

Jung, Eastern Religion, and the Language of the Imagination

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ALL OF JUNG'S major writing on Buddhism and on Eastern religion generally, were undertaken between 1936–1944, with the exception of 'The Secret of the Golden Flower' which appeared in 1929. He produced the work on mandala symbolism in 1950 and subsequently reconsidered his commentaries and two Tibetan texts in 1953. His visit to India took place between 1938 and 1939. It is important to situate these works in the development of Jung's opus. The earlier phase which led to his cooperation with Freud ended in 1912, with the publication of *Symbols of Transformation*. This work with its rich use of symbolism, the hero myth and the idea of matriarchy, not only sealed his split from Freud, it also plunged Jung into a period of isolation and introspection which ended in 1921 with the publication of *Psychological Types*. From 1921 and 1936 Jung was attempting to find objective parallels to the process he had discovered both in his own inner explorations, and in those of his patients and colleagues. Gnosticism and then *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (an alchemical and Taoist text), provided him with such models. In 1936, when his first works on Buddhism appeared, Jung was already sixty-one years old. His ideas had been maturing over the past twenty-four years but had not yet found their way to the alchemical framework which dominated his work in the last twenty-five years of his life. Jung's studies in Eastern religion mark a fundamental turning point in the development of his ideas. In this period Jung took a decisive step into the use of imaginative discourse as an analytical tool.

When looking at Jung's references to Eastern religion, four recurring themes stand out:

1. He was concerned with the practical problems for a Westerner using Eastern spiritual methods and philosophy.
2. The image of wholeness, of a goal, or of an organizing principle of healing became central to this thinking. The mandala and the Buddha were images which drew his attention.
3. Practical insights into *the meaning* of meditational and active imagining experiences occur in Jung's work of this period.
4. Under the name synchronicity, Jung began to investigate a-causal reality. This included imaginative discourse and the use of symbols in healing and spiritual transformation.

The Western Use of Eastern Religion

According to Jung we have to read Eastern texts in the light of their context. He insisted upon a psycho-cultural analysis of the context from which any spiritual practice or philosophy is drawn. He saw four major problems with the indiscriminate mimicry of Buddhism, and Eastern religion generally.

1. The Descent into Interior Reality

Reading Eastern texts from cover to cover, Jung puzzled over the extensive psychological systems of Indian and Tibetan religious thought, and their concomitant lack of the systematic study of external reality. He saw this as being in marked contrast to the West's extensive scientific and technological studies and the relative absence of psychological work. He realized that these concerns reflected the valuation of inner and outer reality in the two cultural matrices. Jung considered that the West was over-concerned with an extroverted attitude and the East with an introverted one. He viewed both attitudes as being one-sided:

In the East the inner man has always had such a firm hold on the outer man that the world had no chance of tearing him away from his inner roots; in the West, the outer man gained the ascendancy to such an extent that he was alienated from his innermost being.¹

¹ C. G. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 11 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), para. 785 (referred to hereafter as *C.W.*).

Jung was not reducing these two great cultures to 'nothing but' extroversion or introversion. He was simply trying to identify the dominant psychological attitude from which knowledge arose. Jung was one of the first students of East-West studies to direct attention to the way in which the East has been read by the West and what the East *means* to the West. This approach asks such questions as: under what conditions were the various Eastern cultures encountered by the West, and what was the mythic or imaginative substructure which supported the East-West interchange and upon which concepts and ideas were moved around? Such a perspective views the cross-cultural interchange as resting upon an ocean of symbols.²

Jung maintained that when a Westerner (with a dominant extroverted tone) approaches an Eastern psychological/spiritual text (with its dominant introverted tone) he or she should entirely *reverse* the instructions. So in the case of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, Jung suggested that it traditionally represented the initiation process moving from the highest, and most exalted state of pure mind, to the lowest, which is rebirth in the womb and the movement into the world. However, in the West, psychology as an initiation system works in the reverse order. It begins with incarnate life in the world, and "regresses" back to the memories of earliest childhood and the birth trauma and thence to intra-womb and intrauterine experience. Such psychological experiences prior to the moment of conception are beginning to be tentatively explored in transpersonal psychology, as the introverted undercurrent begins to reassert itself in the West.³

Jung also turned his attention towards Kundalini Yoga, which could apply equally to certain forms of Tibetan Yoga. The traditional path of awakening is from the lowest to the highest. In Kundalini this is expressed as moving upwards from the lowest chakra, the *mūlādhāra*, which is located near the genitals. This chakra indicates the state from where we

² E.g. J. Campbell attempted an identification of specific mythological 'signatures' of the East and the West, in *Masks of God*, vols. 2 and 3 (London: Souvenir Press, 1974); Henri Baudet in his study *Paradise on Earth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965) sketched the history of European images of non-European peoples and countries. Most recently, E. Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) has used the ideas of M. Foucault to analyse the fantasy of 'Orientalism' in the West.

³ C.W. 11, para. 842-855; e.g. S. Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976).

begin, our taken-for-granted world. But, as Jung pointed out, in the West 'we do not go up into the unconscious we go down'.⁴ He continued:

In adapting the system to ourselves, we must realize where we stand before we can assimilate such a thing. In the East the unconscious is above . . . so we can reverse the whole thing.

In the West we begin in the external world and have to undertake a *nekylia*, a descent into interior reality. Jung claimed that with the East it is an opposite movement.

2. The Question of Fantasy Content

In his commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung drew attention to the injunction in this work to reject all fantasy contents. This, he wrote, appeals to the pragmatic scientific Western mind. But the Eastern dictum is not addressed to this rational extroverted mind with its relative poverty and ignorance of fantasy. Jung insisted that in the East there is so much awareness of mythic reality that,

protection is required against the excess of fantasy. We, on the other hand, look upon fantasy as valueless, subjective daydreaming.⁵

He continued:

The East can reject these fantasies because long ago it extracted their essence and condensed it in profound teachings. But we have never even experienced these fantasies. . . . The East came to its knowledge of inner things in relative ignorance of the external world. We, on the other hand, will investigate the psyche and its depths supported by a tremendously extensive historical and scientific knowledge.

Jung warned that any Western 'reading' of other knowledge systems must take cognizance of the conditioned onesidedness from which we view the world. Failure to do this could lead either to non-comprehension

⁴ 'Psychological Commentary on Kundalini Yoga', *Spring 1975* (New York, Spring Publications), p. 12; see also *C.W.* 11, para. 875.

⁵ *C.W.* 13, para. 63.

and a feeling of cultural superiority, or to a naive and unreflective acceptance.

3. Avoidance of the shadow

As early as 1929, Jung wrote,

I am in principle against the uncritical appropriation of yoga practices by Europeans because I know only too well that they hope to avoid their own dark corners.⁶

I think this is why certain Buddhist teachers, such as Chogyam Trungpa, radically changed their style to a far more rugged one, when they came to the West; hence the title of one of his books: *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1976). This book is aimed at precisely the same misuse of spiritual techniques that Jung was warning about over fifty years ago. James Hillman has recently continued this critique:

In the East the spirit is rooted in the thick yellow loam of richly pathologized imagery—demons, monsters, grotesque goddesses, tortures and obscenities. . . . But once uprooted and imported to the West it arrives debrided of its imaginal ground, dirt-free and smelling of sandalwood!⁷

This could be called “export quality” mysticism.

My experiences with Tibetan Buddhism in the West have certainly borne out Jung's concerns. I have consistently encountered a bewilderment and sometimes an hostility whenever Tibetan Buddhism is mentioned in tones which are less than sacrosanct. In numerous conversations I have found that many cannot accept the fact that Tibetan monastic Buddhism has evolved alongside political power struggles and violence. Even if these are grudgingly conceded, then it is quickly pointed out that this is not the ‘real’ Buddhism. However, Christianity does not receive the same laissez-faire treatment. Christianity and its shadow side are generally associated together, even if lip service is given to the equality of all religions. This may seem to be a harsh generalization but I have encountered it so often, from Europe to Australia, that it does seem consistent. A veneer of spiritual tolerance can easily become established. Ironically the image

⁶ C.W. 11, para. 939.

⁷ J. Hillman, *Re-visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 67.

of Tibetan Buddhism as being *tolerant* can become incorporated into the belief in its superiority.

The problem from the imaginative point of view is that the avoidance of the shadow removes paradox. Imaginative cognition can become paralysed beneath Eastern religion's pure persona in the West.

4. The Thin Veneer

Jung considered that the cultural soul of the West has been largely untouched by Christianity. He wrote of the

unconscious and undeveloped psyche which is as pagan and archaic as ever, . . . a psychic condition that has remained archaic and has not been even remotely touched by Christianity.⁸

In Jung's imaginative reconstruction of history, the West is fundamentally a half-savage culture covered by a thin layer of Oriental religious civilization:

Only a little more than a thousand years ago we stumbled out of the crudest beginnings of polytheism into a highly developed Oriental religion which lifted the imaginative minds of half-savages to a height that in no way corresponded to their spiritual development.⁹

In other words the 'primitive' culture of the West was transformed from outside and not by an organic evolution from within. Christianity, that one time 'Oriental' religion, attempted to lift the psyche of our ancestors and utilized methods that were often brutal. In actuality the depths remained largely untouched. However, instead of recognizing this untouched primitivity, Westerners ignored and repressed it.¹⁰ Jung had in mind the religious persecutions, witch burnings, religious wars, world wars, together with the iniquities of colonialism and imperialism. We could also add to this list the disregard for ecology and human rights.

This concern of Jung's was not so much one of the shadow or the repressed, as it was of the untouched cultural soul. He wrote, 'how thin is

⁸ C.W. 12, para. 12-13.

⁹ C.W. 13, para. 70-71.

¹⁰ C.W. 12, para. 12-13.

the wall that separates us from pagan times'.¹¹ These unrecognized elements of the psyche, untouched by Oriental Christianity, 'naturally did not develop, but went on vegetating in their original barbarism.'¹²

In a sense, Jung was pointing to an *earlier* importation of Eastern, or Oriental religion and to its consequences. The West has always been vulnerable to Eastern religion. In addition to Christianity, Jung cited the earlier Roman adoption of Mithraic religion, which also was initially an Eastern cult. Once again,

while we are turning the material world of the East upside down with our technical proficiency, the East with its superior psychic proficiency is throwing our spiritual world into confusion.¹³

For Jung, the lesson was quite clear. Westerners have repeatedly adopted or copied Eastern religion. We have been attracted to its sublime and lofty conclusion. 'We would like to scale the heights of a philosophical religion, but in fact are incapable of it'.¹⁴

The danger is that the depths of the psyche remain untouched. Jung stressed that unless the instinctual, or unconscious mind is given equal respect to that given to the conscious mind, then that which is repressed will return with a vengeance. This explains why depth psychology moves towards the instinctual and the pathological in human experience. Jung saw the psychopathological symptoms—hysteria, schizophrenia, depression and so on—as the psyche crying out and trying to articulate its demands. The attraction to the religions of the East, or paganism, of shamanism, of theosophy, are also viewed by Jung as calls from the psyche. But according to him they should be seen as a first stumbling step towards illumination, and to be 'read' psychologically, to be insighted mythologically and not adopted philosophically nor in terms of technique. They are signs pointing to deeper rumblings in the psyche and do not constitute imported answers: 'Christianity must indeed begin again from the very beginning if it is to meet its high educative task'.¹⁵

¹¹ *C.W.* 9ii, para. 270–272.

¹² *C.W.* 13, para. 70–71.

¹³ *C.W.* 10, para. 179–194.

¹⁴ *C.W.* 13, para. 70–71.

¹⁵ *C.W.* 12, para. 12–13.

The Image of Wholeness

Jung drew upon two images of wholeness from Eastern religion. These were the Buddha and the Mandala.¹⁶

Jung considered the Buddha to be a more complete image of wholeness than Christ.¹⁷ The Christ figure for Jung was too bright, and too good. Hence any shadow had to be carried by the Devil. Any image of wholeness must, according to Jung, be a complex balance of all possible opposites. Darkness and paradox must have their place. This would clearly be the case for example in Vajrayāna or Shingon Buddhism, as well as in the I Ching, or in Taoism.

In his later work, Jung wrote that the so-called unity of consciousness is an illusion. Wholeness and authenticity is a multi-dimensional psychic process, which is in constant change. Personality is less a unity, than the result of many contending inner figures. It was called a *complexio oppositorum* in Jung's alchemical language. But in Jung's work this process orientation sometimes became a bit static and fixed, as the Judeo-Christian view reasserted itself. But Jung stressed that the mandala represented not just a process of integration, but also one of *differentiation*.¹⁸

*Practical Insights into the Development
of Meditation and Active Imagining*

It is clear that Jung did not fully appreciate Buddhist meditation. He tended to see meditative concentration and absorption (*samādhi*) as an unconscious state. For Jung if there was not an object of consciousness, there could be no consciousness.¹⁹ Jung made sweeping statements about meditation

¹⁶ See J. Thomas, 'The Bodhisattva as Metaphor to Jung's Concept of Self' in *Eastern Buddhist* XV, 2: Autumn 1982, for a full discussion of Eastern religion and Jung's development of the concept of Self.

¹⁷ C.W. 12, para. 22.

¹⁸ J. Hillman, in his book *Re-visioning Psychology* (p. 67) writes that the first task is to 'fall apart', not to 'get things together'. Again, his insights come, in part, from Buddhism with its radical view of change, impermanence, and non-self. R. Avens, another contemporary archetypal theorist, refers to the *Avatamsaka Sutra* with its description of wholeness in terms of interpenetrating worlds of mutual concealment, and of revelation (*Imagination is Reality*, Irving: Spring Publications, 1980, p. 99).

¹⁹ See R. Jones, 'Jung and Eastern Religious Traditions', *Religion* 9, 2: Autumn 1979, p. 147, for a critique of Jung's reading of Eastern religions.

without recognizing their variety. For example, he saw Buddhist meditation as wholly dependent on the individual—this is the ‘self-power’ of Zen. But Jung ignores the idea of ‘other-power’, found in Japanese Shin Buddhism. Jung also gives the unconscious a rather negative tone when he discusses meditation. He saw meditation as primarily a one-sided attempt to withdraw from the world.²⁰ He saw it as a surrender to the collective unconscious, an introverted journey into self absorption. In part, this suspicion stems from the first two points discussed above. Jung was continually concerned about the avoidance of the shadow and of the *content* of psyche.

Jung's studies in Eastern religion also raised the issue of the use of collectively structured images as opposed to individually spontaneous ones. There is much debate, for example, in humanistic and depth psychology, over the difference between guided imagining using prestructured imagery to initiate inner revelation and individual, spontaneous, unprepared imaginings.²¹ There seems to be a continual struggle in spiritual practices to discipline the imagination and to harness it for its purposes. In such attempts, it is important to ascertain both the social and individual implications. To what extent, for example, is the individual's symbol forming capacity being appropriated, paralyzed, blocked or denied, let alone channelled into a particular direction, by stereotyped religious imagery? Jung wrote that ‘every closed system of religion has an undoubted tendency to suppress the unconscious in the individual as much as possible, thus paralyzing his fantasy activity. Instead, religion offers stereotyped symbolic concepts that are meant to take the place of his unconscious once and for all.’²²

In his analysis of Pure Land Buddhist meditation, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, and *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Jung was mainly concerned with them as *statements* of psychological processes. He was not praising them as *methods* to be adopted. When asked by a psychologist how dreams fitted into his system, Jung replied mischievously, ‘What system?’ He also wrote that ‘there are ways which bring us nearer to living experience, yet we should beware of

²⁰ E.g. C.W. 11, para. 774.

²¹ See M. Watkins, *Waking Dreams* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) for a detailed discussion of the use of visual imagery in Western therapy.

²² C.W. 5, para. 80.

calling these ways "methods." The very word has a deadening effect'.²³

There have been numerous studies relating Jung's ideas to Zen meditation, but few on Jung and Tibetan Vajrayāna practices.²⁴ This is a strange omission when it is realized that a considerable proportion of Jung's writings on Eastern religion was directed towards commentaries on two extremely esoteric Tibetan texts.

Whatever the reason for this omission, the studies on Jung and Zen fail to bring out the issue of pre-structured meditational imagery.²⁵ This is unfortunate for it also tends to avoid the problem of the way in which Eastern ideas have been randomly used as *techniques* in the West. The Tibetan Vajrayāna is particularly vulnerable to being reduced to a series of techniques.²⁶ If Jung was averse to his own ideas being reduced to methods and techniques, one can imagine he would be equally opposed to the same thing happening to Eastern traditions.

In Tibet, for example, the practice of Vajrayāna may well be considered as including many techniques, but this is within a complex traditional cultural setting of devotion and faith. The image of 'technique' rests on an entirely different ocean of symbols to what it does in the West. Also, there is no reason to believe that a 'tool' taken from one culture will produce exactly the same results in another. To describe Vajrayāna as a series of very advanced techniques, can lead to a stress on psychic powers, magical masters, spiritual technocrats, mystical astronauts and religious athletes. Athletics can replace devotion or investigation and turn the religions of the world into a kind of spiritual Olympics. The myth of inner progress can easily be substituted for the myth of outer progress.

The use of science and technology as a metaphor has been a rich and rewarding one in the field of comparative knowledges, but it must always

²³ C.W. 11, para. 501; see also C.W. 11, para. 868–871.

²⁴ See D. Lauf, *Secret Doctrines of the Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1977) as an example of a Jungian approach to Vajrayāna Buddhism; see also P. Bishop, 'The Karma-Kargyudpa Lineage Tree' in *Spring 1981* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1981). P. Beyer in his study *The Cult of Tara* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) also draws substantially upon an archetypal perspective.

²⁵ Recent studies of the relationship between Jung and Zen Buddhism include M. Miyuki, 'The Psychodynamics of Buddhist Meditation: A Jungian Perspective', *Eastern Buddhist* X, 2: 1977, and T. Kasulis, 'Zen Buddhism, Freud and Jung', *Eastern Buddhist* X, 1: 1977.

²⁶ See for example, W. Anderson's introduction to Tibetan Buddhism, *Open Secrets* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), pp. 5, 14–15, 21.

be remembered that science itself is a metaphor and a symbol. It is not literally true or false. To literalize Eastern religion as a science is as great an error as dismissing it as a true childish fantasy.

A-Causal or Mythic Consciousness

The period of his Eastern studies occupy a crucial place in Jung's movement towards a consistent mythical style. Jung attempted to reconstruct the language which was specific to the psyche and the imagination. He wrote in 1935:

For the human psyche is not a psychiatric nor a physiological problem; it is not a biological one. It is a field of its own with its own peculiar laws. Its nature cannot be deduced from the principles of other sciences without doing violence to the idiosyncrasies of the psyche. It cannot be identified with the brain, or the hormones or any known instinct, for better or worse it must be accepted as a phenomenon unique in its kind.²⁷

He insisted that the depth imagination resists being known except in its own terms. It was Jung's attempt to articulate this idiosyncratic language of the imagination, which caused him to be the focus of scorn.

Jung's language, style and method of investigation are far from being the peripheral issue they are usually taken to be. They have received the excesses of both praise and scorn. Heisig, in his study of Jung's psychology or religion, documents some of these comments. One theorist claimed:

Jung isn't a thinker in the proper sense. He's a dreamer who carried himself with the sureness of a sleepwalker.

and Aldous Huxley wrote:

Jungian Literature is like a vast quaking bog. At every painful step the reader sinks to the hip in jargon and generalizations, with never a patch of firm intellectual ground to rest on, and only rarely, in that endless expanse of jelly, the blessed relief of a hard concrete fact.²⁸

²⁷ C.W. 16, para. 22.

²⁸ J. Heisig, *Imago Dei: A Study of C. G. Jung's Psychology of Religion* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1979), p. 107.

It was the dedication to this neglected form of cognition that caused a certain misunderstanding on the part of some commentators concerned with Jung's supposedly antirational stance. For example, Piaget wrote:

Jung has an amazing capacity for construction, but a certain contempt for logic and rational activity; . . . this has made him inclined to be content with too little in the way of proof.²⁹

Nothing could be further from the truth. For Jung, reason and its description of reality were not wrong, but one-sided and insufficient. Jung wrote in 1946,

Intellectual or supposedly scientific theories are not adequate to the nature of the unconscious, because they make use of a terminology which has not the slightest affinity with its pregnant symbolism. . . . (The approach) must therefore be plastic and symbolical and itself the outcome of personal experience with unconscious contents. It should not stray too far in the direction of abstract intellectualism; hence we are best advised to remain within the framework of traditional mythology.³⁰

Jung gave many names to both systems of cognition and thought. On the one hand there is 'thinking in words', 'thinking with directed attention', 'logical or directed thinking'.³¹ On the other hand there is fantasy thinking, which occurs once we do not think in a directed fashion. At this point, thinking in 'verbal form ceases, image piles on image, feeling on feeling.'

Jung asked:

How are fantasies made and what is their nature? From the poets we learn much, from the scientists little.³²

He was insistent upon this cognitive dichotomy, because the object of investigation in both cases is entirely different. Imaginative discourse and perception is concerned with the region of depth experience and of meaning.

²⁹ J. Piaget, *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1962), p. 196.

³⁰ *C.W.* 16, para. 478.

³¹ *C.W.* 5, para. 11-32.

³² *C.W.* 5, para. 33.

It has been the task of esoteric (religious, occult, hermetic) language through the ages to transform and re-educate cognition. The symbol calls for a response and a commitment. It cannot be ignored. The use of riddles, koans, and other forms of paradox, to block the rational mind, and hence to force the intuitive, the imaginative leap, are common. There is also the use of the *via negativa* as in the Buddhist *Heart Sutra*, which exhausts the assumptions and speculations of the rational mind.

Another example of the special power and place of imaginative description can be seen when we compare the more mythic accounts of altered states of consciousness, with much of the recent rational psychological work in that area. The rational-scientific descriptions of altered states of consciousness, abound in abbreviations—there are “ASC’s,” and “BPM 1, 2, 3, 4.”³³ This style of nomenclature can also be found in ancient religious traditions such as Buddhism, where meditative absorption levels are known at 1st Jhana, 2nd Jhana, etc. However, the mythic or imaginative perspective personifies these realms so that they become deities and heroes. Instead of abstract levels and categories, we find kinship systems, disputes, marriages, wars, a long involved history of struggles, dominance, subjugation and harmony. These altered states of consciousness and altered worlds of consciousness, such as the Buddhist Pure Lands, suggest a certain grandeur and autonomy. They are not neatly categorized, nor can they be reviewed in an aloof and detached manner. They are ancient lands which seem to exert a compulsion over us.

Another place in Buddhism where imaginative discourse is to be found, is in the use of the *dohās*, or tantric poetry. The siddha Saraha is the most well-known composer of *dohās*. In a story of Saraha’s life it is recounted how this Indian Siddha was sent to find an arrowsmith woman. When he found this woman, she told him, ‘My dear young man, the Buddha’s meaning can be known through symbols and actions, not through words and books’.³⁴ In the use of tantric symbols—mantra, mudra, mandala—there is an attempt to ‘awaken’, to ‘tune’, to ‘massage’ and to ‘educate’

³³ E.g. C. Tart, *Altered States of Consciousness* (New York: Doubleday, 1972); and Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious*.

³⁴ H. Guenther, *The Royal Song of Saraha* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969), p. 5; see also J. Ardussi, ‘Brewing and Drinking the Beer of Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism: The Dohā Tradition in Tibet’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 97, 2: 1977.

the depth imagination.

Guenther makes some important comments on the use of language in the *dohās*.³⁵ He writes that Buddhism is a practical discipline which attempts not only to change outlook and experiences but that these 'are felt to be valuable in their own right'. In other words, they must be meaningful to the subject. Guenther goes on to write that the poem or song, is not only 'the realization in its medium of language (or music) of the experience', it becomes equally 'the point of departure into fancy and reflection on the part of the audience'. The image exists in its own right; it is 'felt' immediately, 'it invites us to explore the depth', it does not represent anything else.

Whilst commenting on Saraha's poetry, Guenther writes that 'another kind of language is needed . . . to avoid the *concretizing* of inner processes into permanent externalized facts'.³⁶ The key word here is 'concretizing'. The Dalai Lama in talks given in 1982 in Melbourne, Australia, said that the purpose of mantra work and its associated practices is to overcome the sense that ourselves and the world are 'ordinary'. In other words, the purpose is to de-literalize the World. It is a process of an *opus contra naturam*, an alchemical work against the taken-for-grantedness of things. It is the attempt to see the world and ourselves as 'extra-ordinary', as fantasies in the fullest sense, as parts in the play of illusion. Rather than concretizing awareness, it is the depth imagination which is to be awakened and, most importantly, educated and made symbolically literate.

Jung was not interested in studying meditation from either a psycho-physical perspective (e.g., bio-feedback or stress reduction), nor from a philosophical one. He was concerned with the *meaning* that such activity had for the meditator. To this extent archetypal psychology attempts to understand not consciousness in general but the internal dynamics of that elusive phenomenon, insight (*vipassanā*, *mahāmudrā*, *satori*). This approach is best revealed in Hillman's study of parapsychology, and Jung's study of U.F.O.'s.³⁷ Neither was concerned with the 'objective' reality of these phenomena and whether or not flying saucers or telepathy exist objectively.

³⁵ Guenther, *ibid.* pp. 23–24; see also H. Guenther, 'Tantra & Revelation', *History of Religions* 7, 4: May 1968, and G. Elder, 'Problems of Language in Buddhist Tantra', *History of Religions* 15, 3: February 1976.

³⁶ Guenther, pp. 5–26.

³⁷ J. Hillman, *Loose Ends* (Irving: Spring Publications, 1978); C.W. 10.

They wanted to know what the belief in these things meant to those who experienced them. Jung wanted to allow the images to tell their own story and to plot the process by which meaning and insight arise. Hence the value of alchemy, of *The Secret of the Golden Flower* and of the esoteric Buddhist texts with their dramatic imagistic records.

Jung by no means adequately conveyed the totality of Buddhism nor of any Eastern religious tradition. He was very selective and drew upon a limited number of esoteric texts. However, he did make a hesitant first step towards understanding the psycho-social matrix which supports the East-West interchange of ideas. These studies also allowed him to consolidate his commitment to imaginative discourse in his search to understand meaning and insight. This is undoubtedly the most important conclusion from Jung's Eastern studies and the one which is perhaps the most fruitful in any continuing interchange between East and West.