W. B. YEATS'S ANTITHESIS: PLOTINISM AND BUDDHISM

NAITO SHIRO

INTRODUCTION
"A Dialogue of Self and Soul" Reconsidered①

The One does not strive to encircle us, but we strive to encircle it. We always move round the One, but we do not always fix our gaze upon it : we are like a choir of singers who stand round the conductor, but do not always sing in time because their attention is diverted to some external object ; when they look at the conductor they sing well and are really with him. So we always move round the One ; if we did not, we should be dissolved and no longer exist ; but we do not always look towards the One. When we do, we attain the end of our existence, and our repose, and we no longer sing out of tune, but form in very truth a divine chorus round the One.

In this choral dance the Soul sees the fountain of life and the fountain of Spirit, the source of Being, the cause of Good, the root of Soul. These do not flow out of the One in such a way as to diminish it ; for we are not dealing with material quantities, else the products of the One would be perishable, whereas they are eternal, because their source remains not divided among them, but constant. Therefore the products too are permanent, as the light remains while the sun remains. For we are not cut off from our source nor separated from it, even though the bodily nature intervenes and draws us towards itself, but we breathe and maintain our being in our source, which does not first give itself and then withdraw, but is always supplying us, as long as it is what it is. But we are more truly alive when we turn towards it, and in this lies our well-being. To be far from it is isolation and diminution. In it our Soul rests, out of reach of evil ; it has ascended to a region which is pure from all evil ; there it has spiritual vision, and is exempt from passion and suffering ; there it truly

lives. For our present life, without God, is a mere shadow and mimicry of the true life.②

This passage is quoted from Inge's recapitulation of Plotinus' *Enneads* in *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vols, I and II in 1917-18.③ William Inge was a theologian with an avid interest in Oriental thought, such as Indian transmigration and Buddhism, quoted from Japanese Buddhist scholars in this book :

An interesting account of 'Modernist' Buddhist teaching on Karma will be found in David, *Le Modernisme Buddhiste* (Paris, 1911). The theory of Karma, which properly means 'action,' is much older than Buddha. In Buddhism its basis is the inexorable law of psychical continuity. Educated Buddhists do not believe in individual retribution—e.g. that an idiot is a man who in a former state misused his intellectual faculties. Buddhism does not believe in permanent psychic individuality. Actions and their consequences are indissolubly linked together, but the notion of individual retribution belongs to 'illusion of the ego,' which this philosophy seeks to eradicate. What we call a person is only the transient embodiment of past activities. 'It is only in considering the whole of humanity as bound together, like the parts of a universal whole, that we can seize the full significance of the doctrine of Karma' (quoted from Prof. Narusa). 'There are no creators or created, and men are not real beings' (Kuroda). Nevertheless, liberation from the bonds of the past is possible. 'If the will was free, it would be impossible to change our character by education. Precisely because the will of man obeys motives and depends on causes, he can transform himself by changing his environment and regulating the motives of his will' (Narasu). Karma, so regarded, is impersonal perpetuity, modifiable by disinterested volition. It is clear that Karma and Heaven-Hell are two alternative theodicies,

which cannot be blended without coufusion. If we adopt the former, punishment, like sin, is finite, and belief in eternal life is quite independent of any idea of compensation. Attractive as the belief in reincarnation is, it seems to have no intuitive sanction.④

Yeats seems to have composed "A Dialoque of Self and Soul"⑤ after reading these two quoted passages:

I

My Soul. I summon to the winding ancient stair;
Set all your mind upon the steep ascent,
Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,
Upon the breathless starlit air,
Upon the star that marks the hidden pole;
Fix every wandering thought upon
That quarter where all thought is done:
Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?

My Self. The consecrated blade upon my knees
Is Sato's ancient blade, still as it was,
Still razor-keen, still like a looking-glass
Unspotted by the centuries;
That flowering, silken, old embroidery, torn
From some court-lady's dress and round
The wooden scabbard bound and wound,
Can, tattered, still protect, faded adorn.

My Soul. Why should the imagination of a man
Long past his prime remember things that are
Emblematical of love and war?

Think of ancestral night that can,
If but imagination scorn the earth
And intellect its wandering
To this and that and t'other thing,
Deliver from the crime of death and birth.

My Self. Montashigi, third of his family, fashioned it
Five hundred years ago, about it lie
Flowers from I know not what embroidery—
Heart's purple—and all these I set
For emblems of the day against the tower
Emblematical of the night,
And claim as by a soldier's right
A charter to commit the crime once more.

My Soul. Such fullness in that quarter overflows
And falls into the basin of the mind
That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,
For intellect no longer knows
Is from the *Ought*, or *Knower* from the *Known*—
That is to say, ascends to Heaven;
Only the dead can be forgiven;
But when I think of that my tongue's a stone.

"Fix every wandering thought upon/That quarter where all thought is done," "Think of ancestral night that can. . . Deliver from the crime of death and birth," and "Such fullness in that quarter overflows/And falls into the basin of the mind/That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind." These passages from *My Soul* represent the presence of the One of Plotinus. On the other hand, Sato's sword, mentioned mainly in My Self, is permitted to

"claim as by a soldier's right/A charter to commit the crime once more." Plotinus suggests the reason for the permission of this claim :

> The Orphics were the first to teach that the Soul of man is 'fallen' ; it is in prison until the end of the cosmic year of ten thousand solar years. Till then, it is 'an exile from God and a wanderer.' It retains its individuality (this is distinctive of Orphism) through all its transmigrations. The Pythagoreans held to this doctrine of a multitude of immortal souls, thus breaking up the older doctrine that 'Soul' generically is the active power or manifestation of one spiritual Being. One of the main problems of the later Greek philosophy was to preserve the truth of human personality, thus, rather later, recognised, without sacrificing the right to believe in Divine immanence and in the ultimate unity of all the creatures in God. *The doctrine which insisted on the individuality and personal responsibility of the human Soul contained a theodicy ; for, as Empedocles and Pindar before him taught, the Soul is in prison because it sinned—stained itself with blood, or 'followed strife,' or committed perjury—in an earlier state of existence. If love and strife are the contending principles which constitute the life of the immortal Soul, sin must be the following of strife, and its punishment the rupture of the bond of love which unites souls with each other and with God.* The eating of flesh, forbidden by the Orphics, was a kind of sacrament of strife, an acceptance of the sad law that creatures must live by killing one another. The flesh itself, in which we live our outer lives, is an 'alien garment,' the sign that we are divided from one another. When 'love-kindness burns like a fire' (Empedocles), we are on the way to conquer strife by love, and the Soul may look for an end to its wandering in the wilderness. Thoughts like these help to reconcile panentheism (Divine immanence) with belief in the distinct soul-life of human individuals[6]. (Inge explanation)

The italicized sentences help us understand the question of the speech in Yeats's *My Soul* :

> Why should the imagination of a man
> Long past his prime remember things that are
> Emblematical of love and war ?

For its answer is found in these italicized sentences :

> *the Soul is in prison because it sinned—stained itself with blood, or 'followed strife,' or committed perjury—in an earlier state of existence. If love and strife are the contending principles which constitute the life of the immortal Soul, sin must be the following of strife, and its punishment the rupture of the bond of love which unites souls with each other and with God*[7].

My Soul advises *My Self* to "think of ancestral night that can... deliver [us] from the crime of death and birth." As I said , that "Ancestral night" suggests Plotinus' idea, for *My Soul* has already said :

> Set all your mind...
> Upon the star that marks the hidden pole ;
> Fix every wandering thought upon
> That quarter where all thought is done :
> Who can distinguish darkness from the soul ?

"Such fullness in that quarter" which "overflows and falls into the basin of the mind" appears in Plotinus' idea of the One already quoted at the head of this introduction :

In this choral dance the Soul sees the fountain of life and the fountain of Spirit, the source of Being, the cause of Good, the root of Soul[®].

"Such fullness... overflows/And falls into the basin of the mind/That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,/For intellect no longer knows/*Is* from the *Ought*, or *Knower* from the *Known*—/That is to say, ascends to Heaven; /Only the dead can be forgiven; /But when I think of that my tongue's a stone." This is the last speech of *My Soul*. It is followed by the monologue of *My Self* of that poem in part II:

II

My Self. A living man is blind and drinks his drop.
What matter if the ditches are impure?
What matter if I live it all once more?
Endure that toil of growing up;
The ignominy of boyhood; the distress
Of boyhood changing into man;
The unfinished man and his pain
Brought face to face with his own clumsiness;

The finished man among his enemies? —
How in the name of Heaven can he escape
That defiling and disfigured shape
The mirror of malicious eyes
Casts upon his eyes until at last
He thinks that shape must be his shape?
And what's the good of an escape
If honour find him in the wintry blast?

These two stanzas can be more easily undersood by reading the passage

already quoted from Inge : "The flesh itself, in which we live our outer lives, is an 'alien garment,' the sign that we are divided from one another. When 'love-kindness burns like a fire' (Empedocles), we are on the way to conquer strife by love, and the Soul may look for an end to its wandering in the wilderness."

The latter half of this passage from Inge helps us understand the rest of this poem :

> I am content to live it all again
> And yet again, if it be life to pitch
> Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch,
> A blind man battering blind men ;
> Or into that most fecund ditch of all,
> The folly that man does
> Or must suffer, if he woos
> A proud woman not kindred of his soul.
>
> I am content to follow to its source
> Every event in action or in thought ;
> Measure the lot ; forgive myself the lot !
> When such as I cast out remorse
> So great a sweetness flows into the breast
> We must laugh and we must sing,
> We are blest by everything,
> Everything we look upon is blest.

Now "strife" is regarded as "a blind man battering blind men" or "the folly that man does or must suffer, *if he woos a proud woman not kindred of his soul*." The italicized if-clause indicates "a proud woman not kindred of his soul," whose soul has been "wandering in the wilderness." The Soul tries to

"look for the end of its wandering in the wilderness," when that end is found in the already-quoted passage on Buddhism :

> Buddhism does not believe in permanent psychic individuality. Actions and their consequences are indissolubly linked together, but the notion of individual retribution belongs to 'illusion of the ego', which this philosophy seeks to eradicate. What we call a person is only the transient embodiment of past activities. 'It is only in considering the whole of humanity as bound together, like the parts of a universal whole, that we can seize the significance of the doctrine of karma'.[9]

I believe the "source" in the lines :

> I am content to follow to its sorce
> Every event in action or in thought ;

is "the original abode," a term used by Daisetz Suzuki, and the same as "Rocky Face" in Yeats's "The Gyres," or, in Suzuki's words, "original face."

> Measure the lot ; forgive myself the lot !
> When such as I cast out remorse
> So great a sweetness flows into the breast
> We must laugh and we must sing,

The "remorse" which "such as I cast out" is due to "the doctrine" which "contained a theodicy." This is explained in the following :

> *The doctrine which insisted on the individuality and personal responsibility of the human Soul contained a theodicy ; for, as Empedocles and Pindar before him taught, the Soul is in prison because it sinned—stained*

itself with blood, or 'followed strife,' or committed perjury—in an earlier state of existence. If love and strife are the contending principles which constitute the life of the immortal Soul, sin must be the following of strife, and its punishment the rupture of the bond of love which unites souls with each other and with God.[10]

After casting out the "remorse," we are on the way to recovering "the bond of love," so that

> So great a sweetness flows into the breast
> We must laugh and we must sing,

and it results, moreover, in the next two lines in the bond of love uniting souls with each other:

> We are blest by everything,
> Everything we look upon is blest.

Chapter 1 "Supernatural Songs"

One of the differences between Plotinism and Zen or Tantric Buddhism is that between the ascent from "Many" to "One" and the unity of the body as "Many" and the absolute Nature as "One." Although the pursuit of such a unity may be regarded as the descent from "Many" to "One," that pursuit is to find Truth in the earthly world and to attain the unity of man and what is called God or the Lord. So while Zen and Tantric Buddhists never despise the bodies, Plotinus does. Yeats prefers the former's stance, especially in "Supernatural Songs," which may at first be interpreted in light of Yeats's understanding of Plotinus.

I. *Ribh at the Tomb of Baile and Aillinn*

Because you have found me in the pitch-dark night
With open book you ask me what I do.
Mark and digest my tale, carry it afar
To those that never saw this tonsured head
Nor heard this voice that ninety years have cracked.
Of Baile and Aillinn you need not speak,
All know their tale, all know what leaf and twig,
What juncture of the apple and the yew,
Surmount their bones ; but speak what none have heard.

The miracle that gave them such a death
Transfigured to pure substance what had once
Been bone and sinew ; when such bodies join
There is no touching here, nor touching there,
Nor straining joy, but whole is joined to whole ;
For the intercourse of angels is a light
Where for its moment both seem lost, consumed.

Here in the pitch-dark atmosphere above
The trembling of the apple and the yew,
Here on the anniversary of their death,
The anniversary of their first embrace,
Those lovers, purified by tragedy,
Hurry into each other's arms ; these eyes,
By water, herb and solitary prayer
Made aquiline, are open to that light.
Though somewhat broken by the leaves, that light
Lies in a circle on the grass ; therein

I turn the pages of my holy book.

Plotinus gives readers of these series of poems a suggestion:

> It is not easy to answer the question how far individuality is maintained Yonder. For Plotinus unity is the source and highest character of true existence, separation the very sign of imperfection and defect of reality. Soul Yonder, he says explicitly, is undifferentiated and undivided. Thus individuality in heaven is hardly a prize to be striven for. And yet Souls are Logoi of Spirits, and each represents a distinct entity in the spiritual world. This distinctness can never be destroyed. But the distinctions of Souls, though not lost, are latent in the world of Spirit. Discarnate Souls are in a sense absorbed into the Universal Soul, and help it to govern the world. Plotinus believes in and describes a blessed state in which the Souls of just men made perfect lives in joy and felicity ; but the condition and crown of this felicity is precisely their liberation from all that here below shuts them off from the most complete communion with each other.① (Inge explanation)

The phrases "a light/Where for its moment both seem lost, consumed," may be in keeping with my explanation of "light" or "brightness" in the Introduction of my paper "W. B. Yeats's Duplication: Plotinus and Daisetz Suzuki."② According to Jeffares, "the light is circular to indicate the perfect harmony achieved by lovers. It is possible that the idea of putting priest and lovers into one poem came from Yeats's reading Japanese plays."③ Jeffares, moreover, writes that the grass rising over the bones of the lovers may have been suggested by the *Nishikigi*, one of the Noh plays read by him④.

> The lovers, now that in an aëry body they must sorrow for unconsummated love, are 'tangled up as the grass patterns are tangled.' Again they are

like an unfinished cloth : 'these bodies, having no weft, even now are not come together ; truly a shameful story, a tale to bring shame on the gods.' Before they can bring the priest to the tomb they spend the day 'pushing aside the grass from the overgrown ways in Kefu,' and the countryman who directs them is 'cutting grass on the hill ; when at last the prayer of the priest unites them in marriage the bride says that he has made 'a dream-bridge over wild grass, over the grass I dwell in' ; and in the end bride and bridegroom show themselves for a moment 'from under the shadow of the love-grass.'[5]

The travelling priest of this quoted passage is a Zen monk, or *Unsui*, which means "flowing like a cloud or running water". The grass surmounting their bones suggests an ideal state of Zen thought, that is, the identification of man and nature, or his return to nature, in which the descent to nature parallels the ascent to the One in Plotinus. Such a paralleled identification of ascent and descent is found in "The Three Bushes" in which the Lover means God, the Chambermaid the incarnated Son, and the Lady Holy Ghost, which is cosidered to be Love. Yeats's Trinity means the One as the source of all things, the nous (*νους*), and the soul associated with the body. In the same year (1936) when "The Three Bushes"[6] was composed, Yeats wrote "Imitated from the Japanese" :

A most astonishing thing—
Seventy years have I lived ;

(Hurrah for the flowers of Spring,
For Spring is here again.)

Seventy years have I lived
No ragged beggar-man,

Seventy years have I lived,
Seventy years man and boy,
And never have I danced for joy.

Here the linear "seventy years" are contrasted to the present moment "is" in "Spring is here again," a present moment such as is found in a Japanese *Haiku* or *Hokku*. It is glorious in that *empty* place, the "Emptiness" (*Shunyata*) of Zen Buddhism. Another illustration of Yeats's Trinity is found in section II of "Supernatural Songs":

II. *Ribh denounces Patrick*

An abstract Greek absurdity has crazed the man—
Recall that masculine Trinity. Man, woman, child (a daughter or a son),
That's how all natural or supernatural stories run.

Natural and supernatural with the self-same ring are wed.
As man, as beast, as an ephemeral fly begets, Godhead begets Godhead,
For things below are copies, the Great Smaragdine Tablet said.

Yet all must copy copies, all increase thier kind;
When the conflagration of their passion sinks, damped by the body or the mind,
That juggling nature mounts, her coil in their embraces twined.

The mirror-scalèd serpent is multiplicity,
But all that run in couples, on earth, in flood or air, share God that is but three,
And could beget or bear themselves could they but love as He.

According to Yeats's Trinity, "man" means Father, woman the *nous*, and

child the soul associated with its body. The influence of this interpretation of the Trinity in Plotinus on the Eastern Church was considerable. It means that the Holy Ghost has emanated from the Father as God, to the Son. This leads easily to the following Zen conception:

> Plotinus is a most ardent and wonderful person. . . . Do you remember the story of Buddha who gave a flower to some one, who in his turn gave another a silent gift and so from man to man for cenruries passed on the doctrine of the Zen school? One feels at moments as if one could with a touch convey a vision—that the mystic way and sexual love use the same means—opposed yet parallel existences.⑦ (Yeats)

Some similarity between the mystic way and sexual love suggested above may have led Yeats to Tantric Buddhism or Tantricism. In his earlier years he was much interested in esoteric books, one of which was Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*⑧. This book was published in 6 volumes, in the first of which Blavatsky writes:

> The "Spirit of God moving on Chaos" was symbolized by every nation in the shape of a fiery serpent breathing fire and light upon the primordial waters, until it had incubated cosmic matter and made it assume the annular shape of a serpent with its tail in its mouth—which symbolizes not only eternity and infinitude, but also the globular shape of all the bodies formed within the Universe from that fiery mist. The Universe, as also the Earth and Man, serpent-like, periodically cast off their old skins, to assume new ones after a time of rest. The serpent is surely not a less graceful or a more unpoetical image than the caterpillar or chrysalis from which springs the butterfly, the Greek emblem of the Psyche, the human soul! The "Dragon" was also the symbol of the Logos with the Egyptians, as with the Gnostics. In the *Book of Hermes*, Pymander, the oldest and

> the most spiritual or the Logoi of the Western Continent, appears to Hermes in the shape of a Fiery Dragon of "Light, Fire, and Flame."[9]

This passage gives us a hint about these lines "When the conflagration of their passion sinks, damped by the body or the mind, /The juggling nature mounts, her coil in their embraces twined." In this "coil" the image of a serpent is found. Furthermore, the same image runs: "The mirror-scaled serpent is multiplicity." These two words "coil" and "mirror-scaled" suggest the presence of the One in Plotinus, for the former is an image of the One as the essential entity and the latter is another image of the One as the phenomenological form, that is, multiplicity. Both these images remind us of the well-known Zen saying, "One in Many, Many in One." This duplication between Plotinism and Zen Buddhism stands contrasted to the Gnostics, the latter does not admit the One as found in Plotinus:

> That this world... never began, nor will ever cease to be, but will continue in existence, as long as intelligibles have a subsistence, has been elsewhere shown by us. And that the communion of our soul with the body, is not better for the soul, has been asserted prior to them [the Gnostics]. But that the soul of the universe should receive any thing from ours, is just as if some one adducing the tribe of potters or braziers, in a well-governed city, should blame the whole city [on their account]. It is necessary, however, to be persuaded that the soul of the universe governs in a way very dfferent from ours; and not bound to body as our souls are. For besides ten thousand other differences which we have elsewhere enumerated, this also ought to be considered, that we are bound by the body, the bond being now in reality produced. For the nature of body being bound in the whole soul, binds together with itself whatever it may comprehend; but the soul of the universe is not bound by the things which it binds. For it has dominion over them. Hence it is not passively affected by them.[10]

(Taylor tranlation)

"That juggling nature [which] mounts" "when the conflagration of their passion sinks, damped by the body or the mind," reminds us of the lines on Hanrahan of "The Tower" :

And I myself created Hanrahan
And drove him drunk or sober through the dawn
From somewhere in the neighbouring cottages.
Caught by an old man's juggleries
He stumbled, tumbled, fumbled to and fro
And had but broken knees for hire
And horrible splendour of desire ;
I thought it all out twenty years ago :

Good fellows shuffled cards in an old bawn ;
And when that ancient ruffian's turn was on
He so bewitched the cards under his thumb
That all but the one card became
A pack of hounds and not a pack of cards,
And that he changed into a hare.
Hanrahan rose in frenzy there
And followed up those baying creatures towards—[11]

Yeats envies this old juggler here because he, though old, is able to make Hanrahan rise in frenzy and follow up a pack of hounds created by him.

Ribh remembers his past ecstacy :

III. *Ribh in Ecstacy*

What matter that you understood no word !

Doubtless I spoke or sang what I had heard
In broken sentences. *My Soul had found*
All happiness in its own cause or ground.
Godhead on Godhead in sexual spasm begot
Godhead. Some shadow fell. My soul forgot
Those amorous cries that out of quiet come
And must the common round of day resume. (My italics)

"All happiness" in the italicized lines is reminiscent of the last stanza of "A Dialoque of Self and Soul" :

I am content to follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought ;
Measure the lot ; forgive myself the lot !
When such as I cast out remorse
So great a sweetness flows into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing,
We are blest by everything,
Everything we look upon is blest.

This last stanza may have been derived from the Taoist poem :

I will cast out Wisdom and reject Learning ;
My thoughts shall wander in the Great Void. (*bis*)
Always repenting of wrongs done
Will never bring my heart to rest.
I cast my hook in a single stream ;
But my joy is as though I possessed a Kingdom.
I loose my hair and go singing ;
To the four frontiers men join in my refrain.

This is the purport of my song :
"My thoughts shall wander in the Great Void."[12]

This poem, translated from the Chinese by Arthur Waley, is included in a volume of Chinese poems found in Yeats's library. The difference between "Ribh in Ecstacy" and "A Dialoque of Self and Soul" is that the former seems to have echoes of Indian, not Taoist, thought, which I suppose to be the Tantric. Another correspondence between Plotinus and Tantric thought may be seen in the following ;

There all the barrel-hoops are knit,
There all the serpent-tails are bit,
There all the gyres coverge in one,
There all the planets drop in the Sun. (IV. *There*)

"There" in the quoted lines, as Jeffares points out, derives from Plotinus' passage :

To "live at ease" is There : and to these divine beings verity is mother and nurse, existence and sustenance : all that is not of process but of authentic being they see, and themselves in all : for all is transparent, nothing dark, nothing resistant ; every being is lucid to every other, in breadth and depth ; light runs through light. And each of them contains all within itself, and at the same time sees all in every other, so that everywhere there is all, and all is all and each all, and infinite the glory. *Each of them is great ; the small is great ; the sun, There, is all the stars ; and every star, again, is all the stars and sun.* While some one manner of being is dominant in each, all are mirrored in every other.[13]

(MacKenna translation) (My italics)

However, the italicized part was tranlated by Inge ; "Each of them is great, since the small also is great. *In heaven* the sun is all the stars, and again each and all are the sun."[14] "There" becomes "In heaven." Before, in "A Dialoque of Self and Soul" Yeats wrote ; "intellect no longer knows/*Is* from the *Ought*, or *Knower* from the *Known*—/That is to say, ascends to Heaven ; /Only the dead can be forgiven ; /But when I think of that my tongue's a stone." Accordingly I may interpret "There" in which "all the serpent-tails are bit," referring not only to Blavatsky's passage quoted above, but to Arthur Avalon's translation :

> Listen, O Devi ! Adored of the world, whilst I tell You the very truth that for the worshippers of the Supreme Brahman there is no need for other religious observances. At the very moment of initiation into this Mantra the disciple is filled with Brahman, and for such an one, O Devi ! what is there which is unattainable in all the three worlds ? Against him what can adverse planets... and other spirits avail ?
>
> The very sight of him will drive them to flight with averted faces. *Guarded by the Brahma-mantra, clad with the splendour of Brahman, he is as it were another Sun. What should he fear, then, from any planet ? They flee, frightened like elephants at the sight of a lion, and perish like moths in a flame.* No sin can touch, and none but one as wicked as a suicide can harm, him, who is purified by truth, without blemish, benefactor of all beings, a faithful believer in Brahman. The wicked and sinful who seek to harm him who is initiate in the klowledge of the Supreme Brahman do but harm themselves, for are they not indeed in essence inseparate from the ever-existent One ?[15] (My italics)

The italicized part in this passage helps us to understand "There all the planets drop in the Sun." This "Sun" is considered to be an initiate or worshipper of the Supreme Brahman, that is, a Tantric Buddhist. The last

sentence in the passage quoted above reminds us of Japanese Buddhist Shinran's well-known words : "Since the good can go to the Pure Land, still more the wicked can."[16] Hatred which is considered to be wicked or daemonic [devilish], may lead the soul to God, for it can like a sort of besom clear the soul of everything that is not mind or sense. It is guoted in 'Manuscript of "Leo Africanus" that [Anima Mundi]. . . is purely instinctive & cosmic quality in man which seeks completion in its opposite which is sought by the subconscious self in anima mundi to use your own term while it is the conscious mind that makes the E[vil] P[ersona] in consciously seeking opposite & then emulating it.[17] Here the clause after "while" suggests "the good [men]" in Shinran's words above. On the other hand, "the subconscious self in anima mundi" suggests Original Prayer (*Hongan*) supported by Amida. Hatred can arouse or awaken such a subconscious self by "clearing the soul of everything that is not mind or sense."

V. *Ribh considers Christian Love insufficient*

Why should I seek for love or study it ?
It is of God and passes human wit.
I study hatred with great diligence,
For that's a passion in my own control,
A sort of besom that can clear the soul
Of everything that is not mind or sense.

Why do I hate man, woman or event ?
That is a light my jealous soul has sent.
From terror and deception freed it can
Discover impurities, can show at last
How soul may walk when all such things are past,
How soul could walk before such things began.

Then my delivered soul herself shall learn
A darker knowledge and in hatred turn
From every thought of God mankind has had.
Thought is garment and the soul's a bride
That cannot in that trash and tinsel hide:
Hatred of God may bring the soul to God.

At stroke of midnight soul cannot endure
A bodily or mental furniture.
What can she take until her Master give!
Where can she look until He make the show!
What can she know until He did her know!
How can she live till in her blood He live!

In the first stanza it is stated that love passes human understanding, so it is of Heaven, but that hatred is a passion in our control, "a sort of besom.... sense," so it is of the earth. Hatred is a besom for that purification, through which in the second stanza Ribh's jealous soul, "From terror and deception freed" discovers impurities, and shows how the soul can and may walk prior to appearance and disappearance of all such things. In the third stanza Ribh's delivered soul in hatred shall "turn from every thought of God mankind has had." The soul is "a bride that cannot in that trash and tinsel hide" : thought as a garment must be stripped off. If so, "Hatred of God may bring the soul to God." This "bride" is Shinran's wicked person. In the fourth stanza Shinran's "Mumyo" (Blindness or Darkness) which singnifies ignorance, is suggested. Yeats could find this Buddhist term and it is discussed in Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series*.[18]

Hatred in this poem appears as an obstacle, a difficulty against which man must fight in order to be purified. I described just such a difficulty in my discussion of '"The Fool by the Roadside" and the Revision of *A Vision*'

included in "W. B. Yeat's Duplication : Plotinus and Daisetz Suzuki."[19] It is found in *A Vision* in the first edition (1925), but disappears in the revised *Vision* (1937).[20] In 1934-35, when "Supernatural Songs" was composed, Yeats needed to have hate as such a difficulty. In 1937-38 when the revised *Vision* and "The Statues" were written, that need was no longer there. I believe this change was brought about by the effect of Buddhism upon Yeats.

Yeats ironically criticizes an "intellectual hatred" in Maud Gonne :

> An intellectual hatred is the worst,
> So let her think opinions are accursed.
> Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
> Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
> Because of her opinionated mind
> Barter that horn and every good
> By quiet natures undersood
> For an old bellows full of angry wind? ("A Prayer for my Daughter")

Yeats composed this poem for his daughter Anne in 1919. From that year on into his old age Yeats came to realize that "intellectual hatred" as a fragmentation of the original unity of love and hate, which should properly be integrated into that unity before the fall of the world. His attempts to realize that unity, inspired by Buddhism and especially by Daisetz Suzuki, did much to promote the thought of Yeatsian Vision, such as is set forth in the quoted passage from his *Autobiographies* :

> A reproduction of his [William Morris's] portrait by Watts hangs over my mantelpiece.... Its grave wide-open eyes, like the eyes of some dreaming beast, remind me of the open eyes of Titian's "Ariosto," while the broad vigorous body suggests *a mind that has no need of the intellect*

to remain sane, though it give itself to every fantasy : the dreamer of the Middle Ages.[21](My italics)

"A mind that has no need of the intellect to remain sane" continued to be his Ultimate Mask, which appeared in the third stanza of his late poem "The Statues" composed in 1938, and referred to Suzuki's "Buddha's emptiness" derived from Zen Buddhism. According to Joseph M. Hassett, "Bringing the anima into the light... is thus the first step in exorcising 'intellectual hatred'."[22] Such an exorcizing may be found in the next section :

VI. *He and She*

As the moon sidles up
Must she sidle up,
As trips the scared moon
Away must she trip :
'His light had struck me blind
Dared I stop'.

She sings as the moon sings :
' I am I, am I ;
The greater grows my light
The further that I fly'.
All creation shivers
With that sweet cry.

This poem must be interpreted referring to Indian, Tantric Buddhist thought, in which Shiva is symbolized by the sun, and his wife Shakti by the moon. The "scared moon" means that Shakti is scared by Shiva. Even a worshipper of Shiva is avoided by others "with averted faces." No wonder

Shiva's "light had struck me blind dared I stop." The she who sings in the second stanza, 'I am, am I,' is suggested in the passage that Blavatsky quoted from *The Divine Pymander* :

> The light is I, I am the Nous[the Mind or Manu], I am thy God, and I am far older than the human principle which escapes from the shadow [Darkness, or the concealed Deity]. I am the germ of thought, the resplendent Word, the Son of God. All that thus sees and hears in thee is the Verbum of the Master ; it is the Thought [Mahat] which is God, the Father. The celestial Ocean, the Aether. . . is the Breath of the Father, the life-giving principle, the Mother, the Holy Spirit, . . . for these are not separated, and their union is Life.[23](Dr. Everard translation)

In this poem Yeats associated the belief in Shiva and Shakti with Blavatsky's esoteric knowledge. "That sweet cry" seems to be the cry of their sexual union which according to Tantrism connotes a Unity of Being, so "all creation shivers with that sweet cry." Yeats's linking of Plotinus and Tantrism is also found in the following :

> Those that love beauty of person without carnal desire love for beauty's sake ; those that have—for women, of course—the copulative love, have the further purpose of *self-perpetuation* : as long as they are led by these motives, both are on the right path, though the first have taken the nobler way.[24]
>
> (MacKenna translation) (My italics)

In Tantrism the self-perpetuation is attained at the moment of the sexual union. Evans-Wentz says :

> Unlike most other faiths, Tantricism teaches understanding and sublima-

> tion of the chief force active in humanity, namely, the reproductive force, and opposes the more prevalent and scientifically unsound teaching concerning the forcible suppression of it. By that all-important force in nature, birth is balanced with death ; the current of the *Prānic* River of Life, whereby all worlds and suns are sustained, is kept flowing, and the growth from higher to lower states of consciousness, even to the Final Emancipation of Buddhahood, is made possible. Thus it is that Tantricism propounds a science of sex, such as the late Sir John Woodroffe (pseudonym, Arthur Avalon) suggested in *The Tantra of the Great Liberation*, in *The Serpent Power*, and in *Shakti and Shakta*.[28]

In the poem "He and She" indicate Shiva and his wife Shakti. The passage translated by Avalon from a Tantra text quoted above is a great help in interpreting the first stanza, if Shiva is regarded as the Supreme Brahman. The second stanza suggests the Unity of Shiva and his wife, symbolized by the copulative love of gods. "The greater grows my light/The further that I fly" suggests the moment of that Unity and Shakti's swoon through their copulative act. Thus, *Sushupti*, a Tantric term meaning the state of the moonless night,[29] ends at section V of "Supernatural Songs" ; and from section VI starts *Turiya*, the ultimate state of the full moon,[30] symbolizing Unity of man and the One, Yeats describes this in his essay "The Holy Mountain":

> At five in the morning of the last day of penance he heard a voice towards the west, the direction of Mount Kailas, a woman's voice as it seemed, singing the Mandukya Upanishad's description of the four states of the soul : the waking state corresponding to the letter "*A*", where physical objects are present ; the dreaming state corresponding to the letter "*U*", where mental objects are present ; the state of dreamless sleep corresponding to the letter "*M*", where all seems darkness to the soul, because

all there is lost in Brahma, creator of mental and physical objects; the final state corresponding to the whole sacred word "*Aum*", consciouness bound to no object, bliss bound to no aim, *Turiya*, pure personality.[29]

To approach the state of this full moon, one must return to Chaos and then start to ascend to the Unity of man and the One. Hence the following:

VII. *What Magic Drum ?*

He holds him from desire, all but stops his breathing lest
Primordial Motherhood forsake his limbs, the child no longer rest,
Drinking joy as it were milk upon his breast.

Through light-obliterating garden foliage what magic drum ?
Down limb and breast or down that glimmering belly
move his mouth and sinewy tongue.
What from the forest came ? What beast has licked its young ?

This section of Yeats's poem "Supernatural Songs" suggests the stage just before the ascent to unity, that is, the birth of the New Age. So M. L. Rosental says:

The poem's phrasing, especially the image of a "magic drum" beating ritually from somewhere above, suggests a sacred birth. "Primordial Motherhood" is contained within the imagined primeval male being seen licking his young. Separation of the sexes, which he fears because his intimate, joy-giving contact with the newborn child will be taken from him, has not yet occurred.[29]

The last line of section VII reminds us of the last two lines of "The Second

Coming" :

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born ?

The transition from "The Second Coming" composed in 1919 to "Supernatural Songs," *circa* 1934-35, seems to indicate that Yeats acquired more deepened understanding of Blavatsky's esoteric theosophy, to Indian Tantrism, and Japanese Zen Buddhism. The former poem shows his scepticism toward Christianity, while the latter shows his growing confidence in his own esoteric ideas, which led him to write *A Vision* in 1925 and later publish the revised *Vision* in 1937.

VIII. *Whence had they come ?*

Eternity is passion, girl or boy
Cry at the onset of their sexual joy
'For ever and for ever' ; then awake
Ignorant what Dramatis Personae spake ;
A passion-driven exultant man sings out
Sentences that he has never thought ;
The Flagellant lashes those submissive loins
Ignorant what that dramatist enjoins,
What master made the lash. Whence had they come,
The hand and lash that beat down frigid Rome ?
What sacred drama through her body heaved
When world-transforming Charlemagne was conceived ?

Yeats thinks that passion may be the wing on which man can fly to Eternity. He says that

> imagination divides us from mortality by the immortality of beauty, and binds us to each other by opening the secret doors of all hearts.... Passions, because most living, are most holy... and man shall enter eternity borne upon their wings.[50]

The first three lines of this section show an echo of Tantrism, for the "girl and boy" who "cry... 'For ever and for ever'" aspire to the Unity of Being at the very moment of their sexual joy. Such a "self-perpetuation" (Plotinus), according to Tantrism, is attained at that moment. The other lines show the reference to Yeats's followig passage quoted in Chapter 4 of my latest paper "W. B. Yeats's Duplication : Plotinus and Daisetz Suzuki" :

> For *primary* man I go to the *Commedia dell' Arte* in its decline. The *Will* is weak and cannot create a role, and so, if it transform itself, does so after an accepted pattern, some traditional clown or pantaloon. It has perhaps no object but to move the crowd, and if it "gags" it is that there may be plenty of tropical allusions. In the *primary* phases man must cease to desire *Mask* and Image by ceasing from self-expression, and substitute a motive of service for that of self-expression. Instead of the created *Mask* he has an imitative *Mask* ; and when he recognises this, his *Mask* may become the historical norm, or an image of mankind.... The *antithetical Mask* and *Will* are *free*, and the *primary Mask* and *Will enforced* ; and the *free Mask* and *Will* are personality, while the *enforced Mask* and *Will* are code, those limitations which give strength precisely because they are *enforced*. Personality, no matter how habitual, is a constantly renewed choice, varying from an individual charm, in the more *antithetical* phases, to a hard objective dramatisation ; but when the *primary* phases begin man is moulded more and more from without.[51]

Section VIII of "Supernatural Songs" refers to the *primary* phases, for some

of the evidences contain "frigid Rome" and "Charlemagne" who transforms the world, the turning point [the 22nd phase] from the *antithetical* phases to the *primary* phases. The next two sections also refer to the phases of the moon.

IX. *The Four Ages of Man*

He with body waged a fight,
But body won; it walks upright.

Then he struggled with the heart;
Innocence and peace depart.

Then he struggled with the mind;
His proud heart he left behind.

Now his wars on God begin;
At stroke of midnight God shall win.

X. *Conjunctions*

If Jupiter and Saturn meet,
What a crop of mummy wheat!

The sword's a cross; thereon He died:
On breast of Mars the goddess sighed.

In section IX, the first couplet refers to that quarter of instinct before the 8th phase which is symbolized by the Earth; and the second couplet to that quarter of passion before the 15th phase which is symbolized by the Water;

the third couplet to that quarter of thought before the 22nd phase which is symbolized by the Air ; and the fourth couplet to that quarter of soul before the 1st phase which is symbolized by the Fire. In a letter to Mrs. Shakespear dated 24 July 1934, Yeats wrote :

> The Earth = Every early nature-dominated civilisation
> The Water = An armed sexual age, chivalry, Froissart's chronicles
> The Air = From the Renaissance to the end of the 19th Century
> The Fire = The purging away of our civilisation by our hatred
> (on these two I have a poem)[32]

On 7 August 1934 Yeats wrote in another letter to her :

> They are the four ages of individual man, but they are also the four ages of civilisation. . . . First age, *earth*, negative functions. Second age, *water*, blood, sex. Third age, *air*, breath, intellect. Fourth age, *fire*, soul etc. In the first two the moon comes to the full—resurrection of Christ and Dionysus. Man becomes rational, no longer driven from below or above.[33]

In section X, the first couplet refers to the *antithetical* phases, while the second couplet refers to the *primary* phases, for according to Yeats's *Vision* (1937) these two planets, Jupiter and Saturn, belong to the *antithetical* phases, while Mars belongs to the *primary* phases. According to A. N. Jeffares Yeats wrote about section X in his letter on 25 August 1934 :

> I was told, you may remember, that my two children would be Mars conjunctive Venus, Saturn conjunctive Jupiter respectively ; and so they were—Ann the Mars-Venus personality. Then I was told that they would develop so that I could study in them the alternating dispensations, the Chrisitian or objective, then the Antithetical or subjective. The Christian

is the Mars-Venus—it is democratic. The Jupiter-Saturn civilisation is born free among the most cultivated, out of tradition, out of rule.[33]

The title of the next section, "A Needle's Eye," means the entrance and exit of the other world.

XI. *A Needle's Eye*

All the stream that's roaring by
Came out of a needle's eye;
Things unborn, things that are gone,
From needle's eye still goad it on.

This is not the entrance into Plotinus' Heaven, in which such a rush is never seen, for very few can be admitted there. This assertion is confirmed in the last section:

XII. *Meru*

Civilisation is hooped together, brought
Under a rule, under the semblance of peace
By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought,
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
Ravening through century after century,
Ravening, raging, and uprooting that he may come
Into the desolation of reality:
Egypt and Greece, good-bye, and good-bye, Rome!
Hermits upon Mount Meru or Everest,
Caverned in night under the drifted snow,
Or where that snow and winter's dreadful blast

Beat down upon their naked bodies, know
That day brings round the night, that before dawn
His glory and his monuments are gone. (My italics)

Any civilisation is doomed to disintegrate itself, so we should see the dawn of a new age beyond its disintegration, "desolation of reality." That seeing is a sort of thinking. "Man's life is thought" might be given a hint from the passage on Plotinus, for Inge says that

> There is a beautiful passage of Lotze which is entirely in accordance with the principles of Neoplatonism, and which Plotinus might have uttered if he had lived in a happier period than the third century. 'As in the great fabric of the universe the creative Spirit imposed upon itself unchangeable laws by which it moves the world of phenomena, diffusing the fullness of the highest good throughout innumerable forms and events, and distilling it again from them into the bliss of consciousness and enjoyment; so must man, acknowledging the same laws, develop given existence into a knowledge of its value, and the value of his ideals into a series of external forms proceeding from himself. To this labour we are called; and the most prominent intellects in all ages have devoted themselves to the perfecting of the outward relations of life, the subjugation of nature, the advancement of the useful arts, the improvement of social institutions, though they knew that the true bliss of existence lies in those quiet moments of solitary communion with God when all human daily toil, all culture and civilisation, the gravity and the burden of noisy life, shrink into a mere preliminary exercise of powers.'[35]

Furthermore Inge adds Tagore's words: 'Living one's own life in truth is living the life of all the race.'[36] The italicized four lines show Yeats's affirmative descent, which is perhaps far from Plotinian ascent, but when

one 'comes into the desolation of reality' after the fall of their 'baseless fabric of this vision' (Shakespeare), ascent and descent should concur in a Yeatsian 'tragic joy.'

Hermits... know
That day brings round the night, that before dawn
His glory and his monuments are gone.

These lines remind us of that refrain in "The Black Tower" which underlies the Yeatsian idea of the phases of the moon.

Chapter 2 "The Gyres"

Yeats placed this poem at the head of his last collection of poems, no doubt regarding it as suitable to represent that collection, in which he tried to find the ever-existent Being in the transient world of Becoming.

The Gyres

The GYRES! the gyres! Old Rocky Face, look forth;
Things thought too long can be no longer thought,
For beauty dies of beauty, worth of worth,
And ancient lineaments are blotted out.
Irrational streams of blood are staining earth;
Empedocles has thrown all things about;
Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy;
We that look on but laugh in tragic joy.

The last line of "Supernatural Songs," "[before dawn] His glory and his

monuments are gone," is a harbinger of this quoted stanza. "We" here "that look on but laugh in tragic joy" are placed in the West, while "Hermits" of "Supernatural Songs" in the East, that is, "upon Mount Meru or Everest." The adjective "rocky" of "Rocky Face" possesses an ambivalent, twofold meaning, to be "firm like a rock" and to be "unsteady." In Zen Buddhism such ambivalence is common.①

On the other hand, Inge recapitulates Plotinus' statement :

> In virtue of what attributes do we call the spiritual world immoral and perpetual ? In what does perpetuity consist ? Are perpetuity and eternity identical, or is a thing eternal by being perpetual ? In any case eternity must depend on one common character, but it is an idea composed of many elements, or a nature either derived from the things Yonder or united to them, or seen in them, so that all spiritual objects taken together make one eternity, which nevertheless is complex in its powers and in its essence. When we look at its complex powers, we may call it Being or Reality, as the substratum of spiritual objects ; we may call it Movement, as their life ; Rest, as their permanence ; as the plurality of these principles, we may call it Difference ; as their unity, Identity. A synthesis of these principles brings them back to life alone, suppressing their differences, and considering their inexhaustible activity, the identity and immutability of their action, their life, and their thought, in which there is no change or break. In *contemplating* all things thus, we *contemplate* eternity ; we see a life which is permanent in its identity, which possesses all things at all times present to it, which is not first one thing and then another, but all things at once ; which is perfect and indivisible.②
>
> (My italics)

This passage helps us understand the words "look forth" that appear in the first line of "The Gyres." The next passage also by Inge enables us to better

interpret that poem.

> If you are perplexed because the One is none of those things which you know, apply yourself to them first, and look forth out of them ; but so look, as not to direct your intellect to externals. For it does not lie in one place and not in another, but it is present everywhere to him who can touch it, and not to him who cannot. As in other matters one cannot think of two things at once, and must add nothing extraneous to the object of thought, if one wishes to identify oneself with it, so here we may be sure that it is impossible for one who has in his soul any extraneous image to conceive of the One while that image distracts his attention. Just as we said that Matter must be without qualities of its own, if it is to receive the forms of all things, so *a fortiori* must the Soul be formless if it is to receive the fullness and illumination of the Frist Principle. If so, the Soul must forsake all that is external, and turn itself wholly to that which is within ; it will not allow itself to be distracted by anything external, but will ignore them all, as at first by not attending to them, so now last by not seeing them ; it will not even know itself ; and so it will come to the vision of the One and will be united with it ; and then, after a sufficient converse with it, it will return and bring word, if it be possible , to others of its heavenly intercourse. . . . Perhaps, however, a Soul which has seen much of the heavenly world may think politics unworthy of itself and may prefer to remain above. God, as Plato says, is not far from every one of us ; he is present with all, though they know him not. Men flee away from him, or rather from themselves. They cannot grasp him from whom they have fled, nor when they have lost themselves can they find another, any more than a child who is mad and out of his mind can know his father. But he who has learnt to know himself will know also whence he is.③
>
> (Inge explanation)

This passage helps you "look forth" out of things after having applied yourself to them. I have described in *Yeats and Zen* how I consider "Rocky Face" to be "original face" Daisetz Suzuki refers to in *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series*. That original face or "original abode" lodges within your inmost self. In the first stanza the inmost self is called on to apply itself to things in the world of Becoming. Even after uniting with them, you should be an onlooker. Thus you may laugh in tragic joy. Yeats proceeds to sing:

> What matter though numb nightmare ride on top,
> And blood and mire the sensitive body stain?
> What matter? Heave no sigh, let no tear drop,
> *A greater, a more gracious time has gone;*
> For painted forms or boxes of make-up
> In ancient tombs I sighed, but not again;
> What matter? Out of cavern comes a voice,
> And all it knows is that one word 'Rejoice!' (My italics)

The italicized line suggests that the age of Christianity has nearly gone, but a new dawn is not yet come. In the darkness before dawn, "out of cavern comes a voice, and all it knows is that one word 'Rejoice!" The voice out of the cavern is that of the inmost self, the original abode or original face. Such a cavern is placed along with Rocky Face in the world of Becoming. Yeats tries to pursue a new One instead of the Christian God or Plotinian One. However, he must seek for such an absolute One beyond disintegration of this order, so that he cannot but choose the descent into Becoming, not Plotinian ascent to Being. He proceeds to sing:

> Conduct and work grow coarse, and coarse the soul,
> What matter? *Those that Rocky Face holds dear,*

Lovers of horses and of women, shall,
From marble of a broken sepulchre,
Or dark betwixt the polecat and the owl,
Or any rich, dark nothing disinter
The workman, noble and saint, and all things run
On that unfashionable gyre again. (My italics)

In the italicized lines the Rocky Face and those it loves are the result of the unity of the Rocky Face and the world of Becoming, or its descent to that world. The lovers *"disinter the workman, noble and saint" "from marble of a broken sepulchre, or dark betwixt the polecat and the owl or any rich, dark nothing."* Both the polecat and the owl are beasts of prey, while the latter may be a prophet like a Greek Minerva. These beasts of prey with supernatural cunning or wisdom hang or hover about in the dark graveyard where they disinter the workman, noble and saint, from *"any rich, dark nothing"* under the marble of a broken sepulchre. This *"nothing"* was considered to be a gain at the end of Yeats's pursuit, but he continues to pursue the descent towards Absolute Emptiness, which he discovers in the process of compoing "The Statues."

Chapter 3 "The Statues"

In chapter 11 of my book *Yeats and Zen*, I attempted to show Daisetz Suzuki's influence upon Yeats in the process of composition of this poem.① It began to be written on 9 April 1938, though Curtis Bradford suggests April-June 1938. In the same year Daisetz Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* was published in Kyoto, Japan.② This book, which was in Yeats's library, includes a noteworthy passage which may have influenced "The Statues":

> As long as it [the mind] is closely watched every minute of the hour, it is like a newly-adopted cat kept on a string all the time, there is no freedom for it, and without freedom it does not function to its full capacity. The ultimate objective is to have the cat wander about freely inside and outside the house and not to do any harm even to the birds kept with her. To apply this to the mastering of swordsmanship, the utmost degree of perfection is gained when your mind is no more troubled with how to strike the opponent and yet knows how to use the sword in the most effective way when you stand before him. You just strike him down, forgetting that you have a sword in your hand and that somebody is standing against you. No idea of personality is here—all is empty : the opponent, yourself, the striking sword, the sword-holding arms ; not only that, even the idea of emptiness is also done away with. From this absolute emptiness there is the most wonderful display of activities.③

The preface of the book is dated "April, 1938." If a copy of the book was sent to Yeats in Ireland immediately after its publication, it is possible that he read Suzuki's book in April-June 1938. To my mind, Yeats may have received that Zen book while composing "The Statues," for perhaps it took its mail parcel only about two weeks to arrive in Europe. I believe when he was reading the quoted passage from Suzuki's book, he realised that Plotinus' void or vacuity, which possesses the same meaning as "empty" in *The Stare's Nest by My Window* included in "Meditations in Time of Civil War," is antithetical to Suzuki's emptiness Suzuki writes of, "Buddha's emptiness," which is found in "The Statues." In *Yeats* and *Zen*, I quote this striking line found in Yeats's manuscripts and typescripts :

> Budda[Buddha] has found a great emptiness.④

After the emergence of this affirmative 'Buddha,' the primary "empty,"

which had seemed to Yeats to be negative, gradually disappearing, changes into the antithetical "empty," which seemed to him to be affirmative. One example of that change is the words "his eyes were empty" (F. 1r) which change into "his measured eye balls" (F. 5r). In his essay "On the Boiler," Yeats says that

> There are moments when I am certain that art must once again accept those Greek proportions which carry into plastic art the Pythagorean numbers, those faces which are divine because all there is *empty and measured*.[5] (My italics)

In this context *empty* may have seemed to Yeats to be the antithetical, affirmative "empty," taking into account the word "divine," symbolizing the Yeatsian full moon phase. Hence *empty* in reference to Pythagoras should be antithetical. On the other hand, Plotinus' "empty" and "emptiness" can be considered to belong to the primary phases which are confirmed in Inge's recapitulation of a statement by Plotinus:

> Unchanging life in the timeless All—this is what he desires, and this the vision [of the One] promises him. But when this is the ground of his yearning for the Absolute, he is not content with a momentary glimpse of the super-existent; he wishes to have done with temporal existence altogether. 'Leave nothing of myself in me,' is his prayer.... In this mood he is willing to accept what to many is the self-stultification of mysticism, that the self, in losing its environment, loses also its content, and grasps zero instead of the infinite. All distinct consciousness is the consciousness of a not-self, of externality; and this is just what he hopes to lose for ever. *This love for the Absolute seems to be anti-selfish emotion raised to a passion. It can hardly express itself except by negations, or by such symbols as darkness, emptiness, utter stillness.*[6] (My italics)

Plotinus' *emptiness* is as primary as his void or vacuity, but Pythagoras' "empty and measured" belongs to the antithetical phases, for the former is represented by the darkness of the dark moon, the latter by the brightness or light of the full moon.

In this way we may understand more deeply "The Statues" :

Pythagoras planned it. Why did the people stare?
His numbers, though they moved or seemed to move
In marble or in bronze, lacked character.
But boys and girls, pale from the imagined love
Of solitary beds, knew what they were,
That passion could bring character enough,
And pressed at midnight in some public place
Live lips upon a plummet-measured face.

No! Greater than Pythagoras, for the men
That with a mallet or a chisel modelled these
Calculations that look but casual flesh, put down
All Asiatic vague immensities,
And not the banks of oars that swam upon
The many-headed foam at Salamis.
Europe put off that foam when Phidias
Gave women dreams and dreams their looking-glass.

One image crossed the many-headed, sat
Under the tropic shade, grew round and slow,
No Hamlet thin from eating flies, a fat
Dreamer of the Middle Ages. *Empty eyeballs knew*
That knowledge increases unreality, that
Mirror on mirror mirrored is all the show.

When gong and conch declare the hour to bless
Grimalkin crawls to Buddha's emptiness.

When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,
What stalked through the Post Office? What intellect,
What calculation, number, measurement, replied?
We Irish, born into that ancient sect
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide
And by its formless spawning fury wrecked,
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
The lineaments of a plummet-measured face. (My italics)

Before interpreting "The Statues", we should understand Yeats's own conception of Character. William Walsh describes it in this way:

It hardly needs to be added that it [character] is not to be found in Yeats's drama, which is singularly undramatic; it is present as an element, the ordering element, in the base of experience of self and others which is the source and impulse of that elaborate superstructure of myth, intuition, symbol and absurdity— 'the system'. And it is present as a reverberation, adding depth and dignity, to some of his finest verse. For Yeats personal life is in essence a duality (the Vision of Michael Robertes is a double vision), and the relation between the two poles is one of conflict. The life of character is not an interior monologue, but 'a dialogue between self and soul', the tension between mask and will, the opposition of man and daimon, the debate of *hic* and *ille*. Conflict is often expressed by Yeats in terms which, although idiosyncratic in utterance, seem for all that to be a version of traditional oppositions: the opposition of 'sensual music' and the 'monuments of unageing intellect', of 'the dying animal' and 'the artifice of eternity'.... This is, of course, evidence of the

> European ancestry of his language, but it would be misleading to take these antitheses as meaning that for Yeats the radical conflict is, as these examples may suggest, the opposition within the character of part against part, of particular power against particular power. Conflict for Yeats is not a partial domestic brawl but a total 'tragic war'. It is the whole of character under one *persona* tensed against the whole of character under another *persona*. And these *personae* or masks are neither disguises, nor aspirations, nor partial representations, but true expressions, charged with the full energy of the complete person.⑦

Boys and girls pressed their live lips upon a plummet-measured face of some statue that Pythagoras planned, "in some public place at midnight," which approximates the phase of the darkest moon, suggesting that passion could bring character enough. Inge's "anti-selfish emotion raised to a passion"⑧ is found here. Character seems to Yeats to be created from the contradiction or conflict between the self and the mask. Passion puts that coflict in motion. In this case the plummet-measured face may be seen as the mask of boys and girls who possess their own selves.

In the second stanza, "these calculations that look but casual flesh" make up the Greek masks of their statues. The Greek who modelled these masks could "put down" "all Asiatic vague immensities," which suggest the primary phases.

The statue of Buddha synthesizing the Greek mask and Suzuki's emptiness, appears in the third stanza. The italicization of its latter half, along with the adjective "empty" and the noun "emptiness," suggests the approach of the epoch-making phase of the moon. "Gong and conch to bless the hour" suggest the starting time, that is, dawn. Its last line,

Grimalkin crawls to Buddha's emptiness

shows the contrast between *"Grimalkin"* and *"Buddha's emptiness,"* for the former is approaching the phase of the darkest moon, while the latter suggests the aspired phase of the full moon. They are antithetical. In short, Plotinus' enptiness, as belonging to the primary phases, is antithetical to Suzuki's *"Buddha's emptiness,"* which suggests the place of "Daimon[s'] pure act" as Yeats puts it in a marginal note in his copy of Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism, the First Series*.[9] If that marginal note indicates that Daimon should act purely, the two head lines of the next stanza,

> When Pearse summoned Cuchulain to his side,
> What stalked through the Post Office?

offers the Central Post Office of Dublin as that place for Daimon's pure act, where Pearse, the leader of the Easter Rising, summoned the Daimon of Cuchulain to his side. At that time it was a proud Irish man who, like the fisherman in "The Tower," stalked through the Post Office. He possessed that inclination towards the transcendental mode which is one of two inclinations of Zen Buddhism.[10] This mode or inclination is one of Yeats's masks, and seems to Yeats to be antithetical, (for "intellect," along with "calculation," "number," and "measurement," may be antithetical. This "intellect" may derive from the Greek "*νους*" which Plotinus ranks next to the One.) Such "intellect" reminds us of Sato' sword as a symbol of intellect. Yeats has in mind "a glittering sword out of the east."[11]
The two lines

> We Irish, born into that ancient sect
> But thrown upon this filthy modern tide

represent the antithesis between the ancient cultures of Greece and Japan on the one hand, represented in Yeats's mind by the Pythagorean intellect and

Sato's sword,[12] and the objective, primary phase of the dark moon on the other.

> [We Irish] Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace
> The lineaments of a plummet-measured face.

This "plummet-measured face" represents one of Yeats's masks toward which "We Irish" should climb through "our proper dark" where our drama, that is, the conflict between Self and Mask seems to lie. In conclusion, the quotation from Suzuki's *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* which you see at the head of this chapter, suggests the significance of "Buddha's emptiness" which is in contrast to that of "Grimalkin," for the former means absolute freedom and the latter refers to "We. . . thrown upon this filthy modern tide/And by its formless spawning fury wrecked" ; the former means "the cat" which can "wander about freely inside and outside the house and not to do any harm even to the birds kept with her" and the latter "a newly-adopted cat kept on a string all the time," "in which there is no freedom," and which "does not function to its full capacity."

Before proceeding to the conclusion, I would like to add a word concerning the third stanza of "The Statues," the last line of which suggests an antithesis between Plotinism and Buddhism. In that line "Grimalkin [manipulated by witches] crawls to [the full moon light symbolizing] Buddha's emptiness." If so, "Bringing the anima into the light—letting it speak—is thus the first step in exorcising 'intellectual hatred'."[13] We read in the following passage from Hassett :

> In Jung's view, animus and anima ought to operate as archetypes containing all one sex's ancestral experience of the other, filters through which the opposite sex is perceived : man's eternal image of the feminine and

> woman's of man. When, however, the conscious and unconscious minds are out of harmony, the animus and anima 'confront the conscious mind in personified form and behave rather like systems set off from the personality, or like part souls.' Jung believed that such personifications can be dissolved and converted into bridges to the unconscious by listening to them, thereby freeing their contents from the unconscious and, as Jung says, using Yeats's symbol of darkness and light, 'bring[ing] these contents into the light.' Bringing the anima into the light—letting it speak —is thus the first step in exorcising 'intellectual hatred'. That is why Yeats found that articulating and expressing his hatred opened the door to the creative power of the collective unconsciousness which Yeats, using Henry More's name for the world soul, referred to as the *anima mundi*.⑱

Plotinism taught Yeats the ascent to Heaven beyond the difficulty, while Suzuki's Buddhism taught him rather the descent to *anima* immanent in manhood, freeing it from darkness to the light symbolized by the full moon of Yeats's phases of the moon. Maud Gonne's intellect, the exorcising of which is suggested in that last line of the third stanza, "Grimalkin crawls to Buddha's emptiness," is a sort of *anima*.

Conclusion

Yeats who had written "The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus" on 19 August 1931, also wrote "News for the Delphic Oracle" probably during 1938. According to Jeffares' *New Commentary*⑲ the former affirmatively refers to Plotius, while the latter regarded as a parody of the former ironically refers to him. You may read these two poems for comparison.

"The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus"

Behold that great Plotinus swim,
Buffeted by such seas;
Bland Rhadamanthus beckons him,
But the Golden Race looks dim,
Salt blood blocks his eyes.

Scattered on the level grass
Or winding through the grove
Plato there and Minos pass,
There stately Pythagoras
And all the choir of Love.

"News for the Delphic Oracle"

I

There all the golden codgers lay,
There the silver dew,
And the great water sighed for love,
And the wind sighed too.
Man-picker Niamh leant and sighed
By Oisin on the grass;
There sighed amid his choir of love
Tall Pythagoras.
Plotinus came and looked about,
The salt-flakes on his breast,
And having stretched and yawned awhile
Lay sighing like the rest.

II

Straddling each a dolphin's back

And steadied by a fin,
Those Innocents re-live their death,
Their wounds open again.
The ecstatic waters laugh because
Their cries are sweet and strange,
Through their ancestral patterns dance,
And the brute dolphins plunge
Until, in some cliff-sheltered bay
Where wades the choir of love
Proffering its sacred laurel crowns,
They pitch their burdens off.

III

Slim adolescence that a nymph has stripped,
Peleus on Thetis stares.
Her limbs are delicate as an eyelid,
Love has blinded him with tears;
But Thetis' belly listens.
Down the mountain walls
From where Pan's cavern is
Intolerable music falls.
Foul goat-head, brutal arm appear,
Belly, shoulder, bum,
Flash fishlike; nymphs and satyrs
Copulate in the foam.

The former represents Plotinus' ascent from the earth or body, while the latter suggests Yeats's tendency to separation from Plotinus' ascent, represented in "Supernatural Songs," though "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" can be indicated as the harbinger of his separation from that ascent. The

definite separation in Yeats's poems is seen in "The Statues," the composition of which seems to me to have been aided by Yeats's reading of Plotinus' passage :

> Recall your thoughts inward, and if, while contemplating yourself, you do not perceive yourself beautiful, imitate the statuary, who, when he desires a beautiful statue, cuts away what is superfluous, smooths and polishes what is rough, and never desists until he has given it all the beauty his art is able to effect. In this manner must you proceed, by lopping what is luxuriant, directing what is oblique, and, by purgation, illustrating what is obscure ; and thus continue to polish and beautify your statue, until the divine splendour of Virtue shines upon you, and Temperance, seated in pure and holy majesty, rises to your view. If you become thus purified, residing in yourself, and having nothing any longer to impede this unity of mind, and no farther mixture to be found within, but perceiving your whole self to be a true light, and light alone ; a light which, though immense, is not measured by any magnitude, nor limited by any circumscribing figure, but is everywhere immeasurable, as being greater than every measure, and more excellent than every quantity : if, perceiving yourself thus improved, and trusting solely to yourself, as no longer requiring a guide, fix now steadfastly your mental view, for with the intellectual eye alone can such immense beauty be perceived. But, if your eye is yet infected with any sordid concern, and not thoroughly refined, while it is on the stretch to behold this most shining spectacle, it will be immediately darkened and incapable of intuition, though some one should declare the spectacle present, which it might be otherwise able to discern. For, it is here necessary, that the perceiver and the thing perceived should be similar to each other, before true vision can exist. Thus the sensitive eye can never be able to survey the orb of the sun, unless strongly endued with solar fire, and participating largely of the vivid ray. Every one,

> therefore, must become divine, and of godlike beauty, before he can gaze upon a god, and the beautiful itself. Thus proceeding in the right way of beauty, he will first ascent into the region of intellect....[②] (Taylor translation)

This passage states that Yeats's words "empty and measured," referring to Pythagoras, belongs to the antithetical phases of the moon, to which "Buddha's emptiness" also belongs. When Yeats found his own ultimate mask in the passage above, he had written "The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus" (1931) and had not yet completed "News for the Delphic Oracle" (1938). Irony in the latter poem shows his separation from Plotinus and is underlaid by that descent to *anima*, which Suzuki's Buddhism suggests, as "an intellectual hatred," Plato's egg ("yolk and white of the one shell"), or Cybele's "Attis." And finally, the imagery of nymphs and satyrs "copulatig in the foam" which appears in the latter poem, is also that of *anima*, the image of "foam" suggesting Aphrodite. "Silence," which Suzuki suggests as a primordial element such as *anima*, is illustrated in Yeats's later poem "Long-legged Fly" (1937-38).

> Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
> His mind moves upon silence.

Suzuki suggests the meaning of "silence" in the passage:

> As long as Enlightenment is the outcome of a most strenuous spiritual effort, it is a positive state of mind in which lies hidden an inexhaustible reservoir of possibilities; it is a unity in which a world of multitudinosity is lodged.[③]

However, A. E. (George Russell, 1867-1935) indicates: "The Zen philosopher

discovered the possibility of a Nirvana in this world very different from that mysterious cosmic Nirvana of the founder of Buddhism.④

The former Nirvana leads to freeing *anima* from the unconscious, that is, exorcising "an intellectual hatred," and to the transformation of the relations to the object which gives the object a new face, because the completion of the *tapas* exercise "introverts the relations to the object and they, deprived of energic value, sink into the unconscious, where they enter into new relations with other unconscious contents, and then reassociate themselves with the object in new form."⑤ It is noteworthy that "Grimalkin" does not *climb* up but *crawls* to "Buddha's emptiness," one of Yeats's last masks. In the light of his idea of the phases of the moon, "Buddha's emptiness" (*Shunyata*) suggests the destination, and "Grimalkin" the starting point, for this cat manipulated by witches represents *anima* to be freed from the dark world of the unconscious. The former and the latter appear to us as an antithesis. Plotinus' emptiness, by which the "love for the Absolute" is expressed and "anti-selfish emotion raised to a passion" cannot but be considered to suggest the starting point, not the destination. Accordingly "Buddha's emptiness" suggested to Yeats by Daisetz Suzuki is in an antithetical position to Plotinian emptiness, which is to free *anima* from the dark underground of the unconscious. Another Zen scholar, Kaiten Nukariya says that

> life is not an ocean of birth, disease, old age, and death, nor the vale of tears, but the holy temple of Buddha, the Pure Lane, where one can enjoy the bliss of Nirvana.⑥

When in this world you free your *anima* from the dark unconscious after Enlightenment, *Satori*, or *Samadhi*—in other words the completion of the *tapas* exercise—you will find the former Nirvana in the epitaph: "Cast a

cold eye/On life, on death./Horseman, pass by!"

Note

Introduction "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" Reconsidered

① This Introduction was written as a reconsideration of "W. B. Yeats's Duplication : Plotinus and Daisetz Suzuki," Chapter 6, included in *Studies in Western Literature*, No. 16 (1995) published by Department of Western Literature, Otani University.

② William Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. II (Longman, 1918), pp. 137-138.

③ W. Inge, *The Philosoqhy of Plotinus*, 2 volumes (Longman, 1917-1918).

④ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 29-30.

⑤ This poem was written between July and December 1927. (Jeffares) In *Yeats and Zen* (Kyoto, 1983) I have already referred to Yeats's composition of this poem after his reading D. T. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series* (London, 1927).

⑥ W. Inge, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 201-202.

⑦ *Loc. cit.*

⑧ *Loc. cit.*

⑨ *Loc. cit.*

⑩ *Loc. cit.*

Chapter 1 "Supernatural Songs"

① Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, Vol. II, p. 22.

② S. Naito's in *Studies in Western Literature*, No. 15 (Otani University, 1995).

③ Jeffares, *A New Commentary on W. B. Yeats's Poems* (Macmillan, 1984), pp. 352-353.

④ *Ibid.*

⑤ Yeats, *Essays & Introductions* (Macmillan, 1969), p. 234.

⑥ See *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Macmillan, 1950), pp. 341-343.

⑦ A. Wade, *The Letters of W. B. Yeats* (Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 715.

⑧ H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 6 volumes (The Theosophical Society, 1888-1910).

⑨ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 141.

⑩ G. R. S. Mead, ed., *Select Works of Plotinus* (Bell & Songs, 1914), pp. 55-56.

⑪ Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Macmillan, 1950), pp. 220-221.

⑫ Arthur Waley, trans., *A Hundred & Seventy Chinese Poems* (Alfred A. Pnopf, 1922), p. 92. According to *Chinese Poems* (George Allen & Unwin, 1946), which was translated by Arthur Waley, the translation of this poem is revised :

> I will cast out Wisdom and reject Learning.
> My thoughts shall wander in the Great Void (*bis*)
> Always repenting of wrongs done
> Will never bring my heart to rest.
> I cast my hook in a single stream ;
> But my joy is as though I possessed a Kingdom.
> I loose my hair and go singing ;
> To the four frontiers men join in my refrain.
> This is the purport of my song :
> "My thoughts shall wander in the Silent Void."

⑬ Stephen T. MacKenna, trans., *Plotinus : The Divine Mind, Being the Treatises of the Fifth Ennead*, Vol. IV (Philip Lee Warner, 1926), p. 77,

⑭ Inge, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 86.

⑮ Arthur Avalon, trans., *Tantra of the Great Liberation* (Luzac, 1913), pp. 27-28.

⑯ Shinran's passage quoted from *Tannisho*, that is, one of the Japanese Shin Buddhist scriptures, and translated by S. Naito.

⑰ Quoted from 'The Manuscript of "Leo Africanus"' edited by S. T. Adams & G. M. Harper, which was published in *Yeats Annual*, No1 (Macmillan, 1982) edited by Richard J. Finneran.

⑱ Daisetz Suzuki, *Essay in Zen Buddhism, First Series* (Luzac, 1927).

⑲ S. Naito's included in *Studies in Western Literature*, No. 16 (Otani University, 1996).

⑳ The revised *Vision* (Macmillan, 1937).

㉑ Yeats, *The Autobiographies* (Macmillan, 1926), p. 141.

㉒ Joseph M. Hasset, *Yeats & the Poetics of Hate* (Gill & Macmillan, 1986), p. 76.

㉓ Quoted in Blavatsky, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 141, from Everard, trans., *The Divine*

Pymander (George Redway,1884).

㉔ S. T. MacKenna, trans., *Plotinus : Psychic & Physical Treatises ; Comprising the Second & Third Enneads*, Vol. II (P. L. Warner, 1921), p. 55.

㉕ W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* (Oxford University Press, 1954 ; reprint, 1981), p. 61.

㉖ H. R. Bachchan, *W. B. Yeats & Occultism* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1965), p. 180.

㉗ *Ibid*.

㉘ Yeats, *Essays & Introductions* (Macmillan, 1961), p. 457.

㉙ M. L. Rosenthal, *Running to Paradise : Yeats's Poetic Art* (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 329-330.

㉚ Yeats, *Essays & Introductions*, pp. 112-113.

㉛ Yeats, *A Vision* (Macmillan, 1937), p. 84.

㉜ Jeffares, *op. cit*., p. 357.

㉝ *Ibid*.

㉞ *Ibid*.

㉟ Inge, *op. cit*., Vol. II, pp. 189-190.

㊱ *Ibid*., p. 225.

Chapter 2 "The Gyres"

① Shiro Naito, *Yeats and Zen* (Yamaguchi, 1983), p. 43.

② W. Inge, *The Philosophy of Plotinus,* II (Longman, 1918), pp. 92-93.

③ *Ibid*., II, pp. 135-136.

Chapter 3 "The Statues"

① S. Naito, *op. cit*., Chapter 11, pp. 100-135.

② Daisetz Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism & Its Influence on Japanese Culture* (The Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938).

③ S. Naito, *op. cit*., pp. 97-98.

④ Quoted in Jon Stallworthy, *Vision & Revision in Yeats's Last Poems* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 132.

⑤ Yeats, *On the Boiler* (Cuala Press, 1939), p. 37.

⑥ Inge, *op. cit*., II, pp. 158-159.

⑦ William Walsh, *The Use of Imagination* (Chatto & Windus, 1959 ; Penguin, 1966),

Chapter 8, p. 191.

⑧ Inge, *op. cit.*, II, p. 159.

⑨ Quoted in S. Naito, *op. cit.*, p. 50 from the copy of *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series* stored in Yeats's library.

⑩ S. Naito, *op. cit.*, Chapter 8, pp. 69-77.

⑪ Quoted from "The Tower" in S. Naito's included in *Studies in Western Literature*, No. 16 (Otani University, 1996).

⑫ In *ibid.*, p. 69, the author says that Sato's sword is the symbol and the mask meaning "Ever-Being", which is defined by the adjectives, "unchangeable" and "glittering."

⑬ Hasset, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

⑭ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

① Jeffares, *op. cit.*

② Kathleen Raine & G. W. Harper, eds., *Thomas Taylor the Platonist* (Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 157-158.

③ Daisetz Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series*, p. 132.

④ Monk Gibbon, *The Living Torch* (Macmillan, 1937), pp. 92-93.

⑤ J. J. Clark, ed., *Jung on the East* (Routledge, 1995), p. 140.

⑥ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

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A. Norman Jeffares, *A New Commentary on the Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Macmillan, 1984).