflicts thus arose between powerful alliances that sought to protect their personal and political privileges or who were intent to gain (or in the case of Bon, sustain) pre-eminence for their preferred religious teachings. These various competing influences and power structures, both from within and from outside the borders of this vast and forbidding region, were part of a period of great cultural and geographical expansion in which,

Tibet opened its doors to new forms of thought and life. Behind this there stood significant missionary activity from both India and China, and also the Tibetan conquests in Central Asia, which led to Tibetans living together with peoples of a considerable level of culture. As a result, a steady expansion of Buddhism began to take place. . . . The original interest

in Buddhism lay with the upper, the more educated classes. . . . The rest of the population remained faithful to their rites of conjuration, their ceremonies and their exorcists. (p. 7)

In the course of these developments large monastic communities representing various religious orders were established, and in time these institutions became powerful, self-governing economic entities (owing to their many wealthy lay patrons) that wielded substantial political and social influence (Tucci, 1970/1980). As these different Buddhist schools continued to expand, certain primary characteristics resonated more than others with the native populace. The aspects of speculative thought and ritual that were so inexorably intertwined in the Indian Mahayana tradition were especially appealing, and thus “it came about that the ritual side of Mahayana Buddhism began to prevail in Tibet, thanks also to the tendencies to magic already present within Indian ritual” (p. 8). However, not all of the Indian masters who came to Tibet were aligned with the same school or espoused the same teachings, and indeed there were “already profound differences between of Santaraksita and Padmasambhava” (p.12). As Tucci wrote:

The former was a great dialectician, though certainly as was appropriate for every Mahayana follower he was experienced in tantric practice, if not to such a degree as to be a match for an exorcist. Padmasambhava was in the first place an exorcist, and after him other followers of the Siddha tradition also came to Tibet. The school of the Siddha, the ‘Perfected Ones’, was then at its apogee in India; the miraculous powers its followers boasted brought them disciples in Tibet, too. (p. 12)

The broad masses of the Tibetan populace were accustomed to the execution of such extraordinary psychic powers, exorcisms, and magic rituals, which made the Siddha school particularly appealing to certain segments of the population. However, it is important to note that the differences in the theoretical precepts of the Chinese school of Ch’an and the Indian Siddha tradition were not insurmountable, and the distinctions between these two disciplines “lay not so much in their respective doctrinal positions as in the characteristic emphasis placed by the Siddha on the practices of yoga and magic” (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 12). On the other hand, the doctrinal assumptions articulated by the Santaraksita and Kamalasila schools revealed significant differences with both the Siddha and Ch’an traditions:

The decisive difference here lay in the fact that Santaraksita considered the achievement of Buddhahood to be the end-result of a long drawn-out process, which necessarily went through different stages before the conclusion was reached, while the Chinese school of

*Hwa shang* preached the uselessness of ‘means’. . . . A spontaneous, direct awareness of our essential purity, of the light which we are, is enough. A re-cognition, an *anagnosis*, of our innermost being will suffice to eradicate all that is not luminous, all deception, ignorance and error. This overturning of the planes of existence does not result from the performance of any routine. It is rather the gift of an instantaneous flash of insight. (p. 13)

An attempt to arrive at a definitive conclusion regarding which of these two divergent approaches was correct took place (c. 792-794) at the council of Samye (Tucci, 1970/1980). According to Tibetan sources, the Indian school of Santaraksita emerged triumphant, but not without an ensuing period of tragedy and turmoil. Kamalasila, Santaraksita’s most distinguished disciple, was apparently murdered, and Vairocana, a leading follower of Padmasambhava, was expelled. A turbulent series of events continued until the first decades of the ninth century, at which time there was a noticeable decrease in the followers of Ch’an. It was also at this time that the movement to establish Buddhism in Tibet would face its greatest challenge to date.

The economic and political influence that the great monastic communities had acquired presented a conspicuous threat to both state control (as exercised by the then ruler, King *Glang dar ma*) and a number of entrenched social interests (Tucci, 1970/1980). This generated a simmering resentment that ultimately swelled into virulent opposition to the Buddhist community, resulting in the mid ninth century in an epic of tragic proportions that would usher in a long period of defilement in which the monastic centers were disbanded and destroyed, their land and possessions confiscated, and the religion itself outlawed. The destruction of the institutional aspects of Buddhism in Tibet did not, however, result in a complete extinction of the faith or its followers. Although its teachings and precepts no longer received primary direction from the old monastic centers, it did persist in various forms, except that now its adherents were prone to diminish or abandon strict convention as it merged with indigenous beliefs and practices:

The Buddhism that remained deviated more and more from the line of orthodoxy. In such circumstances a tacit agreement with *Bon* and with the folk religion had to be arrived at, all the more so because the religious attitude of the Tibetans still remained basically the same. A revival of the earlier religious ideas, not fixed through scriptures and varying from place to place, was inevitable. . . . The spirits of the soil, of the mountain, of the air continued to be venerated and feared as real powers. (p.16)

## The Second Diffusion of Buddhism

A gradual revival of the imported religion began to take root in the latter part of the tenth century, especially in frontier regions and provinces outside of central Tibet, where the highest levels of systematic oppression had occurred (Tucci, 1970/1980). The Land of Snows now witnessed a slow but ever growing resurgence of the Buddhist doctrine. This so-called second diffusion was introduced by the work of *dGongs pa rab gsal* and his disciple *Klu mes* in the Eastern provinces, a region in which “conditions were favorable for a revival of Buddhism in accordance with its authentic tradition” (p. 19). Further developments transpired when the ruler of the Western Tibetan *Gu ge* Kingdom, King *Yeshe-od*, sent the young monk *Rinchen Sangoo* to Kashmir in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. (Pal, 1990). In the years that followed the revival of Buddhism continued to take root throughout this region, and in 1042 the King of *Gu ge* invited the renowned Indian teacher Atisha to further disseminate the dharma in Tibet. During the second diffusion Tibet became almost exclusively dedicated to the importation of Indian Buddhism, and “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” (Conze, 1951/1959, p. 179).

During the next few centuries this tradition would evolve into a number of prominent monastic orders that would consolidate their influence and respective doctrinal precepts (Snellgrove, 1987/2002). 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 aligns itself with particular Buddhist teachings that trace their origins to particular Indian masters. The Kagyu Order, for example, traces its lineage to the eleventh-century tantric sage Tilopa, who was the teacher of the great adept Naropa. He in turn became the tutor of the renowned practitioner Marpa, who, in addition to his exalted spiritual achievements, gained distinction as the first Tibetan member of the lineage. Marpa subsequently acted as the spiritual mentor of Milarepa, the famous mystic and poet who remains one of the most celebrated figures in Tibetan Buddhism. This relationship between teacher (Skt., *guru*; Tib., lama) and student became an all-important and indispensable

aspect of the transmission of the teachings. This was (and still is) an extremely demanding and highly secretive process that involved intricate initiations, elaborate rituals, and “the absolute necessity of total devotion to one’s chosen teacher or master” (Snellgrove, 1987/2002, p. 176). Total adherence to the authority and guidance of one’s teacher is considered an indispensable means of sustaining the unbroken spiritual continuity of the doctrine, and thus the tradition holds that “only a Guru, to whom we submit in complete obedience, and who for us stands in the place of the Buddha, can translate the true secrets and mysteries of the doctrine” (Conze, 1951/1959, p. 180).

This issue of transmission also sparked a dispute between the followers of the new orders and the Nyingma (the *Old Order* that was established during the first diffusion) concerning the validity of their respective doctrines. The new orders maintained that because their doctrines could be verified as having originated with specific Indian adepts, that their teachings retained an authenticity that could not be replicated by the more ambiguous lineages of the Nyingma school. Tucci (1970/1980) described this disparity as follows:

With respect to the Tantric teachings, a distinction has to be made between the orthodox Tantra, and those Tantric texts considered by other schools to be dubious, or entirely inauthentic. These latter are the Tantras (*rgyud*) accepted by the *rNying ma pa* school, as contrasted with the ‘new’ *rgyud* (*rgyud gsar ma*), newly introduced, or revised, after the second diffusion of the teachings, and which could be validated through recognized Sanskrit originals, and interpreted in accordance with a tested Indian tradition. (p. 33)

The Nyingma school countered that the existence of such works as the *gter ma* represented a rich and abundant literary legacy of sacred texts (Tucci, 1970/1980). Many books in this genre are attributed to Padmasambhava (who arrived in 747), a figure who is viewed by the Nyingma order as a second Buddha and who (along with his immediate disciples) allegedly hid these texts in order that they would be discovered and dispersed in a later, more favorable era. The existence of these works, which were put into circulation during ensuing periods, helped to sustain the integrity of the old order:

The distribution of the *gter ma* (which were believed to contain the teachings of Padmasambhava and his divine and human assistants) naturally lent new prestige to the *rNying ma pa* sect, and an authority which corroborated its teachings, to such a degree that at this time the *rNying ma pa* Tantric texts were codified in a vast collection (the *nNying ma rgyud ’bum*). This collection represents a Tantric tradition independent



from that regarded as valid by the other sects. This tradition too . . . was ascribed to great Indian masters, contemporaries, collaborators or students of Padmasambhava. (pp. 38-39).

Despite such disagreements, 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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. (quoted in Powers, 1995/2007, p. 357)

In addition to disagreements with the Nyingma sect regarding issues of verifiable lineage, the proponents of this second phase of Buddhist importation were intent on instituting a stricter adherence to established orthodoxy, and after assessing the perceived transgressions they found in their midst that the,

two main charges brought against Buddhist practice in Tibet by the tenth-to-eleventh century reformers was that of the mistaken use of sexual intercourse in the name of religion . . . and of permitting killing if it were for a good purpose” (Snellgrove, 1987/2002, p. 466).

Some of the practices that were harshly condemned were actually those prescribed in the so-called Supreme Yoga Tantras, which included “sexual yoga if performed by those who had taken monastic vows, rites of slaying or otherwise harming living beings, and religious offerings consisting of animal flesh or other impure substances” (p .474)

The resulting process of reformation saw the firm establishment of the rules of Indian monastic discipline, or *Vinaya*, which involved an austere regiment of regulations and strict adherence to “those scriptures in which the revelations of the Buddha or of his disciples are contained and transmitted” (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 31). This involved the implementation of strict vows of celibacy at the monasteries that enacted such reforms, while at the same time discussion and debate regarding questions of doctrine were permitted, and at times even strongly encouraged:

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. (p. 31)

According to Tucci (1970/1980), 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). Certain schools do however, lean more in one direction than the other, as with the Nyingma and Kagyu orders, which put greater emphasis on Cittramatra. The Gelukpa school stresses the teachings of Nagarjuna and the precepts of the Madhyamaka, and emphasizes logic as one of its primary educational principles, an aspect shared to a lesser extent by the Sakyu order as well. All schools retain distinctive ties to the Siddha ("adept") and Mahasiddha ("great adept") traditions, which stress the passing of sacred knowledge through a lineage of tantric masters (many of whom having lived a wandering, non-monastic existence) who attained greatly advanced psychic and spiritual powers.

In historical terms, the second diffusion can thus be understood as having further solidified Indian Tantric Buddhism as the predominate religious orientation in Tibet, although the still prominent Nyingma school retained notable links to the Ch'an tradition. In particular, "within the *Jo nang pa* and *rDzogs chen* sects a significant part of the heritage of the *Hwa shang*'s ideas, combined with those of the Siddha, was able to come to maturity, be consolidated, and then be transmitted on in further adaptations" (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 14). In time, the more tolerant and accepting aspects of the Mahayana tradition would also resurface, and thus "the vows of chastity and of abstention from meat and alcohol drinks are not imposed even on the monks themselves in all schools" (p. 46). The varied, highly nuanced, and often tumultuous dispersal of Buddhist teachings on the Tibetan plateau consequently represented a frequently indistinct and ambiguous process that unfolded over the course of many centuries and included a vast array of competing interests and influences. As previously noted, this inevitably involved the incorporation of indigenous belief systems and alien religious precepts that were sometimes at odds with

strict Buddhist orthodoxy, and this understanding takes on even further relevance when one considers that such orthodoxy may itself have been previously transformed under the influence of multifaceted circumstances:

One must guard against oversimplifying forms of religious experience and doctrinal statements. They do not develop in straight lines, least of all in times of considerable social upheaval, and with contacts with cultures on many levels. The Buddhism entering Tibet came not only from India (by which is to be understood not only India proper, but also its border regions Nepal and Kashmir) but also from present day Afghanistan and Gilgit, from the cities along the caravan routes of Central Asia . . . and from China. Buddhism has never refused to accept, rework, or transform the ideas of other peoples. In the territories bordering on Tibet there existed numerous religious forms in a picturesque juxtaposition which favored exchange and reciprocal borrowings. . . . Vajrayana (gnostic) Buddhism developed hand in hand with Saivism. It is probable that in these ways, through the mediation of Buddhists influenced by other streams of thought, . . . ideas foreign to Buddhism could be introduced within it, and gradually be merged into a developing doctrinal structure. (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 15)

The development of Tantric Buddhism, and of Tibetan Vajrayana in particular, had certainly been affected by this multicultural and trans-historical process, and as such has been since its inception no stranger to controversy. Indeed, as already indicated, the ubiquitous presence of animistic convictions and shamanistic practices found on the Tibetan plateau in many ways allowed certain primary aspects of the Tantric tradition to be readily absorbed into the native belief system. While this served to create a vibrant and unique form of Buddhism, questions have persisted regarding the subject of orthodox purity and the appropriate assimilation of fundamental tenets, especially in relation to the practice of shamanism and its attendant links to animism. Robert Paul (1976) addressed this concern as follows:

Classical shamanism . . . played a major historical role in the formation of Tibetan culture, and the historical relationship between classical shamanism, the Bon religion, the Buddhism of Guru Rinpoche, and modern Tibetan Buddhism is a vast and complex problem. (p. 141)

Paul further suggested that,

the Tibetan Buddhist idea of the reincarnate *lama* . . . can be interpreted as yet another symbolic transformation of the shamanic conception of the religious virtuoso who goes through the experience of death, journeys to the land of the dead, survives the physical destruction of his body, and returns to life triumphant over death and with special powers. The reincarnate *lama* accomplishes this feat not through ecstatic soul flight, but by actually dying and being reborn as an infant, but one with charismatic authority. . . . thus once again clearly encroaching on the traditional domain of the shaman. (p. 143)

Mircea Eliade (1964/1992) also demonstrated an array of correlations between Buddhist and shamanic practices in Tibet, and this included establishing links between dimensions in the after-life as revealed in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* and the *roads* taken by the shaman as he symbolically guides the deceased into the otherworld. William Stablein (1976) also provided a number of key perspectives regarding the intersection between shamanism and Tibetan Buddhist Tantra:

What is important for the study of shamanism is that the vajramaster is believed to have access to most, if not all, of the powers that are assigned to the classical shaman. The difference seems to be that the textual world of the vajramaster, despite the emphasis on the oral tradition, has conditioned his eyes to a more intellectually phenomenological station in the evolution of the shaman complex. (p. 371)

As Conze (1951/1959) noted, the tantric tradition has often been accused by its detractors of representing a degenerative form of the Buddhist faith and of not properly characterizing certain orthodox elements. To this he replied that “it seems to them that in the history of Buddhism an abstract metaphysics of great sublimity has slowly given way to a preoccupation with personal deities and witchcraft,” and that “immorality seems to replace the lofty austerity of the past” (pp. 175-176). He further clarified that,

if one makes up one’s mind that the “original” Buddhism was a perfectly rational religion, after the heart of the ‘Ethical Society,’ without any touch of the super-natural or the mysterious, then the Tantra will become an almost incomprehensible ‘degeneration’ of presumed original Buddhism. In actual fact, Buddhism has always been closely associated with what to rationalists would appear as superstitions. The reality of extraordinary psychic powers, nay of wonderworking powers, was never questioned. . . . The existence of many disembodied spirits and the reality of magic forces were taken for granted, and the belief in them formed part of the current cosmology. (p. 175)

Tantric Buddhism in Tibet has faced many challenges in its long and tumultuous history, and the lack of a proper understanding and acceptance of some of its more unconventional or esoteric aspects has remained one of the most perplexing components in this process (Snellgrove, 1987/2002). 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 or cultural lenses. Regarding the dynamic emergence of Tantric Buddhism, Snellgrove enthusiastically suggested that “with the effective canonization of a vast

variety of works of ritual and yoga-practice, we enter upon the final astounding phase in the history of Buddhism” (p. 117). He laments, however, that “very few scholars outside the Indo-Tibetan tradition of interpretation have felt able to accept this last Buddhist phase in its entirety” (p.117). The following perspective by one of the most notable of Western Buddhist scholars, Louis de la Vallee Poussin, addressed this issue as follows:

The axis of religious thought is not displaced: tantrism has become Buddhist; without denying essential dogma, Buddhism has annexed a whole new province. We shall understand one day the secret of the long elaboration which removed the original antagonism of so many factors of the Tantra-yana. The theologians, making use of all the finds of doctrinal thought, have constituted a scholarly theory of popular religion; they were able to exteriorize this theory and render it full of life by miracles of the boldest symbolism, filling space with divine and hallucinatory visions. (quoted in Snellgrove, 1987/2002, p. 118)

Thus, through the integration of tantric practices, Buddhism had been expanded and renovated yet again, this time with an emphasis on various forms of magical incantations, esoteric rituals, and creative methodologies that included the meditative use of mythic imagery as a decisive agent of psycho-spiritual transformation.

### **Vajrayana: The Diamond Vehicle**

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. 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 ultimate and unchanging nature of the fully enlightened mind:

Lamaism, dominated by gnostic-magical Tantra (snags), postulates a radiant mind-light (*'od gsal-sems*) present within us, which is capable of successive gradual purification until it is raised to a level of omniscience, ‘knowledge of all forms’, proper to the Buddha. It is this condition of absolute purity from every defilement, this quiescence in the limiting state of Being, that we may designate, in an analogical mode of expression, as the Supreme Reality. (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 101)

Sherab and Dongyal (2006) imparted further clarity as follows:

*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. . . . The unchanging, uddh nature of the mind are called the tantras, and the means used to directly reveal the mind’s nature are known as the tantrayana or the uddha na. (p.95)

And Lama Yeshe (1987/2001) provided an overview of the use and meaning of mythic imagery in tantric art, especially as it relates to the union of masculine and feminine energies:

Tantra provides powerful methods for getting in touch with our essential wholeness. Tantric art is filled with potent symbols of the unity and completeness characteristic of our fully realized potential. The image of male and female deities in sexual embrace—taken by some early Western interpreters of Tibetan Buddhism as a sign of its degeneration—is a symbolic portrayal of the inner unification of our own male and female energies. On a deeper level, their embrace symbolizes the aim of the very highest tantric practices: generation of a more subtle and blissful state of mind that, by its very nature, is supremely suited to penetrate ultimate reality and free us from all delusion and suffering. On this level, the male figure represents the experience of great bliss, while the female is the symbol of nondual wisdom. (p. 19)

It warrants mention that some scholars believe that tantric practices do not actually represent the teachings of the Buddha, others assert that the Tibetan Tantras arose from Hindu Tantra, and still others (i.e., the Tibetans themselves) claim that their particular tantras are unique to and arose from within their own cultural tradition (Powers, 1995/2007). While absolute agreement on the definitive foundational source of Tibetan Tantra will likely remain elusive, it can be said with certainty that in essence such practices represent a form of imaginal deity worship that has been practiced by an array of Hindu and Buddhist lineages throughout a large part of Asia and that its contemporary application is especially prominent in the Tibetan tradition.

The tantric practices employed and practiced in Tibet, regardless of their particular lineage, ultimate origin, or the variances among the different sects, are designed, in the words of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, “in order to train in the path that would allow us to transform death, the intermediate state, and rebirth” (quoted in Varela, 1997, p. 127). This requires that the practitioner carefully attune his awareness to three levels of experience: the state of waking consciousness, in which he engages in deity worship, mantra recitation, and other transformative rituals; the sleeping state, in which he practices dream and sleep yoga; and the state that occurs during the death process, in which he aligns himself with the teaching of *The Tibetan Book of the*

*Dead, or Bardo Thodal*. Accordingly, all such methods are intended to dissolve the dualistic mind into,

the clear light and abide in it through all the moments of life: waking, meditating, dreaming, sleeping, and death. Essentially, the teachings are designed to help us recognize the nature of mind, to understand and overcome the obstacles in our practice, and to abide fully in rigpa. We can utilize the same methods to remain in joy, to find peace in the midst of the turmoil of the world, to live well and to appreciate each vivid moment of our human existence. (Wangyal, 1998, p. 208)

As previously noted, the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet contains four primary schools that co-exist alongside the now much less prominent but still active Bon tradition, which absorbed and integrated many of Buddhism's essential teachings. Each school is aligned with specific lineages, tantras (texts), doctrines, and practices that are designed to correspond to the particular needs and circumstances of its respective practitioners. In the words of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama (1995):

Tantric treatises always present their subject matter in accord with and based on the model of procedure of the sutra path. All of the subtle complexities and differences in the various tantras arise in response to differences in mental disposition, natural inclinations, and psychical characteristics of practitioners. (p. 131)

He further emphasized that "as explained in the *Vajra-Tent Tantra*, there are four classes within the tantric system" (p. 103), which he outlined as follows:

These four classes of tantra are named according to their functions as well as their different features. In the first, Action Tantra, the external actions of cleanliness, cleaning, as so forth, as well, as mudra, or symbolic hand gestures, are emphasized as being more important than the inner yoga. Therefore, it is called *Action Tantra*. In the second class of tantra, performance Tantra, there is an equal emphasis on both the inner and outer aspects. In the third class, Yoga Tantra, the inner yoga of meditative stabilization is emphasized more than external activities. The fourth class, Highest Yoga Tantra, is so called not only because it emphasizes the importance of inner yoga, but also because there is no class of tantra superior to it. (p. 103)

He also clarified that "the purpose of explaining tantra to the appropriate trainees in such a complex manner is to enable each trainee to realize the two truths . . . the ultimate and conventional truths according to Highest Yoga Tantra" (1995, p. 131). The class of Highest Yoga Tantra, as the final stage in tantric practice, is designed to induce the ultimate condition of spiritual union. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama revealed this process in the following passage:

Generally speaking, there are two principle ways in which the term union is used in Highest Yoga Tantra: the union of the two truths, and the union of bliss and emptiness. In the context

of the union of the two truths, the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness, described below, is itself a single entity—ultimate truth, which is unified with the illusory body—conventional truth. When these two are inseparably conjoined, one has achieved the perfect union of the two truths. The union of bliss and emptiness refers to an indivisible union between the wisdom realizing emptiness and a profound experience of bliss. In such a union, the previously gained wisdom that realizes emptiness is generated within a blissful state of mind; thus, these two—wisdom and bliss—are experienced within a single entity of consciousness. (pp. 132-133)

As Tucci (1970/1980) stressed, “these theoretical and yogic elements bear witness to the directing of all experience or modes of being that are possible towards a single purpose, salvation” (p. 101). At the core of this salvation (i.e., liberation) lies an understanding of the four noble truths, with its emphasis on the cessation of suffering and the attendant dissolution of the illusory sense of a separate self. Although in Buddhism this self, or sense of conscious awareness, is considered a transmigrating principle, at the same time “according to orthodox teachings ‘consciousness’ is one of the five ‘aggregates’ (*skandha*) of transient personality and is quite as ephemeral as the other four” (Snellgrove, 1987/2002, p.517). The various Tibetan sects thus share the notion that emptiness (Skt., *sunyata*) is the essential truth of all existence, and within this context “all four orders agree that the mind is of the nature of clear light . . . and all agree that the most subtle and basic level of mind is of the nature of pure luminosity and emptiness” (Powers, 1995/2007, p. 358). In the words of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama:

The innate fundamental mind of clear light is emphasized equally in the Highest Yoga Tantra systems of the New Translation Schools and in the Nying-ma system of the Great Perfection and is the proper place of comparison of the old and new schools. (quoted in Powers, 1995/2007, p. 358)

Arising in union with the clear light, this state of blissful, non-dual emptiness, are two vital manifestations: wisdom (Skt., *prajna*) and compassion (Skt., *karuna*), which are considered the two most essential qualities that manifest in conjunction with the attainment of this fully liberated state. The qualities of humility and simplicity are also highly valued, and in this sense “being a buddha is not being some omnipotent spiritual superman, but becoming at last a true human being” (Sogyal, 1994, p. 54).

Each school also aligns itself with the Buddhist cosmological precept of multiple spiritual planes and universes (Varela, 1997). The three primary realms of desire, form, and formlessness constitute the most basic structure, and there is also a more thorough distinction of either six or



thirty-one realms in the *Kalacakra* system; human beings inhabit the desire realm, which involves existence in a state of *samsara*. This complex structure is given greater clarity in the following passage:

Buddhist cosmology encompasses an unimaginably vast number of world systems beyond our earthly home. Outside of the mundane world, the six realms of *samsara*, there exist innumerable pure lands extending in all ten directions of the universe. . . . These purified paradises are the dwelling places of advanced beings, including celestial buddhas and great bodhisattvas. (Thondup, 2005, p. 184)

Transmigration into one of these advanced realms (as part of the progressive movement toward ultimate liberation) is considered a primary goal of religious practice, and this principle is linked directly to the concept of reincarnation (David-Neel, 1978/1997) This fundamental tenet of all Buddhist schools has taken on special distinction in the Tibetan tradition through the person of the *tulku*, or reincarnated lama. As with so many aspects of Tibetan Buddhism (and Buddhism in general), there have been a “variety of opinions that have been enunciated on this subject and the number of discussions they have given birth to are considerable” (p. 59). Although the intricacies of these various perspectives is beyond the scope of this generalized survey, the following distinction is held by the preeminent Madhyamaka school, especially as it pertains to the absence of individual consciousness, or *anatta* (*no-self*):

What we call “consciousness,” the learned lamas say, is a mental operation. It is certainly not a person. However, the Tibetans retain the idea of multiple reincarnations of the same personality. . . . Thus, we understand that the “spirit” of a dead lama is represented by a certain *tulku*. (p.57)

The Dalai Lama is the most conspicuous and highly revered representative of this enigmatic phenomena, and he, like other eminent Tibetan masters, is said to choose his next incarnation in line with a deeply earnest intent to continue the teachings of his lineage. Tenzin Gyatso is the fourteenth in this order of succession, and as such is understood as the reincarnation of his predecessor. The title of Dalai Lama was first bestowed by the Mongol ruler, Altan Khan, in the fifteenth century on the third successor of Tsong Khapa, Sonam Gyatso (David-Neel, 1978/1997). The word “Dalai” means “ocean” (i.e., “ocean of wisdom”) in Mongolian, and this most revered of Tibetan spiritual masters is deemed an earthly representative of the Bodhisattva and tantric deity Avalokiteshvara (Tib., Chenrezigs), who is said to inhabit the Western Paradise of the Great Beatitude. The prestige and power that accompanied this sanctified association and

exalted lineage of reincarnated *tulkus* would ultimately help to make the Dalai Lama the preeminent political and religious personage in Tibet.

The notion of reincarnation presents itself in various forms, especially as it is distinguished between orthodox monastic practitioners and the lay populace. When the question of what actually reincarnates is considered, the most common idea among the masses is expressed in the form of the *namshes*:

The term *namshes* is an abbreviated form of *namparshespa*. It is the name of a principle that “knows,” one that takes into account the objects that our senses have entered into contact with and differentiates and classifies them. There are six distinct *namparshespa*. A sixth *namparshespa* is attached to the mind. It is regarded as the awareness of the personality, that which has an idea of the *I*. (David-Neel, 1978/1997, p. 29)

In contrast to the Buddhist principle of *anatta* (no-self), David-Neel (1978/1997) further proposed that “the Tibetan masses have made the *namshes* into the equivalent of the Indian *jiva*” (p. 29), and that in this sense it is considered a spiritual entity that attaches itself to material form (i.e., the human body) in successive incarnations. This view further holds that it is not the *namshes* that chooses its new form and attendant set of life circumstances; rather, it is the process of karma that determines the long series of earthly incarnations. The notion of karma refers to the cumulative effects of past actions and the subsequent circumstances that arise out of the relational law of cause and effect. The principle of karma also applies to the more orthodox interpretation, which holds that the subtle energy-mind is the aspect that reincarnates. The orthodox understanding also asserts that the notion of a separate self and the attendant sense of individual personality is “the wrong view that holds onto a mistaken belief in a self-existent ‘I,’ or ego-identity” (Yeshe, 1987/2001). In short, it is the *clear light* (one’s true nature, which is emptiness) that reincarnates, not an individual personality. In the words of Varela (1997):

The most subtle constituent of the subtle body. It refers to both the subtle vital energy and the subtle mind. It also refers to the *clear light*, and it is the aspect of the mind-body continuum which travels uninterrupted from one life to the next. (p. 240)

In its focus upon the phenomena of reincarnation, the Tibetan tradition has also produced the figure of the *Shindje*, a judge of the dead that announces their fate, although this act is said to be performed without moral judgment and without the conferring of reward or punishment. This phenomena is sometimes depicted as containing a courtroom from which two roads lead in

opposite directions—one moving upward toward the different paradises, and the other descending downward into the various hells ruled by pain and suffering. Confinement to in any one of these realms is never considered a permanent condition, as “Tibetans neither believe in eternal bliss nor accept the horror of an eternal hell” (David-Neal, 1978/1997, p. 32). The goal of this long and mysterious spiritual journey remains, as always, the attainment of increasingly higher modes of existence that ultimately lead to the complete liberation taught by the Buddha:

The Tibetan who has grown up among such gnostic and magical practices is imbued with the conviction that he is able to change into modes of being progressively higher in nature until he is dissolved into the nameless. The levels of existence already traversed on the path of meditation will enable him in the moment of death, thanks to the abilities he has acquired and the mental equipment he has gathered, to attain a Buddha-like or at least paradisiacal existence. (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 101)

Intimately tied to the process of reincarnation is the notion of the *bardo*, the intermediate state that contains the disincarnated consciousness from the moment of death until its next incarnation. This interval is considered a crucial period in which, through the skillful aural instructions of a learned Buddhist adept, the disembodied personality may awaken to his true nature and thus be delivered from the long and arduous cycle of rebirth. The means of guiding the dead through this intermediate state is revealed in the *Bardo Thodal*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, one of the *gtar* (treasures) hidden by the great tantric adept Padmasambhava and his followers. Padmasambhava, who is thought to have originated in Odiyana (in present-day Afghanistan) or Himachal Pradesh, arrived in Tibet in 747 and, after reputedly vanquishing the demonic forces that threatened the newly adopted Buddhist faith, went on to profoundly influence the still emerging religious framework through his determined explication of tantric practice. The *Bardo Thodal* is one of many works that were hidden in caves to be discovered at a later period when circumstances were ripe for their acceptance and dispersal. This work is of particular significance, however, because it provides instructions for the interpretation of the beguiling and often frightening psychic images that are encountered during the intermediate state between incarnations:

The voyage described in the Bardo is not a real voyage, accomplished in real places. It translates in images, the conceptions that have been registered in the intellect of the deceased. . . . In their mind they will go back to all the things that they have been taught and in which they believed. . . . The ‘memories’ that the individual stockpiled during the course of his life will take shape and present themselves to him like a moving picture,

and every disincarnated soul . . . will have a tendency to mistake for real events the episodes that supplant one another only in the mind. (David-Neel, 1978/1997, pp. 55-56)

This phase between rebirths is deemed crucial because if the disembodied entity (who receives the necessary instructions during and just after the death phase) can comprehend these images as reflections of his own mind rather than real events, an opening is thus created through which he may then awaken to his true nature, the clear light of dharmakaya. Tucci (1970/1980) noted that as “the consciousness of the spiritually mature person becomes identified with the light which shines out at the time of death, it perceives the identity between the light and its own radiant essence” (p. 64). In the words of Evans-Wentz (1960/2000):

Thine own consciousness, not formed onto anything, in reality void, and the intellect, shining and blissful—these two are inseparable. The union of them is the *Dharmakaya* state of Perfect Enlightenment. Thine own consciousness, shining, void, and inseparable from the Great Body of Radiance, hath no birth, nor death, and is the Immutable Light—Buddha Amitabha. (p. 96)

Tucci (1970/1980) expanded upon the revered and exalted meaning associated with light in the following passage:

In the entire course of the religious experience of Tibetan man, in all of its manifestations from Bon religion to Buddhism, a common fundamental trait is evident; photism, the great importance attached to light, whether as a generative principle, as a symbol of supreme reality, or as a visible, perceptible manifestation of that reality; light from which all comes forth and which is present within ourselves. (pp. 63-64)

### *Dreams in the Tibetan Tradition*

Since at least the eleventh century the Buddhist tradition in Tibet has developed and sustained important religious practices pertaining to the phenomenology of dreaming (Varela, 1997). One of the most notable disciplines that arose originated from teachings transmitted in one of the Six Yogas of Naropa, and these processes and techniques would be further perfected by subsequent practitioners, leading to a genuinely refined and effective set of methodologies. An important distinction should be made, however, concerning the Tibetan Buddhist perception of the nature of dreams and the manner in which modern Westerners may view of this phenomenon. In the words of Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (1998):

There is nothing more real than dream. This statement only makes sense once it is understood that normal waking life is as unreal as dream, and in exactly the same way.

Then it can be understood that dream yoga applies to all experience, to the dreams of the day as well as the dreams of the night. (p. 23)

The above passage pertains to the Tibetan Buddhist view (and broader Indian notion) of *maya*, which refers to the illusory nature of ordinary dualistic perception. Genuine clarity of mind, on the other hand, involves the immediate, penetrating, nondual comprehension that “the very ground of our being is pervasive, self-existing, empty, primordial awareness. . . . Bon-Buddhism places a great emphasis on the doctrine of no-self or emptiness (*sunyata*), which is the ultimate truth of all phenomena” (Wangyal, 1998, p. 200). Within this mode of perception, all phenomena, both in the waking and dream state, are understood to be lacking in any inherent existence, and as such the conventional self, the separate *me* that one normally identifies with, is understood to be a projection of the mind that is not abiding in its true nature, which is known in Tibetan Buddhism as the *clear light of bliss*, and in the Tibetan language as *rigpa*. Learning not to falsely identify with illusory projections, which in Buddhism are seen as arising from one’s karmic traces and perpetuating the cycle of rebirth in *samsara*, is a fundamental aspect of this discipline.

Dream yoga represents a central means by which practitioners learn to focus their awareness toward the reality of their true inner nature, and the foundational starting place of such practices requires a concerted focus upon the effects of karma:

In dream yoga, the understanding of karma is used to train the mind to react differently to experience, resulting in new karmic traces from which are generated dreams more conducive to spiritual practice. It is not about force, about the consciousness acting imperially to oppress the unconscious. Dream yoga relies instead upon increased awareness and insight. (Wangyal, 1998, p. 33)

In the above context, karmic traces are understood as being directly responsible for the content of dream episodes, and the greatly heightened awareness that arises in states of lucid dreaming (in which one is aware of being in the dream state) allows the individual to consciously and constructively approach this dream material and bring it to resolution, thus reducing the obstructions of one’s karmic inheritance.

As with other tantric practices, the *chakras* play an essential role in dream yoga in that “the central channel is the energetic basis of experiences of *rigpa* and the practices we do in dream yoga are meant to bring mind and prana into the central channel” (Wangyal, 1998, p. 51). This

practice is thought to eventually lead to the complete purification of karmic traces and the subsequent awakening to enlightenment:

Ultimately, when we purify the obscurations until none remain, there is no film, no hidden karmic influences that color and shape the light of our consciousness. Because karmic traces are the roots of dreams, when they are entirely exhausted only the pure light of awareness remains: no movie, no story, no dreamer and no dream, only the luminous fundamental nature that is absolute reality. This is why enlightenment is the end of dreams and is known as ‘awakening’ (p. 33)

### *Sacred Art and Creative Meditation*

In light of the Buddhist precept of emptiness and its rejection of the Hindu notions of *Atman* and *Brahman*, it is perhaps a somewhat curious circumstance that one of the principal means of attaining enlightenment in the tantric tradition is through the worshiping of deities in creative meditation. However, this is done with the understanding that “the deity we choose to identify with represents the essential qualities of the fully awakened experience latent within us” (Yeshe, 1987/2001, p. 30). And so, despite the fact that in Buddhism one’s essential nature is understood as lacking any inherent existence, mythic imagery and entities (e.g., Buddha Sakyamuni, Tara, and Avalokitesvara) are employed in various tantric methodologies as a creative means of furthering one’s spiritual development. Manly Hall (1960) defined the nature and function of such mythic deities—in contrast to Judeo-Christian cosmology—as follows:

In the Buddhistic belief, deities are not held to be eternal, unchangeable gods ruling from their distant thrones their progenies of creatures. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are beings who have grown up from the earth. They are revered as illumined souls who, by the merit of their conduct, have been sanctified and deified. They have been born, have suffered, and died, and through long cycles of rebirth have attained liberation. Yet, being liberated, they have turned back to serve their brothers and to advance the common good by the renunciation of their own heavenly privileges and attributes. . . . The average person feels a kinship with the great ones who govern the wheel of necessity. He says of them, ‘What I am, they were; what they are, I will be.’ . . . He has also come to know that these celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas are bound to him by strong and intimate ties. He can become aware of them because they abide with him. He is of identical nature and substance with them, and he achieves union with their quality by becoming like them through discipline and meditation. (p. 5)

Although there are in fact numerous forms of tantric practice, and a variety of deities to which different sects are aligned, basic structures of divinity worship were established that have a broad application to such procedures. As Conze (1951/1959) 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)

In considering the above process, it is essential to remember that from its inception Mahayana Buddhism has emphasized emptiness as the supreme reality, although, as with many aspects in the evolution of Buddhist thought, there are differences between early Buddhist accounts of *nibbana* (Skt., *nirvana*) and later notions of emptiness, or *sunyata* (Snellgrove, 1987/2002). More specifically, Tibetan Tantra emphasizes that “the highest state of all, in which the Buddha-emanations ultimately dissolve and yet continually re-emerge, is the Adamantine Being (*Vajrasattva*) and thus it is defined as *Vajra*, meaning diamond or thunderbolt” (p. 131). 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” (p. 185). Next, he employs syllables (e.g., AM, or HUM) as a means of invoking his chosen deity (as 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, 1951/1959, p. 187)

This process of consecrated assimilation involves a merging of experiential dimensions, and in addressing this theme Tucci (1970/1980) 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. 98). 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. (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. Snellgrove (1987/2002) 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 rite 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)

In the pursuit of ultimate truth the deity thus acts as a kind of psychic bridge to the threshold of one's supreme nature. This threshold can be seen as the boundary between temporal, dualistic, manifest existence and the eternal, nondual, formless nature of dharmakaya, and it is the various practices of tantra, and more specifically tantric meditation, or *mahamudra*, that foster the heightened condition of emptiness with appearance. In the words of Rob Preece (2006):

Even though the notion of no-Self (Skt. *anatma*) is a central tenet of Buddhism, the Buddhist tantric path conceives that our potential for wholeness is personified in the symbolic form of a deity. . . . The deity in tantra is understood as a gateway or bridge between two aspects of reality. . . . In Buddhism we speak of 'relative truth,' the world of appearances and forms, and 'ultimate truth,' the empty, spacious, non-dual nature of reality. . . . The deity stands on the threshold as an expression of the potential for creative manifestation. (pp. 38-39)

And in tantric practice the body plays an essential role in this process, one that reflects a holistic coalescence between mind and matter:

Tantra cultivates a return to the world where psyche and soma, consciousness and matter, are in an intimate inter-relationship. The understanding of subtle energy, both within the body and in the natural environment, makes this profound reconnection possible, principally through the body. (Preece, 2006, p. 245)

The body, then, essentially acts as a kind of alchemical vessel of transformation and does so in direct relationship to the yogic activation of the *chakras*. These seven bodily centers serve as the channels through which the vital feminine energy rises from the lowest to the highest center



to be united with the masculine principle, thus achieving a state of union and supreme bliss. In the words of The 14th Dalai Lama (1995):

Such feats are accomplished on the basis of sophisticated yogic practices that principally involve mentally penetrating the essential points within the body where the *cakras*, or energy centers, are located. By means of this subtle and refined coordination of mind and body, the practitioner is able to accelerate the process of getting at the root of ignorance and completely overcoming its effects and imprints, a process that culminates, finally, in the realization of full enlightenment. (p. 11)

According to Preece (2006), these psychic and physiological factors concurrently interact with the Earth in that “throughout the body, both male and female elements localize in twenty-four particular places. . . . These inner elemental centers correspond to the surrounding land, which gives Tantra a particular significance in relation to nature” (p. 207). The 14th Dalai Lama also noted that “in Buddhism the *external* environment is seen in some sense as a product of collective *karma*. Therefore, the existence of a flower, for instance, is related to the karmic forces of the beings who live in the environment of the flower” (quoted in Varela, 1997, p. 81). These beings and forces exist in a variety of forms, and the higher male and female aspects, which represent both exterior and interior forces, are represented in the tantric tradition as *dakas* (masculine aspects) and *dakinis* (feminine aspects). As Preece stated:

The relationship between the inner body centers and the outer land locations is very subtle. In Chakrasamvara Tantra, the forces that inhabit these centers take the aspect of *dakas* and *dakinis*. When a tantric practitioner meditates, he or she aims to tune into the relationship of these inner and outer forces and allow a process of healing to take place. In this way, the outer land manifests through the *dakas* and *dakinis* and blesses and heals the inner energies. The land is then experienced as if it were a complete mandala with specific locations for different functions, just as the body serves different functions (p. 247)

Creative meditation thus assimilates physiological and psychological aspects to create an effective means through which spiritual transformation can be induced. Deity worship plays a significant role in this process, and involves the fusion of gross and subtle levels of energy that merge in blissful accord to reveal heightened states of spiritual unity.

In summary, Tibetan Buddhist Tantra can be understood as a distinctive form of psycho-spiritual practice that seeks to address the causes of human suffering through a fundamental understanding of the nature of mind. This understanding proposes that emptiness, or *sunyata*, is the mind’s essential nature, and it is toward the achievement of this definitive state that all

aspects of spiritual practices are ultimately directed. Creative meditation and visualization play a predominate role in this process, and it is through the transformative use of mythic imagery to effect the union of opposites that the Tibetan tradition finds its most immediate correspondences to the depth psychology of C. G. Jung—a comparison to which I now turn.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JUNG AND TIBETAN TANTRA: A COMPARATIVE VIEW

#### Mythic Imagery and the Reconciliation of Opposites

Jungian psychology and Tibetan Tantra share a number of intriguing characteristics and methodologies that have as their primary focus the elicitation of spiritual awakening. As previously stated, both disciplines emphasize the transformative power of mythic imagery and the reconciliation of opposites as a means of facilitating human development, and in each discipline these processes are understood as vital catalysts for the inducement of numinous experience (Moacanin, 2003). A concurrent emphasis on the union of feminine and masculine elements performs an essential function in both systems:

The union of masculine and feminine is central to much of life, both inwardly and outwardly. The conjunctio, as Jung called this union, is equally important to the completion stage of tantra, where male and female aspects of the meditator are brought into union on an inner level. (Preece, 2006, p. 215)

This emphasis on the union of opposites also applies directly to the light and dark aspects of human nature, and in Tibetan Tantra, as in certain primary practices in depth psychotherapy, visualization plays a primary role in this process:

In Jungian analysis one must deal with one's shadow, the dark rejected part of the psyche; one must detect projections and egocentric aims. . . . For that reason the total psyche must be approached, its dark as well as its light aspects, personified in tantra by peaceful and wrathful deities repeatedly constructed and dissolved in one's visualization. One is continually facing the conflict of opposites in an effort to transcend them. This is the purpose of the *sadhanas* (meditation exercises), which are based on a profound understanding of what Jung would call depth psychology. (Moacanin, 2003, pp. 88-89)

The creative engagement of God-images and other sacred symbols (e.g., the mandala) holds special significance in each tradition, both as a means of facilitating spiritual development and as a process that points directly to an essential precept that lies at the foundation of each system—the *primacy of psychic reality*. At the same time, each system posits the intimate interrelationship of all phenomena, and this notion of inseparable union, of the ultimate interconnectedness between all things and processes, is especially relevant as it pertains to the psychic relationship between subject and object, observer and observed. This is particularly well demonstrated in the

texts of the Tibetan tradition, as Clarke (1994) astutely observed in relation to *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 this and another enigmatic Buddhist text, the *Tibetan Book of Liberation*, provided Jung (1992a) with what he felt was significant validation for many of his own theories of psychic reality. For example, he found no small measure of significance in the Buddhist notion of the three *kayas*, which represent the *bodies* of perfection relating to the state of enlightenment. Varela (1997) described this doctrine as follows:

The doctrine of the three *kayas*, or bodies, presents the Mahayana understanding of the nature of perfect enlightenment, or buddhahood. The Dharmakaya, or Reality Body, is the ultimate expanse that is the final reality of a buddha's awakening; it is also the ultimate mind of a buddha. The Sambhogakaya, or Enjoyment Body, is the form of the enlightenment mind that remains in the perfected realms of existence. This subtle form is only available to highly advanced spiritual practitioners. The Nirmanakaya, or Emanation Body, is the form of the Buddha that is perceptible to ordinary sentient being like ourselves. (p. 241)

In the above context, Jung (1992a) correlated his concept of the Self with Buddhism's Universal Mind, and suggested that "the unconscious is the root of all experience of oneness (*dharmakaya*), the matrix of all archetypes or structural patterns (*sambogakaya*), and the *conditio sine qua non* of the phenomenal world (*nirmanakaya*)" (p. 66). His concurrent suggestion that "the gods are archetypal thought forms belonging to the *sambogakaya*" (p. 66) has particular relevance concerning his notion of psychic reality, and his interpretation of the contents of the *Bardo Thodal*, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, demonstrated a similar outlook:

The whole book is created out of the archetypal contents of the unconscious. Behind these there lie—and in this our Western reason is quite right—no physical or metaphysical realities, but "merely" the reality of psychic facts, the data of psychic experience. . . . The *Bardo Thodol* says no more than this, for its five Dhyani-Buddhas are no more than psychic data. . . . The world of gods and spirits is truly 'nothing but' the collective unconscious inside me. (1992b, p. 96).

As outlined previously, Lama Yeshe, in referring to the process of tantric meditation, expressed a similar perspective when he stated 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. (1987/2001, p. 30)

And in *The Psychology of Eastern Meditation*, Jung (1936/1958) again emphasized this shared principle when he expressed the following:

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)

The various images and sanctified forms that are employed in the Jungian tradition typically derive from the dreams and fantasies of those involved in the therapeutic process. These images can vary dramatically from person to person and are thought to portray distinctive meaning that has a specific application to each individual, although the appearance of universal motifs remains ubiquitous (Jung, 1963). The Tibetan discipline, on the other hand, adheres to a well-established and extensive assortment of traditional deities (e.g., Avalokiteshvara) and mythic forms (e.g., mandalas), although the principle figures of worship vary to some extent depending on the given sect. (Tucci, 1970/1980).

The mandala holds a special place in each discipline as a symbol of one’s true nature, and here an important bridge is established between the Western and Eastern traditions in question, especially as it pertains to the psychic manifestation of mythic imagery in a broader universal context:

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. (Jung, 1974, pp. 170-172)

The above passage clearly exemplifies the central themes mentioned previously, namely the essential importance of the reconciliation of opposites and the attendant union of masculine and

Feminine principles, a process that is accompanied by the manifestation of various forms of universal mythic imagery that appear both in individual spiritual development (as portrayed in Jung's *The Red Book*) and in broader cultural and religious contexts (Jung, 1974). This notion was echoed by Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche (1998) as follows:

The underlying truth is that these teaching arise spontaneously from humans when they reach a certain point in their individual development. The teachings are inherent in the foundational wisdom that any culture can eventually access. They are not only Buddhist or Bon teachings; they are teachings for all humans. (p. 71)

In his influential work, *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained: Forgotten Tales of Individuation from Ancient Tibet*, Herbert Guenther (1994) addresses a number of Jungian and Tibetan developmental precepts through the lens of one of the oldest extant texts of the rdzogs chen tradition. In the following passage, he outlined the underlying framework from which his analysis unfolds and to which both Tibetan Tantra and Jungian psychology find great resonance:

A quest for wholeness is intimately and intricately intertwined with a phenomenological exploration of the dynamics of psychic life as it expresses itself in images as symbolic descriptions of itself and in this self-presentation remain a challenge for further explorations. (p. xv)

Guenther emphasis focuses upon the nature of visionary knowing and the manner in which numinous encounters with mythic imagery not only test the limits of ordinary perception, but also result in “an extraordinary intensification of the experiencer’s sensibilities and sensitivities that invite and prompt the beholder to follow these visions up to their source, the whole’s creativity or intelligence/spirituality” (1994, p. 60). As outlined above, it is precisely this understanding of the power of mythic imagery that serves as the basis for the various creative and meditative techniques developed by Jung and found in its own unique form in Tibetan Tantra. Acting as the individual’s guiding impetus toward wholeness, such images “instill in the experiencer a sense of the inexhaustibility of his very being” (p.57).

The visionary knowledge to which Guenther (1994) refers also emphasizes a merging of opposites in which the outer environment becomes a mirror to one’s inner world. He uses the example of a mountain paired with a lake (entities especially rich in symbolic meaning to both traditions in question) to illustrate the importance for the individual of learning to see beyond the confines of purely rational perception:

Such phenomena as mountains and lakes as primarily images of symbolic pregnance, not reductively postulated ‘things,’ and, as such, are a challenge to his ability to understand their meaning(s) in his endeavor to realize wholeness anticipated and envisioned through its symbols. (p. 88)

Here one comes face to face with the blurring of the lines between *inner* and *outer*, and one finds in this merging, for example, the tantric association of Mt. Kailash (the physical mountain located in Western Tibet) with the mythical Mt. Meru—which is one of the primary symbolic representations of the World Mountain motif, a sacred symbol that was for Jung (1959/1981) a principal metaphor of the Self. In experiencing this manner of heightened awareness, Guenther (1994) further emphasized that,

The cultivation of this visionary experience needs a different mode of seeing and knowing: one that is not assertive and reductively discursive, but is more primordial, more pristine—an ‘originary awareness’ that in all its nuances remains in touch with the felt sense of the visionary field as an extension of the body-as-lived. (pp. 88-89)

In this manner of seeing, all of the world’s entities can be understood as mythic images, and their sacredness is imparted by virtue of “being participatory agents in what constitutes the resonance domains of Being’s wholeness with itself and everything else as its probabilistic projections and emanations” (Guenther, 1994, p. 110). In human terms, this developmental dynamic, this “return to the origin” (p.144), can be summarized as follows:

We may say that the symbol is the self-presentation, not re-representation, of the whole’s energy-intensity in an image that is ‘seen’ by its experiencer whose visionary capability has developed beyond the seeing of *things* into an ecstatic/*ek-static* gaze, and that this gaze is deeply felt and immediately understood. (p. 145)

### **Dreams, Experiential Realms, and Post-Mortem Existence**

Dreams serve as a primary avenue for the arising of mythic forms and entities, and this of course is equally true for wisdom figures as for the example of mandalas and other sacred motifs. In the process of Tibetan spiritual development, such figures often arise in the dream state, and this includes the *yidam*, or guardian deity, which serves as “a kind of symbol under which this progressive deliverance is accomplished” (Tucci, 1970/1980, p. 97). Jung’s (1963) most noteworthy spiritual guide, Philemon, also arose through the dream state, and he too acted as an indispensable guide in Jung’s spiritual development. The much older Tibetan tradition exhibits a more complex and diversified approach to this phenomenon, including the use of dreams for

divination and the revelation of doctrinal teachings, or “mind treasures” (Wangyal, 1998). This includes not only a broader classification of dream types and attendant levels of awareness but also the ultimate goal of enacting a state of dreamless sleep that reveals the very essence of enlightenment itself.

Apart from the various forms of revelatory dreams described above, the Tibetan tradition views much of dream content (especially in its negative form) as a manifestation of karmic traces. The ultimate goal of dream yoga and other such practices is the progressive purification of the practitioner’s karma to a point where all such psychic material has been distinguished and dreams consequently cease (Wangyal, 1998). In contrast, the Jungian discipline views such dream material as highly instructive symbolic forms that take root and unfold in the unconscious. These forms are seen as having a therapeutic basis in that they are produced by the unconscious as part of its “self-regulating system” (Jung, 1960), a process in which dream figures and scenarios are created as a means of balancing the individual’s emotional and psychic constitution and furthering his development. Through processes of amplification (such as those found in active imagination), the deeper meaning of these images is brought to conscious awareness, and consequently their direct engagement and integration (rather than their extinction) are seen as crucial to psychological growth. In this respect there is of course great emphasis on the archetypal nature of psycho-spiritual development (in both a personal and collective sense), and the manifestation of images of psychic wholeness such as the mandala are understood as having two essential meanings: on the one hand, they manifest through the psyche’s own self-regulating system to help bring cohesion to a fragmented psyche; and on the other hand, they can signify heightened spiritual maturity, just as they do in the Tibetan tradition.

Dreams in both traditions may also act as a vehicle of communication from departed loved ones, and as such they represent a bridge between the world of the living and the realm of the deceased. This phenomena provides one of the few examples of acknowledged autonomous dimensions to be found in Jung’s writings, which along with the notion of autonomous archetypal processes, he developed in his latter years. In Jung’s (1963) words:

I had another experience of the evolution of the soul after death when—about a year after my wife’s death—I suddenly awoke one night and knew that I had been with her in the south of France, in Provence, and had spent an entire day with her. She was engaged in studies of the Grail there. That seemed significant to me, for she had died before completing work on



this subject. . . . The thought that my wife was continuing after death to work on her further spiritual development—struck me as meaningful and held a measure of reassurance for me. (p. 146)

Jung (1963) reported having many such dreams (including contact with his deceased father many years before) and also analyzed many such dreams from his patients, and in his later years he increasingly began to conceive of post-mortem existence—especially as it pertained to the eternal nature of the psyche—as a genuine probability. With its well-established cosmology of experiential dimensions and entities and its long-held precept of reincarnation, Tibetan Buddhism clearly has a more developed theoretical construct concerning autonomous realms and post-mortem existence, but Jung’s late reflections on these subjects demonstrated an ever-increasing tendency toward their acceptance. In one such statement, for example, which alludes to karma and the transmigration of personality, Jung stated that,

our life is not made entirely by ourselves. The main bulk of it is brought into existence out of sources that are hidden to us. Even complexes can start a century or more before a man is born. There is something like karma. (quoted in von Franz, 1998, pp. 117-118)

In her pioneering work, *On Dreams and Death: A Jungian Interpretation*, Marie-Louise von Franz (1998), Jung’s most trusted contemporary, expands upon his work concerning dreams and the afterlife. As described by Jung in the above quote, there exists a strong suggestion of the individuation process continuing in the afterlife as part of the completion of inner psychic work, and in this respect “the unconscious pays very little attention to the abrupt end of bodily life and behaves as if the psychic life of the individual, that is, the individuation process, will simply continue” (p. xvii). An array of distinct, reoccurring motifs concerning death and the afterlife have also been identified, and many of them bear a striking resemblance to certain aspects portrayed in the Tibetan bardo states. Among these primary themes are a judgment episode assessing one’s life and actions, the materialization of a post-mortal “subtle body,” and the journeying to heavenly or hellish dimensions, among numerous others. Further, in an apparent allusion to Jung’s interest in both medieval alchemy and Tibetan Buddhism, von Franz keenly observed that,

in the alchemical tradition . . . the adept, the adept in the alchemical work, the *opus*, . . . creates his own resurrected body during his lifetime. Certain Eastern methods of meditation are also supposed to assist in creating a ‘diamond body,’ which survives physical death. (p. xix)

And Jung, in considering such spiritual phenomena, made a clear distinction regarding the psyche's dependency on the empirical life of the body:

The fact that religious statements frequently conflict with the observed physical phenomena *proves that in contrast to physical perception the spirit is autonomous*, and that psychic experience is to a certain extent independent of physical data. *The psyche is an autonomous factor*, and religious statements are psychic confessions which in the last resort are based on unconscious, i.e., transcendental processes. (quoted in Von Franz, 1998, p. 7).

One final and very noteworthy aspect that unites Jungian psychology and Tibetan Tantra concerns the phenomena of light. The significance of light in the Tibetan tradition has already been articulated in chapter three, and it is fascinating to note that in the Jungian tradition, as it pertains to dream symbols representing the eternal nature of the psyche, “the image of light appears more often than any other image” (Von Franz, 1998, p. 146). Accordingly, this may, or may not be, directly related to the phenomena of the Buddhist clear light, but it is certainly suggestive of a mysterious, transcendental process that appears to supersede religious and cultural boundaries. Indeed, in the Tibetan tradition, it is not only the clear light upon which such significance rests, but this is true in many respects, “whether as a generative principle, as a symbol of supreme reality, or as a visible, perceptible manifestation of that reality; light from which all comes forth and which is present within ourselves” (Tucci, 1970/1980, pp. 63-64).

### **Mystical Encounter on the Tibetan Plateau**

Both the Buddhist and Jungian disciplines variously emphasize the importance of a direct experiential comprehension (unimpeded by strict rationalism) of spiritual processes, and thus the application of one's own highly transformative experiences can be instrumental in bringing further clarity to the theories and precepts contained in these traditions. This emphasis on the immediate, penetrating personal experience of the spiritual practitioner or therapeutic client thus provides the impetus for the delineation of certain experiences of my own that serve to enunciate key aspects of these disciplines.

One such example took place on the Tibetan plateau many years ago and involved a very mysterious encounter with a vast ethereal feminine presence at the base of Mt. Everest. The experience in question took place in the summer of 1996 and involved an overland expedition from the Tibetan capital of Lhasa to the ancient city of Kathmandu, Nepal. The journey was scheduled to take about a week, and would extend along what is known as the Friendship

Highway, a rough, unpaved road that links these two ancient trading partners. This route took us through an array of small villages as well as a number of important religious settlements, including the monastic centers of Gyantse and Shigatse, before arriving at Rongbuk Monastery near the base camp of Mt. Everest. Throughout this passing kaleidoscope of ancient towns and medieval villages we encountered a vast, ever-changing landscape of immeasurable mountain ranges and open, desolate plains that exuded a stark, ominous beauty. In this environment, human beings find themselves in the presence of immense natural forces that dwarf the human condition. And in the midst of this seemingly endless expanse of open, untamed wilderness, one's usual sense of position and importance in the world is greatly diminished, and one stands humbled in the presence of an environment whose unfathomable scope remains an unquenchable mystery.

Our evening at Rongbuk Monastery was spent attending to the practical needs of food and shelter, as we had arrived well after dark and were tired and hungry after a long arduous ascent over hard and unforgiving terrain. The guest quarters were cold, sparse, and dimly lit, as were the kitchen conditions where we consumed in silence a simple bowl of buckwheat noodles while surrounded by a retinue of subdued young novice monks. Immediately after dinner I retired to my humble cot, and was soon fast asleep. Then, sometime in the middle of the night I awoke and was instinctively drawn outside and up a neighboring hillside where, upon reaching the top, I suddenly encountered the undeniable presence of a vast feminine energy that seemed to blanket the sky above. I was awe-struck by her combination of power, depth, and sensitivity, and at that moment I felt that perhaps my mother had died and that her expanded spirit was somehow visiting me. But when I expressed this thought to the sky, this notion was in no way confirmed, and later I would discover that my mother was indeed still alive, which draped this profound experience in mystery. A few days later we arrived in the city of Kathmandu, and the next day, while strolling through the colorful, crowded side streets of this age-old metropolis, I came upon an image that immediately captured my attention in a state of great attraction and curiosity. The image was that of an ethereal female figure, clearly presented in the context of veneration and surrounded by a host of exotic and esoteric figures. At the time I was not well versed in the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhist deities and religious iconography, and as such I was not immediately well attuned to the fact that this enigmatic and alluring female presence, with her

undeniable air of serenity and deep green coloring, was in fact the Goddess Tara, accompanied by her cohorts and astral attendants. This specific identification would come to me at a later date; all I knew then, after first setting my eyes on her, was that she must return home with me. Upon my return to California she was carefully framed and subsequently began to assume a distinct visual presence in my living space. However, a deeper appreciation of her underlying meaning—in a broader religious context and in my own personal experience—remained largely beyond my conscious awareness until I began to encounter writings on the sacred feminine through my studies in depth psychology and Tibetan Buddhism. Through this process I began to more fully appreciate that within the context of the archetypal feminine, one of the most prominent figures is the Goddess Tara, who, as the mother of all buddhas, exemplifies compassion, enlightened activity, and “the totally developed wisdom that transcends reason” (Moacanin, 2003, p. 63). In Jungian terms, she “represents the mother archetype. . . . she is the image of the mother who has integrated in herself all the opposites, positive and negative” (p. 63). Tara can be viewed as belonging to a broader group of female embodiments of wisdom and divine power that include the dakini, which has on occasion been associated by Western scholars with one of Jung’s key archetypes, the anima (Moacanin, 2003). Jung (1963) placed great emphasis on the integration of the feminine aspect as well as the importance of actively embracing the natural world in a deeply spiritual and mythological framework, and in this context he viewed Nature as the supreme manifestation of the archetypal Goddess. One of Jung’s most prominent students and colleagues, Erich Neumann, outlined the significance of the sacred feminine and its direct correlation to the Goddess Tara as follows:

The archetypal feminine in man unfolds like mankind itself. At the beginning stands the primeval goddess, resting in the materiality of her elementary character, knowing nothing but the secret of her womb; at the end is Tara, in her left hand the opening lotus blossom of psychic flowering, her right hand held out toward the world in a gesture of giving. Her eyes are half closed and in her meditation she turns toward the outward as well as the inner world: an eternal image of the redeeming female spirit. Both together form the unity of the Great Goddess, who, in the totality of her unfolding, fills the world from its lowest elementary phase to its supreme spiritual transformation. (1955/1983, pp. 334-335)

And the vital role that the sacred feminine plays in the process of spiritual development was expressed by Nathan Katz in the following perspective:

The inspiration of the anima or the dakini is a call for one to look inward. As such, she is the link between the conscious and unconscious. In appearing to consciousness, the anima calls its attention to what has remained hidden; she is the door to the unconscious. (1992, p. 322)

Therefore, what appears to have remained hidden and unconscious in my own experience, was a deep and abiding realization of the archetypal feminine, which was brought into direct conscious awareness through my encounter with the Goddess presence at the base of Everest. The vital link that then resulted in the all-important amplification of the above experience came through my subsequent encounter with Tara's mythic image, as encountered in the shop in Kathmandu. This image carried tremendous power and attraction (as a personal mythic projection/association), and consequently lead to a much deeper attunement to my own unfolding spiritual processes. It also persuaded me of the undeniable presence of a vast and autonomous spiritual entity, an utterly immense and numinous mystery that is symbolized by—and at the same time transcendent of—the image of Tara itself. If one thus understands the deities depicted in mythic imagery as essentially symbolic representations of transcendent forces, it must also be acknowledged that these symbols nonetheless possess a potent numinous quality by virtue of their archetypal nature. In Tibetan Tantra they also denote—like the progressively advanced stages of the *chakras*—heightened levels of spiritual development to which inhabitants of this earthly dimension aspire. As previously noted, the Buddha is said to have interacted with otherworldly entities, and indeed the very basis of the bodhisattva ideal involves the instruction and guidance of all sentient beings in this earthly realm—and in innumerable other dimensions as well.

In his book, *The Sacred Place*, Paul Devereux (2000) observed that the interaction of cosmic and earthly forces appears to be highly concentrated in certain physical environments, and it is especially pertinent to note that throughout human history mountains in particular have been known to exist as the sacred refuge of the Goddess. This is precisely the belief that is held by the native Tibetan and Nepalese inhabitants who occupy both sides of Mt. Everest. This mountain has long been considered a sanctified entity because an array of mystical experiences and encounters with various disincarnate beings have been reported in its immediate vicinity for millennium. With this understanding in mind, the potential connection between Mt. Everest and the Goddess in my own experience deserves further consideration.

Mountains hold a special place in the religious thinking and creative iconography of the Himalayas, and both Mt. Everest and Mt. Kailash prominently appear on thangka and in other forms of Tibetan Buddhist art (Govinda, 1966). Both earthly entities are also linked to the archetypal motif of the World Mountain, and as outlined previously Mt. Kailash is directly associated with the mythical Mt. Meru, which in Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain cosmology symbolically represents the spiritual center of all physical and metaphysical universes. Within this context, the “cosmic mountain may be identified with a real mountain, or it can be mythic, but it is always placed at the center of the world” (Eliade, 1964/1992, p. 110). Mt. Kailash (and all manifestations of the World Mountain, including Everest) thus represents a preeminent form of *axis mundi*, and in its existence as both a physical and mythic entity it merges the inner and outer domains through the physical form’s activation of the inner archetype, resulting in a union of opposites that has a direct correlation to the psychosomatic dynamics of the *chakra* system:

To Hindus and Buddhists alike Kailas is the center of the universe. It is called Meru or Sumeru, according to the oldest Sanskrit tradition, and is regarded to be not only the physical but metaphysical center of the world. And as our psychological organism is a microcosmic replica of the universe, Meru is represented by the spinal cord in our nervous system; and just as the various centers (Skt.: *cakra*) of consciousness are supported by and connected with the spinal cord (Skt.: *meru-danda*) . . . in the same way Mount Meru forms the axis of the various planes of supramundane worlds. (Govinda, 1966, p. 273)

Accordingly, it warrants emphasizing that “as Kailas corresponds to the spinal column, it represents the axis of the spiritual universe, rising through innumerable world planes” (Govinda, 1966, p. 276). Here one finds a direct correspondence between the presence of the axial mountain, the human chakras, and the concurrent access to other dimensions of reality. In Tibetan Buddhist cosmology there exist numerous planes of existence, including such realms as Khacho Shing (the Pure Land of the Dakinis) and Yulo Kopa (the Pure Land of Tara).

In considering this relationship between sanctified realms and the natural world, Mircea Eliade observed that “where the sacred manifests itself in space, the real unveils itself. . . . It opens communication between the cosmic planes (between earth and heaven) and makes possible ontological passage from one mode of being to another” (1957/1987, p.63). From this perspective, it seems possible that my remarkable encounter with the immense Goddess entity may have been facilitated through the spiritual axis of Mt. Everest, and whether she derives from the realm of Kacho Shing, Yulo Kopa, or one of the many other exalted paradises, her utterly

vast and sacred presence was undeniably that of an unfathomable and highly advanced spiritual being. In this way, the above experience served to activate a deep, on-going archetypal process of exploration and discovery within myself while simultaneously revealing a wholly expanded sense of divine potential, one that points to the existence of greatly heightened celestial realms that are, in the Buddhist tradition, major steps forward along the path to final liberation. This experience is also highly suggestive of greatly expanded and autonomous archetypal domains as articulated in Jung's (1963) prodigious discoveries.

### **Jung at the Foot of Mt. Kailash**

No comparative study of the two disciplines would be complete without some mention of their mutual association with the esoteric phenomena of the *chakras*. Jung had received an initial exposure to this fundamental tenets of Hindu and Buddhist tantric practice through Woodroffe's (1918/2003) *The Serpent Power*, and it was through tantric yoga that "Jung discovered certain symbolic parallels with his own conception of psychic libido and with the general goal of psychic integration" (Clarke, 1994, p. 75). This discipline, which is especially prominent in the Tibetan tradition, appealed to Jung because it represented a system that integrated psychic and somatic factors, involved the manifestation of symbolic material indicative of the stages of spiritual development (as variously arising in the seven *chakras*, or vital energy centers), and was holistic in that it offered a "positive, life-affirming view of the body, the passions, and the shadowy regions of the psyche" (p. 111). In the activation of the *chakras* one again finds precepts common to both disciplines, as the attendant meditative techniques are designed to stimulate the female principle, or kundalini, and "to raise it from the lowest to the highest chakra, there to be united with the male principle, a union which brings about a state of supreme bliss beyond all dualities" (pp. 110-111).

The Tibetan Buddhist *chakra* system focuses upon bringing all of the subtle winds of the body into the central channel, thereby resulting in the realization of the clear light of bliss, or dharmakaya (Powers, 2007). In contrast to the Hindu system (which historically has posited as many as twelve *chakras*, although the predominant model espouses seven, to which Jung was exposed), the Tibetan system can involve seven or ten *chakras*, all of which are positioned along the central channel. The point of the third eye is the starting place for the central channel, and

from there it curves up to the crown of the head before continuing directly down the body to the tip of the sexual organ. This system can be further understood as follows:

The body contains seventy-two thousand energy channels, through which winds circulate. The most important ones are a central channel, which is roughly contiguous with the spine, and a left and right channel that wrap around the central channel at certain points and constrict the movements of winds in the channels. These constriction points are called *cakras* (*rtsa 'khor*, which literally means 'wheel.' (p. 284)

Jung (1963) felt that the extroverted nature of contemporary Westerners, with its focus on the primacy of exterior existence, had caused the broader culture to remain at the levels of the second and third chakras. These levels emphasize respectively the sexual nature of existence (in its procreative as opposed to transformational potentiality), as well as competition and conquest, especially in the financial, political, military spheres (Campbell, 1986/2003). And although all of the chakras play an important role in the process of human development, the last three levels are especially relevant to spiritual awakening in that “the uppermost three centers are of increasingly sublimated spiritual realizations” (p. 37). Campbell further suggested that the fifth center “is the *cakra* of ascetic, monkish disciplines. . . . Those who reach this level focus their energy into . . . work on one’s self, conquering one’s outward-going tendencies, turning all inward” (2003, p. 35). Jung himself described this level as involving “a full recognition of the psychical essences of substances as the fundamental essences of the world, and not by virtue of speculation but by virtue of experience” (quoted in Clarke, 1994, p. 115). This perspective exemplifies the core of Jung’s notion of the primacy of psychic reality, but he had little to say in relation to the two remaining levels. As outlined in chapter two, a number of contemporary scholars have speculated that Jung’s own experiential horizon did not allow him to adequately comprehend the Eastern principle of nondual awareness. In this sense he could not conceive of an egoless, unitary state that is liberated from the dualistic ego-Self relationship because, as he stated, “such an egoless mental condition can only be unconscious to us, for the simple reason that there would be nobody to witness it” (Jung, 1992a, p. 56).

Indeed, it warrants repeating that Jung considered the psychic stages represented by the last two *chakras*—especially the awakened non-dual state of the seventh *chakra*—to be levels that existed beyond any notion of human consciousness. And as stated previously, he referred to *chakra* six as a state in which “the ego disappears completely,” and he considered *chakra* seven



to be “beyond possible experience” (quoted in Clarke, 1994, p. 115). Thus, although his journey took him to considerable heights, from the standpoint of Tibetan Buddhist doctrine, and in the opinions of certain contemporary scholars, Jung’s path did not lead him to a spiritual ascent of genuine union beyond all opposites. Instead, he came to rest at the foot (i.e., the fifth *chakra*) of Mt. Kailash, where he stood gazing at its objectified, mythic proportions in a dualistic exchange between ego and Self, rather than merging with its unified, definitive totality (the framework of Jung’s binary developmental theory, especially as it relates to the psychic union of all opposites within this theoretical structure, is examined in the next chapter through the prism of transpersonal theory).

The most fundamental teachings of Tibetan Buddhism assert that not only are these two upper levels of the *chakras* attainable, but that the seventh *chakra*, as the very mode of dharmakaya itself, represents one’s true nature as all-encompassing, undifferentiated, nondual awareness. This signifies an ecstatic, unitary, timeless state that defies all rational conception, “representing a rapture beyond any god known as of a name or form” (Campbell, 1986/2002, p. 37). For it is at the level of the seventh *chakra* that “both the beheld image and the beholding mind dissolve together in a blaze that is at once of nonbeing and of being” (p. 39). This is the unrivaled, incomparable vision from the summit of the World Mountain, the ultimate horizon from which all is one and where the separate *I* vanishes, not into the oblivion of the unconscious as Jung believed, but into the eternal light of supreme spiritual realization.

The meditative practices of Tibetan Tantra are designed to induce psychic development toward this indomitable state, and the mythic image itself stands “at the threshold of passage from time to eternity, which is in fact the plane of reference of the metaphors of myth”

(Campbell, 1986/2002, p. 40). Concurrent with this perspective is the understanding that,

this threshold is . . . the place of the sacred in its archetypal and symbolic manifestations. On this threshold we come into relationship with the power of archetypal intent, the forces that can shape our lives. The tantric deity occupies a central place on this threshold as a personification of that intent. . . . Awakening our relationship to the sacred on this level has a profound influence upon our lives, because the deity is the vehicle or channel through which the power of dharma manifests. (Preece, 2006, p. 137)

This threshold can be seen as the boundary between temporal, dualistic, manifest existence and the eternal, nondual, formless nature of dharmakaya, and it is the various practices of tantra,

and more specifically tantric meditation, or mahamudra, that “enable a meditator to cultivate a quality of emptiness with appearance” (Preece, 2006, pp. 132-133). These exercises are intended to soften our psychosomatic boundaries, thus gradually diminishing the sense of division between one’s solidified sense of separate identity and the exterior environment. Ultimately this transformation reveals a dynamic alchemical process, one that serves to “make a crystal of our minds, so that there is no separation between inner and outer” (Tarhang, 1978/1990, p. 30). Liberation is thus achieved through the dissolution of a separate ego and the luminous union of observer and observed, a process that in Highest Yoga Tantra (as the final stage of practice) reveals itself as follows:

The meditator experiences the first taste of dharmakaya as clear light awareness dissolves into nonduality like a clear sky, or a drop of water dissolving into the ocean. Once this experience arises, buddhahood, it is said, is possible within this lifetime, and practitioners with this quality of awareness can, within their present bodies, complete the final stages of unification. (Preece, 2006, p. 230)

Tarhang Tulku, founder of the Nyingma Institute in Berkeley, California, described this vital process of unification as one that,

involves meaning which reveals itself not in words or concepts, but in the quality of our lives, in the intrinsic beauty and value of all things. When our actions arise naturally from a celebration of living, all concepts drop away. We become meaning itself, enlightened by all existence. (1978/1990, p. 116)

In summary, Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Jungian depth psychology each represent a complex system of psycho-spiritual transformation, and each views the human mind, or psyche, as the primary instrument through which the transcendence of duality is achieved (for Jung, this overcoming of opposites remains a goal that is never fully achieved, whereas in Tibetan Buddhism nonduality is conceived as a reachable goal—and the ultimate destiny—of all sentient beings). And it is precisely this experience of transcendence that is variously facilitated in both methodologies through the creative use of mythic imagery. Spiritual awakening thus exists as the ultimate aim in both disciplines, a process that is intended, in Jungian terms, to lead the individual “from the ego to the Self, from the unconscious to consciousness, from the personal to the transpersonal, the holy, the realization that the macrocosm is being mirrored in the microcosm of the human psyche” (Moacanin, 2003, p. 67). In the Tibetan tradition, the path of

liberation is understood as leading to an awakening to one's true nature—the primordial, all-pervasive, inherently empty, nondual, clear light of bliss.

Further, although from a Tibetan Buddhist perspective and in the view of many modern commentators, Jung's understanding of spiritual liberation did not rise to the same level as revealed in Tibetan Buddhism, he nonetheless made a profound and lasting contribution to the East-West dialogue while elucidating many of contemporary Western culture's most pressing issues. Foremost among these in his mind was the need for humanity to return to its inner roots, to reconnect with the powerful and ever-present psychic structures that guide the process of human development. These archetypal structures reveal an inscrutable variety of entities and dimensions, the ultimate nature of which remains a profound mystery and an important subject for further inquiry. But whether they exist as autonomous dimensions, psychic projections, or some variable that has yet to be properly enunciated, the precepts and experiential findings of these two vibrant disciplines clearly suggest that psychic engagement with the sacred mythic imagery of the human mind represents an essential means of promoting psycho-spiritual growth and reconciliation. And in deeply considering this profound inner process, one is reminded of the judicious counsel of Lama Govinda, who stressed that "such penetration and transformation is only possible through the compelling power of inner vision, whose primordial images or 'archetypes' are the formative principles of our mind" (1969, p. 91).

A number of similarities and distinctions exist between the two systems, and often it was the very nature of certain distinctions that provided Jung with important material for his own hypotheses, including his theory of introversion and extroversion. In Jung's (1963) thinking, the extroverted tendency of the West is most readily exemplified by its exaggerated emphasis upon rationalism and scientific materialism (at the expense of contact with the archetypal unconscious), and he was greatly concerned that this imbalance had greatly diminished contemporary Western humanity's sense of inner meaning, resulting in a deeply engrained spiritual malaise. This pervasive disconnection from the core of one's inner world is a primary theme of many Tibetan masters as well, including Sogyal Rinpoche (1994), who described this condition as "perhaps the darkest and most disturbing aspect of modern civilization—the ignorance and repression of who we really are" (p. 52).

Both traditions are primarily concerned, then, with a proper understanding of the nature and workings of the human mind, and the depth and clarity of this understanding is thought to have a direct correlation to both spiritual development and the cessation of psychic suffering. It warrants mention, however, that whereas in the Tibetan tradition the achievement of enlightenment is accompanied by an end to suffering, for Jung (1963) the process of individuation involves an endless course of development in which suffering remains an unceasing—and even necessary—component. The contrast between Tibetan Tantra’s nondual approach to liberation and Jung’s dualistic/relational path to individuation is explored in greater depth in the next chapter through the framework of contemporary transpersonal theory. Such primary themes as spiritual evolution, mythic realms and entities, and the primacy of psychic reality are also examined.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THROUGH THE LENS OF TRANSPERSONAL THEORY

#### The Emergence of Contemporary Transpersonal Thought

The transpersonal movement grew out of the field of humanistic psychology in the mid-1960s, and was initiated in an effort to expand the focus of inquiry beyond the individual self and toward experiences of a trans-egoic and trans-human nature (Ferrer, 2002). Its development was fostered by a group of pioneering psychologists and psychiatrists such as Abraham Maslow (1976), Stanislav Grof (1976), and Anthony Sutich (1969), and was further complimented by the contributions of D. T. Suzuki (1964), Alan Watts (1961), Haridas Chaudhuri (1978), and other exponents of Eastern esotericism. This diverse and progressive spiritual movement thus,

emerged out of the encounter between Western psychology—psychoanalytic, Jungian, humanistic, and existential schools in particular—Eastern contemplative traditions—especially Zen, Advaita Vedanta, and Taoism—and the psychedelic counter-culture of California in the 1960s. . . . Another important catalyst of the transpersonal movement was the introduction of Tibetan Buddhism to the West by teachers such as Chogyam Trungpa, founder of the Naropa Institute in Boulder, and Tarthang Tulku, prime mover of the translation of numerous Tibetan works into English. (pp. 5-6).

The transpersonal orientation has consequently received its impetus from a wide array of psychological and spiritual disciplines, and this in turn has fostered a number of often divergent theories and disagreements among the movements leading figures (Ferrer, 2002). Such fundamental issues as the epistemology and ontology of transpersonal phenomena, the underlying meaning and ultimate source of spiritual experience, and the nature of reality itself have elicited a range of varying interpretations. Arguably the most prominent influence on transpersonal theory to date has been the metaphysical outlook of the perennial philosophy, especially “the two versions of perennialism most widely accepted in transpersonal scholarship: Grof’s Neo-Advaitin perennial philosophy and Wilber’s structuralist neoperennialism” (p. 72). The historical development and underlying theoretical basis of this discipline can be understood as follows:

The idea of the perennial philosophy (*philosophia perennis*) has received different articulations throughout the history of Western philosophy. The search for a universal, permanent, and all-encompassing philosophy can be traced to the Neoplatonism of Philosophy of Alexandria or the Platonic-Christian synthesis of St. Augustine. . . . The modern notion of a perennial philosophy should be regarded as a product of the ecumenical

interest of the Christian tradition in the Neoplatonic Renaissance . . . In finding unity and harmony amidst a multiplicity of conflicting world views. Throughout the history of philosophy, the term perennial philosophy or *philosophia perennis* was also used as a synonym for Scholasticism and Thomism; as the final goal of philosophy by Leibniz; as the regulative idea of philosophical practice by Jaspers; and as a world philosophy, synthesis of East and West, by Radhakrishnan. . . . Common to all of these conceptions, however, is the idea that a philosophical current that has endured through centuries, and that is able to integrate harmoniously all traditions in terms of a single Truth which underlies the apparent plurality of world views. (p. 73)

Concurrent with the adoption of the perennial metaphysics by the transpersonal movement has been the focus upon the arising of mystical states (e.g., Maslow's *peak-experiences*) as reflecting individual intra-subjective consciousness, a process in which spiritual phenomena are conceived "in terms of inner experiences" (Ferrer, 2002, p. 38). The occurrence of these expanded states is at times aligned with hierarchical structures, or levels, of spiritual stages or development (e.g., the sambhogakaya and dharmakaya stages) that are directly involved in the procurement of specific types of transpersonal experience. The notion of spiritual involution and evolution, especially as inspired by the work of the Indian sage Sri Aurobindo (1949/1990), also plays an important role in what is conceived as a process of personal and collective evolution transpiring here on Earth. This involves the notion of Spirit, in the course of physical incarnation, as "forgetting" its original nature, of "getting lost in involution and then evolving back—from matter to prana to mind to overmind to supermind" (Wilber, 1981/1996, p. 330). These stages are seen in evolutionary terms as representing increasingly higher intensities of psycho-spiritual awareness that lead back to the source, and the various dimensions and attendant levels of consciousness that constitute this system are referred to as the *Great Chain of Being*. In the midst of Spirit's initial manifestation in physical form,

all the higher levels, up to and including Spirit, are thus rendered unconscious. And the sum of these higher but unconscious structures is simply the *ground unconscious*. In the ground unconscious, the Ursprung, there exist all the higher structures in a potential form, ready to unfold into actuality, or emerge in consciousness. Involution then, is the enfolding or in-turning of the higher structures into successively lower ones, and evolution is the subsequent unfolding into actuality of the enfolded potential. (pp. 317-318)

Another prominent theoretical system that has arisen in this field in the last two decades is the *participatory vision* (or *participatory turn*), which promotes a dramatic reorientation of the

essential tenets of transpersonal theory (Ferrer, 2002). This movement can be traced in part to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century proponents of Romanticism, who proposed that,

the cognitive categories of the human mind were in some sense the ontological categories of the universe—i.e., that human knowledge did not point to a divine reality but was itself that reality—and on that basis constructed a metaphysical system with a universal Mind revealing itself through man. (p. 351)

Richard Tarnas (1991) outlines the epistemological basis that grew out of this progressive historical development in the following passage:

The participatory epistemology, developed in different ways by Goethe, Hegel, Steiner, and others, can be understood not as a regression to naïve *participation mystique*, but as the dialectical synthesis of the long evolution from the primordial undifferentiated consciousness through the dualistic alienation. It incorporates the postmodern understanding of knowledge and yet goes beyond it. The interpretive and constructive character of human cognition is fully acknowledged, but the intimate, interpenetrating and all-permeating relationship of nature to the human being and human mind allows the Kantian consequence of epistemological alienation to be entirely overcome. (pp. 434-435)

From this standpoint, “the relation of the human mind to the world was ultimately not dualistic but participatory” (Tarnas, 1991, p. 433). In addition, human existence could be understood “as an expression of nature’s essential being” in which “within its own depths the imagination directly contacts the creative process within nature, realizes that process within itself, and brings nature’s reality to conscious expression” (p. 434). Thus, in a transpersonal context, the participatory vision “reframes this experiential dimension as the participation of in individual in a transpersonal event” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 116), which contrasts with the notion of purely individual, intra-subjective experiences. This distinction is further emphasized in the following passage:

What the participatory vision radically rejects is the anthropocentric, and ultimately egocentric, move to infer from this participation that transpersonal phenomena are essentially human inner experiences. As virtually all mystical traditions maintain, spiritual phenomena are not to be understood merely in phenomenological terms, but rather as stemming from human participation in spheres of being and awareness that transcend the merely human. (pp. 116-117)

The participatory vision also conceives that “the expression *transpersonal experience* automatically configures transpersonal phenomena in terms of an experiencing subject in relation to objects of experience,” which in turn “reifies both a Cartesian subject and a Cartesian object”

(Ferrer, 2002, p. 33). This dualistic approach stands in direct opposition to the very essence of transpersonal phenomena, which often manifest in unitary form that abolishes the subject-object dichotomy. Further, human consciousness is not seen as a passive observer in this process, but rather is conceived as being engaged in a process of dynamic spiritual disclosure, working in “communion and co-creative participation” (p. 121) with the Mystery in a manner that emphasizes qualities of transformative knowing. Tarnas (1991) articulates this notion in his suggestion that “these subjective principles are in fact an expression of the world’s own being, and that the human mind is ultimately the organ of the world’s own process of self-revelation” (p. 434). According to Ferrer (2002), such an understanding thus necessitates,

a shift from intrasubjective experiences to participatory events which can be equally understood in both experiential and epistemic terms. Human participation in transpersonal phenomena is a creative, multidimensional event that can involve every aspect of human nature, from somatic transfiguration to the awakening of the heart, from erotic communion to visionary co-creation, and from contemplative knowing to moral insight. (p. 12)

The above passage, with its concerted emphasis upon the psychosomatic, co-creative, contemplative, and multidimensional aspects of participatory spirituality, provides conspicuous links to tantric practice. As David Gordon White suggested, the precepts of tantra include “the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy,” and that tantric practice “seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways” (quoted in Kripal, 2007, p. 19). Within the participatory vision, Ferrer (2002) proposed that such emancipatory aspects also serve to liberate the transpersonal field from Cartesian dualism while offering a more pluralistic and unrestricted view of spiritual mystery:

The emphasis on participatory knowing liberates transpersonal studies from their tacit commitment to a Cartesian epistemology and situates them in greater alignment with the goals of the spiritual quest, which has traditionally aimed at the attainment, not of special experiences or altered states, but of liberating discernment and practical wisdom. In addition, this move releases transpersonal studies from its restraining empiricist moorings and paves the way for the articulation of an *emancipatory epistemology* that anchors the validity of spiritual knowledge, not on its matching pre-given spiritual realities but on its liberating power for self and world. . . . The participatory turn overcomes the essentialism and reductionism of the perennial philosophy by conceiving of a plurality of potentially overlapping but independently valid spiritual liberations and ultimates, which are enacted through human creative participation in an always dynamic and indeterminate spiritual power. (p. 185)



There are certain notable differences, then, between the perennial and participatory approaches to the understanding of transpersonal phenomena. However, despite these varying conceptions and theories, the most significant and unifying elements of the field of transpersonal psychology remains the manner in which this discipline “has given spirituality a central place in our understanding of human nature and the cosmos,” as well as the focus upon “Spirit as not only the essence of human nature, but also the ground, pull, and goal of cosmic evolution” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 7). Indeed, both the perennial and participatory orientations have made substantial contributions in this regard, and the developments in their respective outlooks have been fostered by preeminent thinkers and spiritual practitioners to such an extent that the now animated debate between these two disciplines is likely to continue for some time. In this regard, Ferrer suggested that “the dialectic between universalism and pluralism, between the One and the Many, displays what may well be the deepest dynamics of the self-disclosing of Spirit” (p.191). He further proposed that “from perennialist universalisms to the emerging spiritual plurality of interfaith dialogue, Spirit seems to swing from one to the other pole, from One to the Many, and from the Many to the One, endlessly striving to more fully manifest, embody, and embrace love and wisdom in all its forms” (p. 191). In the spirit of this mutually supportive stance, this study does not attempt to privilege one viewpoint over the other, but rather seeks to integrate the pertinent aspects of such approaches in an effort to elucidate the ways in which the psychic phenomena and transformative effects of mythic imagery—as previously enunciated in the Jungian and Tibetan tantric traditions—have been interpreted and applied within the context of contemporary transpersonal theory.

### **Two Developmental Paradigms**

Among the various theories that have arisen in the transpersonal field, there are two developmental paradigms that are especially relevant to the traditions in this comparative study. The first, Wilber’s (2001) *structural-hierarchal* model, has already been introduced above, and its focus on the Buddhist notion of *no-self* and nondual awareness (as the ultimate form of spiritual transcendence) places it in alignment with the precepts of Tibetan Buddhism. On the other side of the spectrum is the *dynamic-dialectic* paradigm of Michael Washburn (1995), which posits a “bipolar constitution to the psyche” that “involves the interplay between two psychic poles” (p. 9), namely the ego and the *Dynamic Ground* (with the latter term being

akin to Jung's Self). Washburn's system is largely predicated on Jungian theory, and, as with Wilber's model, places strong emphasis on the importance of mythic imagery and archetypal processes in psycho-spiritual development.

An in-depth explication of their particular tenets and hypotheses is beyond the scope of this study, but a brief outline of such aspects is provided below not only as a means of demonstrating their respective associations to Tibetan Tantra and Jungian psychology but also to provide further elaboration on the fundamental practices and precepts of these two disciplines. To begin with, Wilber's (2001) model applies structurally oriented psychology within the framework of hierarchically oriented metaphysics. He further posits the emergence and development of consciousness (from biological birth to ultimate liberation) in three primary stages: the *subconscious*, which pertains to the pre-personal condition of infancy; the self-conscious, which relates to states of egoic consciousness; and the superconscious, which corresponds to levels of transpersonal development and ultimate liberation, or enlightenment. These three basic lines of development proceed, one level at a time, through ascending structural tiers, and are integrated into the psycho-spiritual stages of the *chakra* system, with its clear and unmistakable association to Buddhist Tantra:

Kundalini power--consciousness itself--is said to begin its evolution at the base of the spine, in what is called the first chakra, a chakra that represents earth, matter, and food. In short, the uroboros. From that low estate, it evolves up the spine through successively higher chakras. The second and third chakras represent emotions, sexuality, and power (the typhon); the fourth represents love and belongingness (membership); the fifth, verbal knowledge and beginning of self-reflexiveness (verbal membership and beginning of mental-egoic). At the sixth chakra, consciousness enters the psychic realm (level 5). The sixth chakra is 'located' between and behind the eyebrows—the 'third eye' of the psychics. The seventh chakra—the crown chakra, located at and beyond the crown of the head represents higher transcendence, Light and Oneness (level 6), which, when fully matured, passes beyond all chakras, high and low, into radical emptiness (level 7/8). (Wilber, 1981/1996, p. 151)

According to Wilber (2001), this highest level (nondual emptiness) is bordered by the archetypal realm, which plays a vital role in the process of involution/evolution:

The entire manifest world arises out of the Formless (or casual Abyss), and the first forms to do so are the forms upon which all others will rest—they are the 'arch-forms' or archetypes. Thus, in this use, the archetypes are the highest Forms of our own possibilities, the deepest Forms of our own potentials—but also the last barriers to the Formless and Nondual. As the first (and earliest) forms in involution or manifestation (or movement

away from the casual Source), the archetypes are the last (and highest) forms in evolution or return to Source. As the forms right on the edge of the formless, they are the first form the soul embraces as it contracts in the face of infinity and hides its own true nature; but they are also, for just that reason, the highest beacons on the way back to the Formless, and the final barrier to be deconstructed on the edge of a radiant infinity. (p. 240)

Washburn's (1995) model, on the other hand, posits the existence of a dualistic relationship between the ego and the Dynamic Ground, although his model also conceives of human development as progressing "along triphasic (preegoic, egoic, and transegoic) lines" (pp. 9-10). He outlined the other key distinctions between the dynamic-dialectical and structural hierarchical models as follows:

Although both of the transpersonal paradigms here under consideration divide development along broad triphasic lines, they diverge considerably in their interpretations of what triphasic development is really about. The dynamic-dialectical paradigm interprets triphasic development as a dialectically spiraling movement of departure, return, and higher synthesis played out between the ego and the Dynamic Ground. The structural-hierarchical paradigm, on the other hand, interprets triphasic development as a step-by-step climb up a psychic ladder. (p.11)

Washburn (1995) further emphasized his theory of the binary constitution of the psyche in the following passage, which clearly demonstrates Jung's extensive influence:

The bipolar conception divides the psyche into egoic and nonionic poles. The egoic pole is the seat of the ego, of ego functions (reality testing, self-control, reflective self-awareness, operational cognition, and of personal, that is, biographical experience. In contrast, the nonionic pole is the seat of the Dynamic Ground, (libido, psychic energy, numinous power of spirit), of somatic, instinctual, affective, and creative-imaginal potentials, and of collective (inherited) memories, complexes, and archetypes. . . . The bipolar structure, then, encompasses many of the most basic dualities of life: form and dynamism, mind and body, thoughts and feeling, logic and creativity, self-control and spontaneity. (p.11)

This focus on a dualist structure, however, in no way precludes an emphasis on the reconciliation of opposites. Jung, like Washburn (1995), integrated the tantric *chakra* system into his theory, though arguably Washburn's conception surpasses that of Jung in that his model aligns his stage of *integration* (the highest form of human development) with the psychic union that occurs when the highest *chakra* is activated:

According to Tantrism, the regeneration process begins when the so-called serpent power (*kundalini*) is awakened. This power—conceived here as the power of the Ground in its instinctual and unconscious organization (libido)—is said to lie latent at the base of the spine until it is aroused into activity by means of ascetic and meditative practices. Upon

being aroused, *kundalini* manifests itself as the sacred transformative power, *shakti*—conceived here as the power of the Ground in its expression as liberated spirit. . . . The ascent of *shakti* continues until the entire body-mind has been awakened and purified, at which point, it is said, the goddess Shakti unites with her consort Shiva at the crown of the head. At this point the person undergoing transformation is said to experience the highest type of spiritual absorption. (p. 204)

This ultimate form of spiritual absorption is aligned by Washburn (1995) with his stage of *integration*, the pinnacle of human development in which the ego and the Dynamic Ground become fully unified and thus “the psyche becomes a completely harmonious duality, a *coincidentia oppositorum*” (p. 231). This is not the nondual state of the clear light of emptiness (i.e., *no-self*) found in the Tibetan tradition and in Wilber’s model, but rather a state of oneness that is achieved within the bipolar structure itself (something that, as outlined in chapter four, Jung was unable to fully conceive). Washburn’s model thus arguably brings Jung’s system to its logical conclusion, a level of final ascent in which union with the World Mountain (i.e., the Self, or Dynamic Ground) is achieved. Washburn used Patanjali’s objectless ecstasy as a means of illustrating this point:

Patanjali indicates that objectless ecstasy (*asamprajnata samadhi*) is a real possibility, although he allows that this kind of *samadhi* is a higher and rarer attainment than object-centered *samadhi* or, as he calls it, *samadhi* ‘with support’ (*samprajnata samadhi*). In the case of objectless ecstasy, *samadhi* is usually achieved by employing and then dropping a support. By these means the power of the Ground is drawn into the ego’s subjective space and the ego in turn is drawn into this power, becoming absorbed in it as a pure power cathexis independent of any cathexis object. An ecstasy thus ensues that transcends not only self-reference but reference to objects as well. A dynamic Void, or rather plenum, is created. The ego becomes one with the power of the Ground and experiences a state of subjected-objectless spiritual dynamism. (p. 236-237).

As with Wilber’s model, this process of spiritual transformation is accompanied by the manifestation of numinous mythic imagery, the *visionary knowing* (as previously outlined by Guenther) that arises or is projected in creative meditation, through dreams, in spontaneous visions, and in the direct realization of the world as a truly integrated whole. In this sense, “visionary symbols are responses to the ego’s own contemplative explorations. . . . The integrated ego . . . understands full well that the images and insights issuing from this process are products of the psyche’s own resources” (Washburn, 1995, p. 239).

## The Pioneering Work of Stanislav Grof

The theme of visionary knowing that is so central to this study is especially well represented in the work of one of the movement's founders, Stanislav Grof. For more than half a century, Grof's (1998, 2000) seminal research and theoretical postulations pertaining to clinical, psychedelic, psychotherapeutic, and holotropic (his term for transpersonal) phenomena have arguably served as the most prominent cornerstone of this still emerging field. Although he has integrated a wide variety of psychological perspectives into his work, Jung's depth psychology has been especially influential, and so too have various aspects of Eastern esotericism, including Tibetan Buddhism. His explorations of the developmental and therapeutic effects of nonordinary states of consciousness have been particularly compelling, and he has developed a metaphysical outlook that constitutes a broad integration of first-hand accounts of mystical experience with the contemplative practices, mythological themes, cosmological perspectives, and archetypal symbols of both East and West.

Grof (2000) constructed a cartography of the human psyche that includes three primary realms, which include the *biographical* (one's usual experience and memories), the *perinatal* (relating to the trauma of biological birth), and the *transpersonal* (which refers to a wide array of mystical and non-ordinary states). This third category has particular relevance to the heightened states that are emphasized in both the Tibetan tradition and in Jungian psychology, and according to Grof these holotropic modes of being strongly suggest that "human consciousness is part of and participates in a larger universal field of cosmic consciousness that permeates all of existence" (p. xi). His transpersonal model classifies holotropic experiences as belonging to three primary categories. He refers to the first category as *Experiential Extension within Space-Time and Consensus Reality*, which includes experiences of transcendence beyond spatial boundaries that can involve,

experiences of merging with another person into a state that can be called 'dual unity,' assuming the identity of another person, or identifying with the consciousness of an entire group of people, such as the mothers of the world. . . . Our consciousness can even expand to such an extent that it seeks to encompass all of humanity. . . . In a similar way, we can transcend the limits of the specifically human experience and identify with the consciousness of various animals, plants . . . or the whole material universe. (p. 57)

Grof (2000) further specified that “other transpersonal experiences in this first category are characterized primarily by overcoming of temporal rather than spatial boundaries, by transcendence of linear time” (p. 59). This category thus represents phenomena in which,

we can experience episodes from the lives of our human or animal ancestors, or even those that seem to be coming from the racial and collective unconscious, as described by C. G. Jung. Quite frequently, experiences that seem to be happening in other cultures and historical periods are associated with a sense of personal remembering, a convinced feeling of *déjà vu* or *déjà vecu*. People then talk about reliving of memories from past lives, from previous incarnations. (p. 59)

This transcendence of spatial and temporal boundaries presents a number of intriguing correlations to specific underlying precepts of both Jungian theory and Tibetan Tantra. For example, the experiences of racial remembrance and identification with archetypal constellations are (as described above) clearly linked to Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious, and the reliving of past lives presents an obvious link to Buddhism’s tenet of reincarnation (and to Jung’s related speculations in the last years of his life). In addition, the descriptions of direct identification with other sentient beings or with the universe at large effectively suggest a correlation to Jung’s notion of *unus mundus* and Buddhism’s One Mind.

Many further correlations can be found in Grof’s (2000) second category of holotropic phenomena, which is referred to as *Experiential Extension beyond Space-Time and Consensus Reality*: He notes that this range of transpersonal experiences is, to the modern mindset, even stranger than the first in that,

our consciousness can extend into realms and dimensions that the Western industrial culture does not consider to be ‘real.’ Here belong numerous visions of our identification with archetypal beings, deities and demons of various cultures, and visits to fantastic mythological landscapes. In this context, we can attain intuitive understanding of universal symbols, such as the cross, the Nile cross or *ankh*, the swastika, the pentacle, the six-pointed star, or the ying-yang sign. We can also experience encounters and communication with discarnate and suprahuman entities, spirit guides, extraterrestrial beings, or inhabitants of parallel universes. (p. 62)

The examples in the above passage immediate correlations can be drawn the archetypal entities of Jungian psychology and the deities and multiple universes of the Tibetan tradition. The notion of universal symbols also has a clear presence in both disciplines, and the notion of suprahuman entities and spirit-guides mentioned above can be readily linked to Jung’s contact

with numerous archetypal figures (especially Philemon) and the Tibetan Tantra's conception of the *yidam* and other such entities. The existence of inhabitants of parallel universes is also an essential tenet of Tibetan Buddhist cosmology.

Other psychic phenomena belonging to Grof's (2000) second category involve identification with a supreme spiritual principle that may variously manifest as of one of humanity's great religious icons, and this may even include contact with "religious symbolism and mythical motifs that were previously unknown to the person involved" (p. 65). He further suggested that "observations of this kind confirm C. G. Jung's idea that, besides the Freudian individual unconscious, we can also gain access to the collective unconscious that contains the cultural heritage of all humanity" (p. 65). In addition, Grof proposed that this spiritual principle can manifest in what appears to be its ultimate form, the cosmic Void. Buddhism's fundamental association with the precept of the Void poses an obvious parallel in this sense, as outlined in the following passage:

In its farthest reaches, our consciousness can transcend all boundaries and identify with Cosmic Consciousness or the Universal Mind known under many different names: Brahman, Buddha, the Cosmic Christ, Keter, Allah, the Tao, the Great Spirit, and many others. The ultimate of all experiences appears to be identification with the Supracosmic and Metacosmic Void, the mysterious and primordial emptiness and nothingness that is conscious of itself and is the ultimate cradle of all existence. It contains no concrete content, yet it contains all there is in a germinal and potential form. (pp. 62-63)

The third category in Grof's (2000) cartography is referred to as *Transpersonal Experiences of Psychoid Nature*, and includes such phenomena as synchronicities, spontaneous psychoid events, and intentional psychokinesis. He describes this category as follows:

This group includes situations in which intrapsychic experiences are associated with corresponding events in the outer world (or, better, in consensus reality) that are meaningfully related to them. Psychoid experiences cover a wide range from synchronicities, spiritual healing, and ceremonial magic to psychokinesis and other mind-over-matter phenomena known from the yogic literature as *siddhis*. (p. 63)

Here the conspicuous link with Jung's theory of synchronicity is self-evident, and the references to ceremonial magic and other such phenomena present an obvious correlation to the practices of Tibetan Tantra. Grof (2000) notes that such phenomena "have many strange characteristics that shatter the most fundamental metaphysical assumptions of the materialistic worldview of the Newtonian-Cartesian paradigm" p. 63). In attempting to comprehend this

mysterious interrelationship between psyche and matter, he suggested that “somewhere on the perinatal level of the psyche, a strange experiential switch seems to occur: what was up to that point deep intrapsychic probing becomes an extrasensory experience of various aspects of the universe at large” (p. 63). He further concluded that,

these observations confirm the basic tenet of some esoteric systems, such as Tantra . . . according to which each of us is a microcosm containing in a mysterious way the entire universe. In the mystical texts, this was expressed by such phrases as ‘as above, so below’ or ‘as without, so within.’ (pp. 63-64)

### *Psychic Projections or Autonomous Dimensions?*

In light of the many compelling parallels outlined above, the findings of Grof’s (1998, 2000) seminal research seem to bring a notable degree of clarity and confirmation to many of the essential tenets of both Jungian depth psychology and Tibetan Buddhist Tantra. This includes the distinction between psychic projections and autonomous dimensions and the various forms of experiential phenomena that can accompany these states. The phenomena of timelessness, or the eternal present, is of course of primary importance in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and is also characterized by Jung as being a distinctive feature of the unconscious. As previously outlined, this state can be effected through the various creative and contemplative practices emphasized in both disciplines, which is sometimes accompanied (especially in the Tibetan tradition) by contact with other experiential dimensions. Certain examples provided in previous chapters are revisited here through various lenses of contemporary transpersonal theory in order to further explore their ontological nature and relevance to human spiritual development.

Although traditional Buddhist orthodoxy stresses the precept of no-self and denies the existence of an individual soul, at the same time its cosmology posits the existence of various spiritual dimensions and ethereal entities that are considered to be more than mere psychic projections (Thongdup, 2005). They are thought to possess their own independent existence and to inhabit innumerable planes and universes. Further, the presence of various spiritual forces that are commonly classified within the category of animism remains an integral part of Buddhist cosmology, as outlined by Govinda (1960) in his foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*:

Animism permeates all Buddhist texts, wherein every tree and grove, and every locality, is held to have its own peculiar deities; and the Buddha is represented as discoursing with gods and other spiritual beings, inhabiting the Earth and the realms beyond, as if it were a most natural procedure. Only a completely intellectualized and Westernized Buddhism,



which attempts to separate the thought-content of Buddhism from its equally profound mythological elements, can deny this animistic background and with it the metaphysical foundations of Buddhism. (p. lvii)

These various dimensions are inhabited by other conscious entities of widely varying qualities, which the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama summarized as follows:

Basically we can say there are different worlds, different experiences; human life is just one of them. What we usually call spirits are some different form of life, beings who have a different body and mentality. Within the desire realm, and more specifically within the environment inhabited by human beings, there is quite a variety of other entities. . . . And they're all cohabitating with us right here. (Quoted in Varela, 1997, p. 141)

In this context, it is fascinating to note that Tibetans consider dakas and dakinis to exist as definitive and very powerful spiritual entities who inhabit the above land centers in “a dimension of reality known as Khacho Shing, the Pure Land of the Dakinis, a realm closely related to our own, yet more subtle and more intimately connected to the elemental forces of nature” (Preece, 2006, p. 248). This connection to the energies of the Earth and to specific land centers serves a vital function in the process of creative meditation (as described previously), and the methods employed (which include activation of the connecting *chakra* centers) are designed to effect a psychic merging with various expanded dimensions. There exist many stories in Tibetan Buddhist literature, for example, that tell of “meditators who leave their bodies for days at a time to travel through the invisible world” (Thongdup, 2005, p. 6). These practitioners, who are known as *delogs*, then “come back to their bodies to record their extraordinary journeys, which could span the lowest rungs of hell and the sublime pure lands” (p. 6). One captivating account of just such a journey—replete with sacred mythic entities and imagery—is revealed in the following experience of a young Tibetan woman:

Dawa Drolma felt that she moved through the sky, soaring like a vulture. She found herself in the manifested pure land of Guru Rinpoche, the buddha in the form a realized master. There was a boundlessly vast field. In the center she saw a giant red rock mountain in the shape of a heart. The mountain was surrounded by many sharp, sword-like mountains, all shining with a reddish color. The sky was adorned with a canopy of five-colored rainbow light. All kinds of beautiful birds were singing and playing joyfully. The ground was covered with flowers of all kinds and colors. The whole atmosphere was filled with an amazing sweet fragrance that overwhelmed all her senses. There was also a blue mountain, as if made of sapphire. These were not vague appearances, but vivid images with real presence. . . . In the middle of the mountain, she saw the inconceivable palace of Guru Rinpoche called the Lotus of Light. The palace was the enlightened wisdom of Guru

Rinpoche himself, spontaneously appearing in the form of a luminous mansion of light. . . . This pure land was filled with masters, dakas, and dakinis. . . . Accompanied by White Tara, Dawa Drolma entered into another inconceivably beautiful palace, made as if of red crystal. . . . In the middle of a great hall, Dawa Drolma saw an enormous throne—higher, it seemed to her, than a three-story building. . . . On that throne she beheld the amazing presence of Guru Rinpoche, Padmasambhava, the embodiment of the wisdom, compassion, and power of the enlightened ones. . . . Dawa Drolma drew closer to the throne and touched her forehead to the feet of Guru Rinpoche. . . . Guru Rinpoche bestowed upon her empowerments and blessings. With great compassion, he said . . . ‘Tell people what you saw and entreat them to pursue virtue’ . . . Then White Tara led Dawa Drolma to the hell realms. Dawa Drolma journeyed through the experiences of the bardo. She saw the Dharma King of the Lords of the Dead in wrathful and terrifying form in his Court of Judgment. . . . She also saw the results of karmic effects and the severity of sufferings of the hell realms with her naked eyes, so she would be able to teach more effectively on her return to the world of the living. . . . White Tara then took Dawa Drolma to visit Potala, the pure land of Avalokiteshvara, and Yulo Kopa, the pure land of Tara, before returning to the human world. . . . Dawa Drolma spent the rest of her life teaching Dharma based on her delog experiences and totally devoting her life to the service of others. . . . In 1941, at the age of thirty-two, she died. . . . People witnessed many miracles at the time of her death and cremation. She and her delog accounts inspired the hearts of many people in many parts of Eastern Tibet to believe in the law of karma and rebirth. That in turn awakened a kinder nature in many. (pp. 151-155)

In considering the ontological nature of such an account, it must be remembered that such realms and deities hold an exalted position in Buddhist cosmology, and are held to be considerably more *real* than the earthly plane itself. This notion has a fascinating correlation to Grof ‘s (1998) transpersonal findings, which has revealed the existence of an immense array of spiritual realms and experiential dimensions that lie beyond the perception of ordinary waking consciousness. His findings also assert the existence of two forms of ultimate reality. He refers to the first form as *Absolute Consciousness*, and he designates the second form as *Cosmic Emptiness*, or the *Void*. Absolute Consciousness represents the supreme creative principle (which is responsible for the creation of manifest existence), and this creative principle is thought to co-exist with, and emanate from, the great Void:

When we encounter the Void, we feel that it is primordial emptiness of cosmic proportions and relevance. We become pure consciousness aware of this absolute nothingness; however, at the same time, we have a strange paradoxical sense of its essential fullness. . . . While it does not contain anything in a concrete manifest form, it seems to comprise all of existence in potential form. . . . The Void transcends the usual categories of space and time, and lies beyond all dichotomies and polarities, such as light and darkness, good and evil . . . agony and ecstasy, singularity and plurality, form and emptiness, and even existence and nonexistence. . . This metaphysical vacuum, pregnant with potential for everything there

is, appears to be the cradle of all being, the ultimate source of existence. The creation of all phenomenal worlds is then the realization and concretization of its pre-existing potentialities. (p. 30)

The above passage addresses a number of primary themes in Buddhist cosmology, including the Void as primordial emptiness, the reconciliation and union of opposites (one is immediately reminded here of the famous Buddhist adage, *form is emptiness, and emptiness is form*), the existence of a timeless dimension, and the presence of countless world systems. It also touches upon the theme of manifest existence arising out of this Void, and Grof (1998) stated that some of these various realms and the entities that inhabit them are understood to interact with and inform our earthly dimension in ways that suggest direct correlations with aspects of Jungian psychology:

The material realm that we inhabit and with which we are intimately familiar seems to be just one of these worlds. . . . Of special interest is a domain that lies between our everyday reality and the undifferentiated Absolute Consciousness. It is a mythological realm that has been extensively studied by C. G. Jung and his followers. . . . Jung referred to it as the archetypal realm of the collective unconscious. The beings inhabiting these realms seem to be endowed with extraordinary energy and have an aura of sacredness or numinosity. For this reason they are usually perceived and described as deities. . . . The encounters with mythological beings and visits to mythic landscapes . . . can be in every respect as real as events in our everyday life, or more so. The archetypal realm is not a figment of human fantasy and imagination; it has an independent existence of its own and a high degree of autonomy. At the same time, its dynamics seem to be intimately connected with material reality and with human life. (pp. 69-70)

Thangkas and other forms of sacred art that are used in Tibetan meditative practices depict such deities, paradises, and dimensions, but, as mentioned above, in referring to these divine entities Lama Yeshe (1987/2001) clarified that "tantric meditational deities should not be confused with what different mythologies and religions might mean when they speak of gods and goddesses" (p. 30). Echoing the same perspective, Pal (1990) stated that "on a more metaphysical level, the divine images are simply symbols of the Buddha. . . . They are not themselves real but help to define reality and are dispensed with by the enlightened mind and by the true yogi" (p. 36). Further, Padmasambhava's (2005) famous instruction manual for liberation in the bardo state, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, clearly delineates the forms and entities encountered in this intermediate state as projections of one's mind. And, as previously revealed, Jung (1992b), in his commentary on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, posited that "the

whole book is created out of the archetypal contents of the unconscious. . . . The world of gods and spirits is truly ‘nothing but’ the collective unconscious inside me” (p. 96).

However, Jung (1963) also emphasized that there exist autonomous psychic entities that are not purely projections of one’s mind (such as Philemon and other wisdom figures he encountered), and both the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and Grof (in an expansion upon Jung’s findings) have clearly emphasized the autonomous existence of other entities and dimensions. Tulku Thondup (2005) emphasized that in the Tibetan tradition rebirth into one of these paradisiacal, non-samsaric pure lands (as part of one’s spiritual evolution toward ultimate liberation) exists as a principal aim of tantric practice. Further, Jamgon Kongtrul’s (1995/2003) *The Treasury of Knowledge: Myriad Worlds* presents a comprehensive overview of world-systems and the various beings who inhabit them. And in the latter years of his life, Jung (1960), who in adherence to Kantian epistemology was always careful not to draw absolute metaphysical conclusions, nonetheless considered archetypal forms and other such numinous phenomena to be strongly suggestive of autonomous and unfathomable forces possessing a profoundly extra-psychic, multidimensional nature—one that “postulates a meaning which is *a priori* in relation to human consciousness and apparently outside man . . . . but might also occur without the participation of the human psyche” (pp. 85-86). In addition, as discussed in chapter two, Jung (1963) in his later years also made conspicuous references to both God and the presence of independent spiritual entities. And in light of the above perspectives, this author’s own aforementioned encounter at Mt. Everest with the immense and mystifying Goddess entity cannot simply be written off as a psychic projection, but rather is highly suggestive of the merging of spiritual planes and of direct contact between humans and exalted ethereal beings.

Two seemingly independent but potentially interconnected phenomena appear to be at play here, and in consideration of the widely differing perspectives (i.e., psychic projection vs. autonomous dimensions) presented above concerning the phenomena of mythic entities and realms, one is faced with a decidedly beguiling predicament. How, for example, is one to distinguish between personal projection and actual contact with other dimensions or entities? And if by chance they represent some form of overlapping phenomena, by what means does one determine where an individual’s mythic projections end and these autonomous and often greatly heightened realities begin? This question lies at the heart of a tremendous enigma, especially in

relation to the many different psychic contexts (e.g., dreams, the bardo, near-death experience, and other non-ordinary states of consciousness) in which these realms and entities manifest.

From the standpoint of Buddhist epistemology, a careful consideration of the notions of ultimate truth (i.e., Universal Mind) and relative truth would appear to provide a fitting basis in any attempt to decipher this complex predicament. For example, Buddhist doctrine asserts that everything is Buddha without exception, and consequently in this view everything (including maya) is contained within the Buddha-essence, but only the eternal, nondual emptiness of dharmakaya is ultimately real. In a similar vein, Moacanin (2003) stated:

Equally basic to the philosophy of Nagarjuna is the distinction between the mundane and ultimate truth, which is actually one of the foundations of Buddha's teachings, and is always emphasized in Mahayana Buddhism. But this does not mean a separation between the worldly and the transcendental. It is rather the realization of the relativity of the mundane, and a consequent deepening of inward awareness in the process of which the mundane, the superficial, is not destroyed but is transformed and then seen in a new light. (p. 83)

Further clarity is garnered in the understanding that "it is not a distinction between untruth and truth, but between levels of truth" (Anderson, 1979, p. 142). In this line of thinking (which exceeds the boundaries of mere rationalism), relative truth and ultimate truth co-exist side by side (and in essence are one), and thus the levels of spiritual reality accessed in creative meditation can be understood as corresponding to the heightened spiritual states and dimensions that ultimately lead to final liberation in the clear light of dharmakaya. Accordingly, in the Tibetan tradition "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" (Snellgrove, 1987/2002, p. 131). This belief system further stresses that "things can be symbolically true and literally true at the same time; products of the imagination such as the deities summoned up by vajrayana meditators are mental images, yet they are real" (Anderson, 1979, p. 142).

From a rational Western standpoint, such statements do little to remedy the apparent incongruity of such circumstances, and indeed, as both the Jungian and Tibetan traditions readily admit, the often mysterious and unfathomable nature of spiritual phenomena is ripe with paradox. In the transpersonal field, such persistent paradoxes and inconsistencies have been effectively addressed through the epistemological framework of the participatory vision (Tarnas,

1991). The assimilation of the influence of Romanticism, and of Hegel's work in particular, has provided this movement with a philosophical basis through which "all opposites could be transcended in a higher unity" (p. 379). This process is predicated in part on the notion that human consciousness does not develop according to fixed and unchanging ultimate truths or structures, but that the historical stages in the development of psycho-spiritual consciousness represent a continuing dialectic that suggests the workings of an ever-evolving Divinity, or universal Mind (not to be confused here with Buddhism's counterpart):

Hegel conceived of the primal being of the world, the universal Mind or Spirit, as unfolding itself through its creation, achieving its ultimate realization in the human spirit. In Hegel's understanding, the Absolute first posits itself in the immediacy of its own inner consciousness, then negates the initial condition by expressing itself in the particularities of the finite world of space and time, and finally, by 'negating the negation,' recovers itself in its infinite essence. Thus the movement of knowledge evolves from consciousness of the object separate from the subject, to absolute knowledge in which the knower and known have become one. (p. 380)

This evolution from containment in the Absolute to differentiated consciousness to reunion with the whole parallels the basic outline of Wilber's (2001) model (which also contains Hegelian influences); however, to reiterate, rather than avowing that human spirituality develops through engagement with unchanging spiritual ultimates, the participatory vision instead posits a dynamic creative interplay in which Spirit evolves through the participation of human existence (and by extension, all existence) in the bringing forth and disclosure of spiritual mystery. In the words of Ferrer (2011):

Spiritual participatory events can engage the entire range of human epistemic faculties (e.g., rational, imaginal, somatic, vital, aesthetic, etc.) with the creative unfolding of reality or the mystery in the enactment—or 'bringing forth'—of ontologically rich religious worlds. In other words, the participatory approach presents an enactive understanding of the sacred that conceives spiritual phenomena, experiences, and insights as *co-created events*. (p. 2)

The role of imagination is especially significant in this process, as underscored by Tarnas (1991):

Through the self-creating power of imagination and will, the human being could body forth unborn realities, penetrate invisible but altogether real levels of being, comprehend nature and history and the cosmos's unfolding—indeed, participate in the very process of creation. (p. 371)

Tarnas also emphasized one of the prominent Romantic views of imagination as representing the essence of reality itself:

Blake recognized ‘Imagination’ as the sacred vessel of the infinite, the emancipator of the bound human mind, the means by which eternal realities came to expression and consciousness. Indeed, for many romantics, imagination was in some sense the whole of existence, the true ground of being, the medium of all realities. It both pervaded consciousness and constituted the world. (p. 369)

Depth psychology also espouses a similar view. In the words of Hollis (2000):

It is the archetypal imagination which, through the agencies of symbols and metaphor and in its constitutive power of imaging, not only creates the world and renders it meaningful but may also be a paradigm of the work of divinity. (p. 7)

The emphasis in these perspectives on the preeminence of mind and imagination is highly reminiscent of the primacy of psychic reality emphasized in Tibetan Tantra as well. The creative and meditative practices utilized in the tantric and Jungian traditions, as well as the heightened psychic dimensions accessed through such methodologies, also suggest fundamental correlations to the participatory vision. This epistemology therefore provides an expanded framework through which to further consider mystical phenomena such as the encounter with the Goddess entity at the base of Mt. Everest described in chapter four. To briefly reiterate, the incident involved the interaction of the author, the Goddess entity, and the mountain landscape, and thus can be said to represent a multidimensional, multi-local event (as opposed to purely individual or intra-subjective). At the same time, human perceptive faculties (as in the author’s above experience) participated in the co-creative disclosure that emerged through the combined presence of sacred entity (i.e., the Goddess), sacred place (i.e., Mt. Everest), and human being. Again, this epistemology disavows relational dualism, instead viewing human existence as a vehicle—rather than a separate observer—of spiritual revelation. And, as already noted, this includes the concept of an evolving God (rather than a fixed ultimate) that, in part through its manifestation in worldly and human incarnation, brings to fruition aspects of its divine potential.

This notion has certain parallels to Jung’s (1963) conception of the bringing forth of the contents of the unconscious matrix through the vehicle of human consciousness. In this sense, the evolving God hypothesis appears to be more closely aligned with depth psychology than with Buddhism and its unchanging and ultimate Universal Mind. However, this apparent dichotomy arguably finds a degree of conceptual resolution in Grof’s (1998) discovery of the mutual co-existence of two forms of ultimate reality, *Absolute Consciousness* and *Cosmic Emptiness*, or

the *Void*. These two fundamental psychic structures, when applied to the conspicuous differences between the Jungian Self and the Buddhist no-self, may provide an essential clarification. For when the Self is aligned with Absolute Consciousness (as articulated through Washburn's work), and Cosmic Emptiness is aligned with formlessness and the Void of Buddhism's Universal Mind (as enunciated in Wilber's theory), then this arguably provides support for the notion that Jung's process of individuation and Tibetan Buddhism's path of liberation each represent distinct, co-existing, and sometimes overlapping avenues of spiritual development and disclosure. In this respect, they each emphasize one of these two distinctly different ontological frameworks (as outlined by Grof above), which is directly reflected in their respective precepts and practices. At the same time, both traditions on occasion quite naturally access similar spiritual phenomena—especially in an archetypal context—which manifest in both disciples precisely because they share access to the collective, unified oneness of all things that is exemplified through Jung's tenet of *unus mundus* and Buddhism's doctrine of Universal Mind.

### **Mythic Imagery and the Union of Opposites at the Ring of Brodgar**

One such event in the author's own experience that seems especially well suited to enunciate a number of the foundational theories described above occurred in the year 2000 on the Isle of Orkney, just north of the Scottish mainland. In the midst of exploring and photographing the ancient Bronze Age sites found throughout the island, I increasingly found myself drawn in by a tremendous sense of ancestral lineage to the people who had lived in this remote and windswept environment some 5000 years ago. And at one place in particular, a gigantic circle of standing stones known as the *Ring of Brodgar*, I came into contact with a psychic phenomenon that would change my life. Standing in utter silence, embraced by wind and sea, these magnificent granite monoliths exuded a mysterious, calming presence, one in which I simultaneously felt a deep, abiding sense of eternity—a sense of having been transported to a divine place within myself that I somehow shared with the very stones that stood before me. These great silent structures, immense and abstract in form, acted as a kind of bridge to the eternal, creating a penetrating sense that the same spirit that lay within me existed within them as well in an inseparable union of psyche and matter. The transformative nature of this experience was such that the usual dualistic boundaries—the separation of self and other—dissolved to reveal a sacred primordial unity. And this realization had the effect of awakening within me—of concretizing in *both*



*spiritual and intellectual terms*—a sense of the numinous, transformative quality of mythic imagery and the manner in which it possesses the capacity to both represent and induce higher states of spiritual unity.

I was further struck by a powerful and overwhelming sense that this ring of massive granite structures represented an ancient religious complex, and that these so-called primitive people had been in intimate contact with something—some kind of deep, intuitive knowledge—that has been lost to the modern world and had by extension been lost to me as a member of contemporary Western society. Through this penetrating connection I felt a sense of intimate ancestral union, an undeniable sense that I (and we in the modern world) in some way share a common psychological structure with these Neolithic people, a far-reaching and still existent spiritual heritage that was spoken to these ancient humans—and now to contemporary man—through these stones. In that moment I stood as one with the Ring of Brodgar, and it was precisely this magnificent, mysterious union of psyche and matter, of ancients and moderns, that led me to an in-depth consideration of the life and work of Carl Jung.

Suddenly, concepts presented by Jung (1964) and his contemporaries that I had first attempted to digest more than twenty years before took on new, immediate, highly-charged meaning, as though they were revealing a powerful, compelling life force. And indeed, through the above experience of numinous archetypes (i.e., the circle and the stone), I now understand that this is precisely what they represent. In light of this profound encounter, one can now more fully appreciate Jung's passionate assertion that "the seat of faith . . . is not consciousness but spontaneous religious experience, which brings the individual's faith into immediate relation with God" (1958/1990, p. 48). This vital notion finds its most fundamental basis in the reconciliation of opposites, especially as this pertains to the merging of psyche and matter, time and eternity, and the immanent and transcendent divine. And all of these aspects find expression in the fully manifested characteristics of the Great Goddess, qualities that now appear to be slowly reemerging through a significant metamorphosis in our present historical period (Gimbutas, 1989; Jung, 1963).

The multidimensional nature of this enigmatic experience at the Ring of Brodgar also presents an intriguing parallel to Ferrer's (2002) view of transpersonal phenomena as

“multilocal participatory events” (p. 117), which he conceived as containing the following principal components:

(1) events, in contrast to intrasubjective experiences; (2) multilocal, in that they can arise in different loci, such as an individual, a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or a place; and (3) participatory, in that they can invite the generative power and dynamism of all dimensions of human nature to interact with a spiritual power in the co-creation of spiritual worlds. (p. 117)

The above conception has a direct application to the mystical phenomena that arose at the Ring of Brodgar as follows: 1) this incident seemingly exceeded a purely intrasubjective level (i.e., the sense of sacred presence was exuded by the stones); 2) it arose within the context of an exterior environment; and 3) it involved the participatory interaction of human consciousness with this physical environment in the bringing forth of the resulting transpersonal experience. This understanding consequently emphasizes human consciousness as "the agent of religious knowing" (Ferrer & Sherman, 2009, p. 38), a process in which, through the engagement of various modes of human perception (e.g., imaginal, somatic, intuitive, and aesthetic), humanity participates with the Mystery in the unfolding of spiritual realities, insights, and experience. One is therefore encouraged to "recognize the ontologically creative role of spiritual cognition," and to consider the possibility that "these worlds are not statically closed but fundamentally dynamic and open to continued transformation resulting (at least in part) from the creative impact of human visionary imagination" (p. 32). This approach extends transpersonal experience beyond the self-enclosed limits of human perception (as in the Kantian epistemology), and at the same time stresses the fundamental role that human faculties play in the bringing forth of spiritual manifestations. From an archetypal perspective, Tarnas (1991) fittingly proposed that,

the bold conjectures and myths that the human mind produces in its quest for knowledge ultimately come from something far deeper than a purely human source. They come from the wellspring of nature itself, from the universal unconscious that is bringing forth through the human mind and human imagination its own gradually unfolding reality. (pp. 436-437)

Tarnas further emphasized that,

it has been the fate and burden of depth psychology—that astounding seminal tradition founded by Freud and Jung, to mediate the modern mind’s access to archetypal forces and realities that reconnect the individual self to the world, dissolving the dualistic world view. (p. 432)

This acknowledgement of the mediating function of archetypal forces and the dissolution of Cartesian dualism correlates with Jung's (1960) concern with the reconciliation of opposites and the transformative and healing power of archetypal symbols. Within this framework, the experience at the Ring of Brodgar can most certainly be described as a psychic reconciliation, a numinous merging of psyche and matter that unified self and world. It is also highly suggestive of the transformative power and ubiquitous presence of mythic imagery, as stones and circles have been throughout the centuries among the primary representations of the Self and point directly to the postulation of an inherent religious instinct in humanity (Jung, 1964). Indeed, as von Franz emphasized, "the Self is symbolized with special frequency in the form of a stone" (1964, p. 221). This numinous, unitary encounter with these great megalithic stones is also especially compelling in light of the understanding that "stone is the great symbol of permanence that, early in human history, came to stand for the eternal and the divine" (Streep, 1994, p. 105).

To experience a sense of union with the divine through the megalithic stones in Scotland is therefore indicative of a much broader role that sacred stones have played in the collective history of human worship. Tucci (1970/1980), for example, observed in areas inhabited by Tibetan tribes that "megalithic monuments also exist on many mountain passes" (p. 245). In addition, the five sacred stones of Tibetan Buddhism include the greatly sanctified element of turquoise (the color of Green Tara), which was also revered by the ancient Egyptians, Persians, and the American Indians. Other examples include the following:

The stone that Jacob placed on the spot where he had his famous dream, or certain stones left by simple people on the tombs of local saints or heroes, show the original nature of the urge to express an otherwise inexpressible experience by the stone symbol. It is no wonder that many religious cults use a stone to signify God or to mark a place of worship. The holiest sanctuary of the Ka'aba, the black stone in Mecca to which all pious Moslems hope to make their pilgrimage. . . . Christ is . . . called 'the spiritual rock from which the water of life springs' (1 Cor. X:4). Medieval alchemists . . . hoping to find God in it, or at least the working of divine activity, believed that this secret was embodied in their famous 'philosophers' stone. (Von Franz, 1964, pp. 224-225)

That the Ring of Brodgar exists as a *circle* of standing stones is also quite significant, as the circle is viewed in both the Jungian and Tibetan Tantric traditions as a fundamental symbol of wholeness:

The circle (or sphere) as a symbol of the self . . . expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature. Whether the symbol of the circle appears in primitive sun worship or modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the mandalas drawn by Tibetan monks, in the ground plans of cities, or in the spherical concepts of early astronomers, it always points to the single most vital aspect of life—its ultimate wholeness. (Jaffe, 1964, p. 266)

The above perspectives speaks directly to the provocative notion (in the modern Western mindset, at least) that the images one perceives do not exist solely as separate entities but instead intimately mirror the workings of the human psyche, and as such they exist in some form of unitary relationship. Von Franz (1964), in pondering the stone as the quintessential symbol of sanctified wholeness, offered a similar perspective:

The fact that this highest and most frequent symbol of the Self is an object of inorganic matter points to yet another field of inquiry and speculation: that is, the still unknown relationship between what we call the unconscious psyche and what we call 'matter' . . . . It may prove to be that 'psyche' and 'matter' are actually the same phenomenon, one observed from "within" and the other from 'without.' (p. 226)

And further, it was precisely this notion of the union of psyche and matter that led Jung into his investigation of the phenomena of synchronicity, as Tarnas (1991) observed:

In his later work . . . and particularly in relation to his study of synchronicities, Jung began to move toward a conception of archetypes as autonomous patterns of meaning that appear to structure and inhere in both psyche and matter, thereby in effect dissolving the modern subject-object dichotomy. (p. 425)

The deep inner sense of meaning and higher unity that arises out of the interaction of human consciousness with archetypal forms and structures in the outer environment consequently leads one to a careful consideration of the phenomena of sacred place. In this respect, Devereux (2000) suggested that "the concept of the sacred place . . . requires the consideration of the sense of sanctity held by the human mind and how that has been applied to physical geography" (p. 10). He further concluded that,

there was a general understanding, prior to the brief centuries of our present culture, that the earth was alive, with subtle yet powerful forces flowing through its body, the land. These concentrated at various points that came to be regarded as totemic spots, sacred areas, power places, or temples, depending on the local culture. Each of these locations had its own quality, tutelary deity or 'spirit of place'—*genius loci*. They were points of *geographical sanctity*. (1990/1999, p. 11)

These essential aspects and their relationship to Jung's understanding of human cultural history are beautifully enunciated in the words of Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (1993) in their seminal work *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*:

Jung, striving to restore the psyche this forgotten knowledge of the unity and sanctity of life, knew that the Neolithic experience is not dead and gone, but still lives on in us as the archaic ground of the twentieth-century psyche. . . . If the collective unconscious can be imagined, as Jung saw it, as 'the mighty deposit of ancestral experience accumulated over millions of years . . . to which each century adds an infinitesimally small amount of variation and differentiation', then the millennia of the Neolithic must have registered, as a deep layer of the soul, a vision of life as a constant celebration of being. (p.105)

And in considering such Neolithic sites as the Ring of Brodgar, Devereux (1990/1999) proposed the following:

At these monuments we are in the presence of *technology*, the impressive remains left by a group of races who were the founders of what has become today's 'Western culture' . . . . This 'spiritual technology' . . . was still informed by a profound reverence for the earth; when the soil and rock of the land, its flora, fauna, energies and processes were intimately understood and directly experienced. (p. 23)

Such sanctified geographical structures can therefore be conceived as having been constructed not only as objects of worship but as vehicles through which to induce deeply transformative spiritual experiences and phenomena (Devereux, 1990/1999, 2000). The megalithic stone, like the World Mountain, is representative of *axis mundi*, the world axis or eternal center that unites the various physical, psychic, and cosmological dimensions. From this standpoint, the *center* represents a unitary state that transcends our usual waking consciousness, a condition that is simultaneously tied to, and actively initiated by, archetypal features in the outer environment (Eliade, 1957/1987). Accordingly, in contemplating the great stone megaliths of the Ring of Brodgar, which are buried deep beneath the earth and subsequently rise up through the ground some fifteen to twenty feet toward the sky above, one is struck by "the image of a universal pillar, *axis mundi*, which at once connects and supports heaven and earth and whose base is fixed in the world below . . . . such a cosmic pillar can only be at the center of the universe" (pp. 36-37). The deeply transformative sense of timelessness and psychic wholeness that accompanied this encounter takes on a greater sense of clarity and perspective when one considers the following:

The Center is precisely the place where a rupture of the levels occurs, where the space becomes sacred, thus *real par excellence*. A creation implies a superabundance of reality, in other words, an irruption of the sacred into the world. It follows that all construction or fabrication has the cosmogony and an exemplary model. The creation of the world became the archetype of each creative human activity, whatever its plane of reference. (p. 112)

The act of creation emphasized above finds cogent expression in the transpersonal field through the participatory vision in which human perceptive faculties participate in a psychosomatic event that gives birth to the emergence of spiritual realities (Ferrer, 2000). The notion of creative participation, as well as the concept of *axis mundi*, also finds expression in the ascending structure and central channel of the *chakra* system that merges the feminine and masculine energies (Eliade, 1957/1987). The union of these and all other opposites in the highest *chakra* results in a transformation of consciousness in which temporal time becomes an *eternal present*. This phenomenon has been the focus of the contemplative practices, ritual activities, and artistic expression of innumerable religious traditions throughout human history—including Tibetan Tantra—and such practices are designed to induce "intervals of time that are 'sacred,' that have no part in the temporal duration that precedes and follows them, that have a wholly different structure and origin, for they are of a primordial time" (p. 71). This distinction between temporal and eternal time represents another central component in the experience of sanctified environments and the inducement of psychic wholeness. As Campbell (1974) stated, "the idea of a sacred place where the walls and the laws of the temporal world may dissolve to reveal a wonder is apparently as old as the human race" (p. 184). However, the historical emergence of egoic consciousness and the increasing distinction of separateness that characterizes modern humanity have altered this equation. The notion of *axis mundi*, the spiritual center that mythic rituals and archetypal images and structures were designed to elicit, has all but vanished from contemporary culture. In the words of Eliade (1957/1987):

Religious man lives in two kinds of time, of which the more important, sacred time, appears under the paradoxical aspect of a circular time, reversible and recoverable, a sort of eternal mythical present that is periodically reintegrated by means of rites. This attitude in regard to time suffices to distinguish religious from non-religious man; the former refuses to live solely in what, in modern terms, is called the historical present; he attempts to regain a sacred time that . . . can be homologized to eternity. (p. 70)

This distinction between eternal and temporal time and the association of modern humanity with the latter naturally leads to a consideration of the social and psychological circumstances that have served to create this division. The historical emergence of egoic consciousness is considered a primary factor (Jung, 1963), and this in turn is linked with the framework of the monotheistic cosmology of the Judeo-Christian tradition:

Compared with the paleo-oriental religions, as well as with the mythic-philosophical conceptions of the eternal return, as they were elaborated in India and Greece, Judaism presents an innovation of the first importance. For Judaism, time has a beginning and will have an end. The idea of cyclic time is left behind. Yahweh no longer manifests himself in *cosmic time* (like the gods of other religions) but in a *historical time*, which is irreversible. (Eliade, 1957/1987, p. 110)

According to Eliade, this critical development was then further solidified with the coming of the Christian era:

Christianity radically changed the experience and the concept of liturgical time, and this is due to the fact that Christianity affirms the historicity of the person of Christ. The Christian liturgy unfolds in a *historical time sanctified by the incarnation of the Son of God*. The sacred time periodically reactualized in pre-Christian religions (especially in the archaic religions) is a mythical time, that is, primordial time, not to be found in the historical past. (p. 72)

This disparity between the temporal and the eternal remains one of the primary features that distinguishes the religious cosmologies of modern and pre-modern humanity (Eliade, 1957/1987). As an experience of the eternal is also directly associated with a sense of expanded unity, or nonduality, this aspect has important implications not only for the state of contemporary exoteric religion but also for the future developmental direction of the species itself. This notion follows Eliade's ardent proposition that spiritual growth must be augmented through "access to a mode of being not subject to the destroying action of Time" (p. 136).

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

#### A Brief Summary of the Findings

Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Jungian depth psychology represent two dynamic psycho-spiritual traditions that are most readily linked through their creative use of mythic imagery as a powerful means of effecting psychic healing and spiritual transformation. They also share a number of essential elements, including their mutual emphasis on the reconciliation of opposites and the union of masculine and feminine principles. Further, each discipline seeks to elicit spiritual transcendence through an understanding of the nature of mind, or psyche, with the Tibetan Buddhist tradition focusing on the goal of ultimate liberation and Jungian psychology emphasizing ongoing transformation through the process of individuation. There also exists a notable emphasis on the phenomena of visionary knowing (e.g., mystical encounters with forces of numinosity), which is thought to be instrumental in the shifting of the center of one's identity away from the ego toward the realization of an inseparable interrelationship with a boundless and all-encompassing psychic reality.

Each tradition represents a complex psychological system that possesses its own distinctive theories and characteristics, and these include sometimes widely varying conceptions of the ontological nature of both human spirituality and ultimate reality. The Jungian view, for example, espouses the existence of a dyadic relationship between the ego and the Self while making no claim to any supreme metaphysical certainty, whereas Tibetan Buddhist doctrine posits emptiness, or *no-self*, as the fundamental truth of all existence.

When viewed through the lens of contemporary transpersonal theory, the Jungian relational dyad finds its most comprehensive representation in Washburn's dynamic-dialectical paradigm, which portrays the human psyche as possessing a bipolar constitution that involves the ongoing interplay of the ego and the Dynamic Ground (i.e., the Self) as it moves in a spiraling movement of departure and return toward ever higher synthesis and ultimate union. The nondual orientation of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition finds notable representation in Wilber's structural-hierarchical theory, which posits progressive levels of development that are portrayed at the higher stages through the Buddhist kayas, culminating in a state of nondual bliss and emptiness. Ferrer's participatory vision questions the exclusive truth claims of any one tradition and espouses the



notion that each represents a valid and distinct spiritual path. As shown in the last chapter, his work also delineates co-creative and unitary aspects in the transformative engagement with mythic imagery. Grof's pioneering work has brought further clarity to many of the similarities and distinctions between Jungian psychology and Tibetan Tantra and has been instrumental in expanding our contemporary understanding of spiritual dimensions and human potential. This includes his conception of the co-existence of Absolute Consciousness (which presents correlations to the Jungian Self-ego dyad) and the Void (with its direct association to the Buddhist precepts of emptiness and no-self).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There remains much room for further inquiry and exploration in this area of research, and of particular note are the mythic imagery and archetypal phenomena that arise through intermediate states, past-life recall, near-death experience, and in the material channeled through psychic mediums. For example, in correlation with aspects of both Grof's discoveries and Tibetan Buddhism, the research findings of Christopher Bache (1994) suggest that in the bardo state essential aspects of one's "karmic script" (p. 92) are determined by the reincarnating entity in conjunction with the judicious oversight of "wise, elderly, archetypal beings" who form a "Board of Judgement" and who "sometimes take the form of figures from the individual's religious heritage" (p. 87). Bache's research also provides support for the view (as held by Grof and others and enunciated in Tibetan Buddhism) that the disembodied states experienced in near-death episodes and the bardo state represent greatly expanded timeless realms, and that such states are "filled with highly symbolic, archetypal images" (p. 85). Mirroring the teachings of the *Bardo Thodol*, such mythic imagery is thought to be "largely a reflection of each person's thought forms and expectations" (p. 85), and can appear in both light and dark aspects; but "underlying the individual imagery reported, however, is a consistent description of beauty beyond description, of rapturous reunion, and of restored wholeness" (pp. 85-86), which is clearly indicative of paradisiacal dimensions, or greatly heightened archetypal realms.

In a clear reference to the diamond symbol as representing mystical union in Tibetan Vajrayana, Bache (2000) also recounted his numinous encounters with the state of Diamond Consciousness in which, in his words, "one's experience of physical light is but a metaphor for the intensity and brilliance of this energy" (p. 274). Not only is the presence of mythic imagery

a primary factor in the various phenomena described above, but the distinction between religious images that arise through one's individual expectations and the universal manifestations of both archetypal imagery and the phenomenon of light that are widely reported across cultural and historical boundaries remains worthy of further exploration. Further, in relation to the distinction between psychic projections and autonomous dimensions, research into where one aspect ends and the other begins represents a compelling area of investigation. In addition, if such symbolic forms and figures are indeed psychic metaphors, the question must be asked, *what lies behind such images?* Are there heightened and autonomous entities of superior knowledge—as reported in both the Jungian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions—that assume the roles of spiritual *educators* as part of the process of awakening and/or the easing of the transition of a given personality into other realms (as in post-mortem phenomena) or psychic dimensions? And finally, as with the shamanic tradition, is there some kind of decidedly active process of shape-shifting at play in such mystifying circumstances?

The pioneering work of the Jungian psychotherapist, Roger Woolger (1988), also deserves consideration, as his work in past-life regression has shown that images—especially those expressing archetypal themes—are instrumental in activating past-life recall. Originally a sceptic, his research findings resulted in the conclusion that “in our deeper or fuller consciousness *we are multiple beings*, that we have many personalities within us . . . even to the point of having detailed histories stretching back from birth to death” (p. 34). These personal histories possess distinctly mythic themes (e.g., the Oedipal drama, the devouring father, or the wounded feminine) that are accompanied by powerful symbolic imagery, and whether one considers reincarnation in a literal or symbolic sense (i.e., many aspects of one self), working with these images and themes can be highly transformative. So again the question arises, what is the ontological nature of such images, and do they represent aspects of multiple selves (as in reincarnation), or are they representative of multiple aspects within oneself?

Woolger (1988) expanded his work beyond the subject of reincarnation to involve other important areas of inquiry, which deal with spiritual planes, disincarnate entities, clairvoyance, and other such phenomena:

What psychics see clairvoyantly also confirms the research that Jung and others have made into the collective unconscious, whose many layers now seem almost incontrovertibly to

include traces of past-life memories. But many psychics claim a great deal more than this, placing their perceptions within the greater framework of what is loosely called ‘metaphysics.’ Here we are dealing with what nowadays is called ‘channeled teachings,’ which assert, more often than not, the existence of higher spiritual planes, spirit guides, ascended masters, reincarnation, and karma. (p.53)

As outlined previously, mythic representations are predominant in such spiritual phenomena. In particular, the work of Jane Roberts (1972), who acted as the channel for the disincarnate entity known as *Seth* (a phenomena that has parallels to the Tibetan oracle), addressed many relevant considerations concerning the relationship between sacred symbols and spiritual development, and described these mythic forms as being “highly charged psychic particles . . . and that includes physical objects that have strong characteristics of attraction and expansion” (e.g., Mt. Kailash as the World Mountain) and that “stand for inner realizations and realities” (p. 307). Further, such symbols manifest in multiple layers of consciousness (e.g., in the unconscious) that lie beyond the immediate awareness of the waking ego. In the words of Roberts, as the medium of Seth’s teachings:

These other stages of reality create their own realities as you create your own. The realities are, therefore, by-products of consciousness itself. If you could become aware of these, they might appear to be other places to you, rather than realms or fields or different kinds of activities. If you probe into these realms, you will be forced to perceive them with the root assumptions of your own system, translating feelings of warmth and comfort, for example, into images or warm shelters or buildings, or feelings of fear into images of demons. (p. 294)

There are conspicuous references here to the existence of other psychic dimensions, and the examples describing the translation of emotions into psychic images has a clear correlation to the bardo state of Tibetan Buddhism. But again, where does one draw the line between personal projections and autonomous dimensions, and to what extent are all dimensions—including our own—governed by symbolic representations of underlying forces and processes? And to what extent is one’s individual personality a purely independent entity, as opposed to being one of many selves that inhabits a larger psychic gestalt, as suggested by Woolger?

The creative and transformative aspects of mythic representations that are so fundamental to both Jungian psychology and Tibetan Tantra also deserve further attention. The ability of images and symbols to not only induce deep emotional and psychological states and to foster

healing but also to actually assist in the bringing forth of new realities (as in the participatory vision) is another area worthy of future research. Seth's teachings, for example, proposed that,

You can direct the healing of your body, telling yourself that this will be accomplished by you at one of the other levels of sleep consciousness. . . . In a light trance the meaning of dream symbols will be given to you if you ask for them. The symbols may then be used as methods of suggestion that will be tailored to you personally. If you discover, say, that a fountain in a dream represents refreshment, then when you are tired or depressed think of a fountain. In another layer of reality, of course, you will be creating one. (Roberts, 1972, p. 298)

This notion of the co-creation of experiential dimensions is directly linked to the thoughts and emotions generated by the individual psyche, but how is one to conceive of such realms? Are they real in the same sense that the earthy dimension is considered real by its inhabitants? Seth's teachings further proposed that a given individual,

may form images of dream cities or of people that are of a very joyful nature, translate the emotion itself into whatever symbols are pertinent to him. An exuberance may be translated into images of playing animals, flying people, or animals or landscapes of great beauty. . . . The feelings of joy may now lead to images of Christ, Buddha, or the Prophets. These symbols are the changing scenes characteristic of consciousness at various stages. These experiences are to be considered as creations; creative acts all native to consciousness at various levels. (Roberts, 1972, p. 303)

That certain images manifest in line with specific levels of human consciousness is of course a concept shared by both Jungian psychology and Tibetan Tantra, and the above depiction of playing animals, flying people, and exalted landscapes are highly suggestive not only of a waking dream but of the dream-like atmospheres created at such places as Disneyland and Las Vegas. Are human beings, then, not only co-creators at varying levels of consciousness (i.e., in both earthly and psychic realms), but might the earthly realm itself be a kind of projected mythic dimension created by the imagination of forces beyond our present comprehension? With such considerations in mind, it may well be that the human psyche—whether conceived as the Jungian Self or Buddhism's Universal Mind—exists as the *final frontier* (rather than *outer space*), and that future research into the mystery of earthly existence will come to be increasingly focused on the unified interrelationship of psyche and matter as well as on the explorations of psychic dimensions that are both highly symbolic and ontologically real.

## **A Final Word on the East-West Dialogue**

The encounter between Eastern and Western thought has a long and sometimes tumultuous history, one that has been blessed with periods of illuminating cross-fertilization but also plagued at times by certain misconceptions and generalizations, especially in the West's approach to its counterpart (Clarke, 1994). Jung represents but one of many commentators who has found great inspiration and insight in various aspects of Eastern spirituality while not always fully ascertaining the meaning of certain precepts. And yet, his contributions to the significance of these esoteric traditions, especially Tibetan Buddhism, cannot be underestimated, and his highly influential work in this area in many ways foreshadowed and fostered the tremendous level of interest in Asian traditions that is found in the West today. In the words of Clarke:

The most obvious point of departure in a discussion of Jung's contemporary relevance lies in the extraordinary proliferation of cultural and intellectual contacts with the East that has occurred since his day, ranging from the spiritual quests of New Age wisdom-seekers to the formalized dialogues of theologians, philosophers, and psychologists. The popular enthusiasm increasingly evident in recent years for various forms of Buddhism, for meditation, yoga, and Eastern medical and therapeutic techniques has been complemented by a conspicuous new openness toward Eastern thought and traditions on the part of academics from a variety of disciplines, and matches, in both intensity and intention, the mania for China and India that occurred in the Enlightenment and Romantic periods respectively. . . . He read the signs of the times with uncanny accuracy, seeing in the burgeoning interest in the East not passing fads but expressions of a deep and urgent need. 'The East,' he remarked in 1931, 'is at the bottom of the spiritual change we are passing through today', a spiritual change that arises not from the evanescent need to escape into the exotic, into 'a Tibetan monastery full of Mahatmas', but rather 'from the depths of our own psychic life'. (pp. 181-182)

Indeed, it is often contact with the unusual or unfamiliar aspects in life that allows one to not only broaden his own experiential horizons but also to better understand oneself—and one's culture—in a fuller and more meaningful fashion. In this vein, Eliade, the eminent historian of religions, spoke of "a 'hermeneutical' engagement with the East . . . as a confrontation with the 'others' which helps Western man better to understand himself" (quoted in Clarke, 1997, p. 28).

Such sentiments and intentions have served as the impetus for this cross-cultural and comparative study of Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and Jungian depth psychology (and the modern transpersonal psychology movement that has followed), and the work that is presented herein represents one small contribution to a much larger, long-standing process that seeks to induce

greater spiritual growth and illumination on both a personal and collective level. And it is these resolute qualities, I believe, that serve as the very foundation of both traditions:

Buddhism and Jungian thought have each provided a powerful, alternative response in the West to a pervasive sense of spiritual impoverishment. In contrast to modern, industrialized society, each places value on the imagination and the non-rational, and works toward a more spontaneous and less ego-bound way of being. At the very heart of each is a concern for the nature of the self and its relationship to human suffering and liberation. (Meckel and Moore, 1992, p. 3)

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