

## The Bodhisattva as Metaphor to Jung's Concept of Self

JAMES D. THOMAS

When alone I proceed through myself, I meet him wherever I go.  
He is the same as me, yet I am not he! LIANG-CHIEH<sup>1</sup>

This 'something' is strange to us and yet so near, wholly ourselves and  
yet unknowable. . . . C. G. JUNG<sup>2</sup>

IT WAS IN 1929, while in collaboration with Richard Wilhelm on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, that Carl Jung wrote: "I reached the central point in my thinking and in my researches, namely, the concept of the self. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Despite the wide range of subjects for his curiosity and prodigious research, there is little doubt that Jung's consummate interest was in unfolding the mysteries of the self.

In searching for a term that expressed the center of his explorations, Jung was extremely cautious. He settled on

. . . the psychological name of the 'self' . . . a term on the one hand definite enough to express the indescribable and indeterminable nature of this wholeness. The paradoxical qualities of the term are in keeping with the fact that wholeness consists partly of the conscious man and partly of the unconscious man.<sup>4</sup>

Jung's caution at this point reveals his attraction to and fear of philosophic abstractions. Jung saw himself as an empiricist and pointed with mock

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<sup>1</sup> Chang Chung-yuan, *Original Teachings of Chan Buddhism* (NY, 1969), p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> Jung, C. G., *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (NY, 1970), p. 250.

<sup>3</sup> Jung, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (Vintage Books, NY, 1963), p. 208.

<sup>4</sup> Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, Bollingen Series XII (Princeton, 1968), p. 20. Bollingen Series referred to hereafter as CW (Collected Works).

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pride to "an unimpeachable source" the *British Medical Journal*, proclaiming him "an empiricist first and last."<sup>5</sup> The problem is that neither Jung's eclecticism nor his subject matter will allow for strict empirical description. With both philosophical and psychological consistency one can point to the ego as the conscious aspect of self, but what can be reasonably stated about the self's involvement in the unconscious?

Jung declares that "the self is absolutely paradoxical in that it represents in every respect thesis, antithesis and at the same time synthesis."<sup>6</sup> Given the style of Jung and the nature of his subject, ambiguities are unavoidable. Jung struggles with definitions empirical through paradoxical to enigmatic when he describes the self as "... not only the center but the whole circumference."<sup>7</sup> At every stage, it is as though he is warning that a figure can only carry the idea of self so far before it tends to obscure and/or limit it. After his travels in India, Jung wrote:

Though very well acquainted with the self's peculiar and paradoxical phenomenology, we remain conscious of the fact that we are discerning, with the limited means at our disposal, something essentially unknown and expressing it in terms of psychic structures which may not be adequate to the nature of what is to be known.<sup>8</sup>

Jung constantly sought figures, analogues and metaphors that were dynamic and specific enough without making pretensions to conceptual closure. Clearly, Jung was caught up in the tension between philosophy and symbolic expression. It was for Jung a creative tension, for he alternately used the one to extend and illuminate the other. Jung points up this creative impasse by writing that

... a psychology that satisfies the intellect alone can never be practical, for the totality of the psyche can never be grasped by intellect alone. Whether we will or no, philosophy keeps breaking through, because the psyche seeks an expression that will embrace its total nature.<sup>9</sup>

Philosophy keeps breaking through as the necessary result of mean-

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<sup>5</sup> Jung, *Answer to Buber* (NY, 1957), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> CW XII, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., par. 44.

<sup>8</sup> *Psychology and Religion*, CW XI, par. 956.

<sup>9</sup> *Two Essays*, CW, Vol. VII, par. 201.

ing; and meaning is the necessary result of observation of phenomena. The trouble is, that philosophy, poorly engaged, can reduce a living subject matter to a sterile "nothing but" formula. Properly used, philosophy can illuminate without unduly restricting its subject. One of the most useful of philosophic tools in this regard is metaphor. The genius of the metaphor is its broader perspective beyond the restrictive confines of the literal. Its special hazard is its style of being purposefully nonspecific and suggestive of not only the unknown but the unknowable. The latter suggestion is, of course, a great threat to rationalism and scientific method, which explains in part the understandable suspicion that surrounds the use of metaphor.

James Onley explores metaphor in larger context as he suggests that those Socratic and Einsteinian world pictures, models, hypotheses, myths and cosmologies are better called metaphors.

Metaphor in this sense is a classical and essential way of knowing. We can say "this is like that" forever but it is the metaphor that gives an overall pattern of meaning to the connections. It acts as a man-made bridge between subjective consciousness and the objective world.

A metaphor, then, through which we stamp our own image on the face of nature, allows us to connect the known of ourselves to the unknown of the world, and, making available new rational patterns, it simultaneously organizes the self into a new and richer entity; so that the old known self is joined to and transformed into the new, the heretofore unknown, self. Metaphor says very little about what the world is, or is like, but a great deal about what I am, or am like, and about what I am becoming; and in the end it connects me more nearly with the deep reaches of myself than with any objective universe.<sup>10</sup>

Metaphor has none of the features of an austere and parsimonious system that addresses itself to facts and objective reality. Metaphor is often rather flamboyant and even reckless in its expression. Donald Rhoades writes:

We say that tables have 'legs', needles and hurricanes have 'eyes', machines have 'arms' and 'fingers', and all sorts of things have

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<sup>10</sup> Onley, James, *Metaphors of Self* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 31-32.

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'mouths'. . . . The religious man, the philosopher, and the scientist—and the man on the street—differ only in that their morphisms are different; no one is without them.<sup>11</sup>

Metaphor is a highly personal and suggestive way of knowing. Its peculiar advantage, where honestly used, is to encourage introspection of the person using it. For metaphor seems irretrievably intertwined with the projection and the acceptance of projection of self. This is so no matter what the object of metaphor might be.

When it comes to the self as the conceptual object of attention, Onley believes that it is only adequately carried by metaphor since the self is already at work seeking to express itself through metaphor. It is far wiser to identify this function and ally with it in extension of understanding.

The self expresses itself by the metaphors it creates and projects, and we know it by those metaphors; but it did not exist as it now does and as it now is before creating its metaphors. We do not see or touch the self, but we do see and touch its metaphors; and thus we 'know' the self, activity as agent, represented in the metaphor and the metaphorizing.<sup>12</sup>

Even more necessary is the use of metaphor when attempting to express one's own sense of self:

One cannot . . . hope to capture with a straight on look, or expect to transmit directly to another, one's own sense of self; at most one may be able to discover a similitude, a metaphor, for the feeling of selfhood.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of self as well as the personal sense of self has the quality of myth about it. It resists being either something concrete or a hypothetical reference. Any attempt to define or explain the self in terms that exclude the function of myth and metaphor tends to reify it.

Certainly Jung was no stranger to metaphor. Seeking means to develop a theory of self, he used the mandala as a metaphor. The mandala, a magic circle encompassing a square, suggests that the self is at once a center, a goal, a totality, an inner tension and a union of opposites. The

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<sup>11</sup> Rhoades, Donald H., *A Faith of Fellowship* (Philadelphia, n.d.), p. 82.

<sup>12</sup> Onley, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 267.

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mandala as metaphor has several advantages. It is sufficiently removed from our Western scientific attitude to give fresh perspective; it is also visually crisp and geometrically pleasing, however it is cold and impersonal.

Further, Jung struggled to portray the self in its uniquely human and yet godlike potential. He writes of the Original Man, the Anthropos, the androgynous Adam, "... of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of the primordial night. There he is still the whole, and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from nature and bare of all egohood."<sup>14</sup> What figure is adequate to this task? Explaining the difficulty in writing an autobiography, Jung writes:

Man cannot compare himself with any other creature; he is not a monkey, not a cow, not a tree. I am a man. But what is it to be that? Like every other being, I am a splinter of the infinite deity, but I cannot contrast myself with any animal, any plant, any stone. Only a mythical being has any range greater than man's. How then can a man have any definite opinion about himself.<sup>15</sup>

Jung, still seeking a fuller model to carry his insights into self, drew upon the figure of Christ. The self expresses itself through the conscious ego in just such a way as God seeks to become flesh through Christ. The figure is almost too powerful. For the implications for theology are considerable. Even while Jung insisted that he was not writing theology, he was calling for men to be responsible by withdrawing their projections from the historical Jesus and looking to their own Christ/self within. This may well be metaphor working overtime. To say that the intrapsychic self is like an extrapsychic phenomena is valid, but to use that metaphor as persuasion concerning the outer reality is questionable. There is no evidence that this was Jung's intention. But the hazard is there even though one can understand why the metaphor was so attractive. Jung was reared in a Christian atmosphere and many of his family were theologians. The figure was just too close. It was bound to be as confusing to some as it was revealing to others.

Since the concept of self has peculiar emotive connotations and powerful subjective implications, there is advantage in choosing a model that is

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<sup>14</sup> *Civilization in Transition*, CW, Vol. X, par. 304.

<sup>15</sup> *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (NY, 1963), p. 4.

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culturally and/or historically removed. One could argue that Christ would be a better model of self for the Westerner. However, it seems to me that this threatens more conflict than it promises benefit as a heuristic device. Jung, in speaking of the Christian's relation to Christ and the Buddhist's identification with Buddha, writes this:

Fundamentally these confessions are identical, inasmuch as the Buddhist only attains this knowledge when he is without self, "anatman." But there exists an immense difference between the two formulations. The Christian attains his end in Christ, the Buddhist recognizes that he is Buddha. The Christian, starting from the transitory and egocentric world of his consciousness, dissolves in Christ, but the Buddhist still rests on the eternal foundations of inner nature, whose at-one-ness with the divinity as with the universal Being, we meet in the other Indian confessions as well.<sup>16</sup>

For the Westerner, there seems to be an unavoidable conflict here. Does one partake of (take part in) the object of identification or does one aim at becoming that object? To the extent that the object (Christ) is also God, grave theological problems arise for the orthodox Christian. Buddhist doctrine presents no such problem. If it cannot be said that the Buddha was deified, it must be recognized that his image has tended to be elevated to a superhuman level.

To the extent that this is so, the bodhisattva figure presents itself as a more accessible model. To be sure, the bodhisattva himself was deified. But the bodhisattva has stubborn roots in the merely human and is as much a process as a condition. The very name denotes an exalted state in the making. It combines the very human with a spiritual potentiality. Every human being is a potential bodhisattva. But since the bodhisattva figure itself is controversial, let us speak more precisely to the concept.

The conception of the bodhisattva emerged concurrent with the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism. In the fourth century BC an ideological split began to appear in Buddhism that was to widen into two distinct forms known as Theravāda (Way of the Elders) and Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle, Great Ferryboat). By the first century AD the doctrinal differences were clearly drawn and visible in the sutras (scriptures). In the early Mahāyāna sutras the term "bodhisattva" (bodhi: enlightenment

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<sup>16</sup> *On the Psychology of Eastern Meditation* (NY, 1949), p. 18.

and *sattva*: being) came to mean a "Buddha-designate." Although definitions vary, the central distinction to be made is between a Buddha-being (having arrived in nirvana) and a Buddha-designate (being on the way but short of nirvana). The bodhisattva is distinguished by his conscious postponement of nirvana because of his identification with and compassion for all living things.

One of the central conditions that give rise to the bodhisattva figure was the growing elitism of the Buddhist priesthood. It was charged that the priests, called Arahats and Paccekabuddhas (private Buddhas), were interested only in their own complete nirvana. They were interested neither in teaching nor service and neglected to emulate the compassionate feature of the Buddha. Early Buddhist doctrine did emphasize that each life was a separate entity and completely responsible for its own spiritual condition. This concept was implemented by Jain doctrine to severe and austere extremes. As such, it had less and less appeal to the masses.

The figure of the Buddha had undergone idealization and spiritualization to such an extent as to make him inaccessible to the common man. Hinduism in the second century BC underwent a great revival which must have posed a threat to Buddhism. There was a great upheaval of *Bhakti* (devotion, worship, love) as the religious means of expression. Buddhism had developed in such a way as to appeal very little to the masses. It had become a metaphysical doctrine or an esoteric psychology with nothing that could appeal as an object of devotion.

Mahāyāna Buddhism emerged as an answer to these conditions. Indigenous in Buddhist doctrine and alongside the principle of individual accountability is the concept of the interdependence of all things. This tenet gave Mahāyānists their answer to extreme individualism and became a logical basis for the doctrine of "vicarious merit." It follows that if all beings are interdependent then the *dharma* (merit) of one may be devoted to the good of others.

Complementing this doctrine in its appeal to the imagination of the common man was Mahāyāna's re-emphasis that the Buddha-being resides potentially in every person and thing. These two principles tended to bring Buddhism closer to the people. Not only do good intention and acts of devotion make a difference but the benefits of grace are accessible to everyone.

The central carrier of these Mahāyāna doctrines is the bodhisattva. He (or she) is designated for Buddhahood but remains human and in the

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factual here-and-now. In fact, because of his wisdom and compassion he identifies with all ignorant and struggling creatures so completely that his own nirvana is postponed. He is the worthy object of adoration, for his endless compassion overflows with grace on all who come near him. At the same time he embodies the gospel that the Buddha-being potential resides in everyone.

Bodhisattvas appear in the literature expressing themselves in a wide range of characteristics—from deified saviors to “household” bodhisattvas. Richard Robinson, in dealing with the term “householder” bodhisattva observes that “... no sūtra preaches devotion to a celestial bodhisattva until the third century AD, a full three centuries after these beings entered the literature.”<sup>17</sup>

Mahāyāna Buddhism taught that every man and woman—every creature—can and must eventually become a bodhisattva. This being so, at what point does a mere human being become a bodhisattva? There seem to be both conservative and liberal answers to this question.

The Mahāyāna sūtras address themselves to monastics and laity alike and although they are written by monks alone some are quite liberal in their inclusion of the laity. Robinson draws from the Vimalakīrti Sūtra a view of

... the householder bodhisattva encouraging a crowd of young patricians to leave the household life. When they protest that they cannot do so without their parents' permission, Vimalakīrti tells them to arouse the thought of enlightenment and practice diligently, since that is the equivalent to 'going forth.'... The householder bodhisattva was welcome to study meditation and philosophy, and probably was allowed to spend protracted periods of retreat in the monasteries, He could teach the doctrine and was encouraged to propagate it.<sup>18</sup>

These household bodhisattvas are too numerous to mention. Only the exceptional ones will have been lionized. The bodhisattva image is then both a goal to be attained and a way of achieving it. Even the celestial bodhisattvas are pictured constantly working at the same menial tasks that engage ordinary human beings. Lord Avalokita, who is portrayed as a god, has a double meaning in his name.

<sup>17</sup> Robinson, Richard H., *The Buddhist Religion* (Belmont, 1970), p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.



Evans-Wentz translates Avalokiteśvara as both "The Lord looking down in pity" and "The Lord seen within."<sup>19</sup> No matter how engrained the bodhisattva figure becomes, the subjective implications are still there. "We are all reflections of the image of the bodhisattva. The sufferer within us is that divine being. We and that protecting father are one."<sup>20</sup>

The bodhisattva image originally emerged as an answer to the elitism of monastics and the inaccessibility of religious expression for the common people. The bodhisattva was a living model for the doctrine of inner potential and perfectability of all creatures—at once a superdemocratic and an aristocratic ideal. The bodhisattva was also carrier/model for yet another and complementary doctrine—that of the ideal being in the here and now. The bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism points toward nirvana that is not annihilation or the loss of this world but rather is attainment of full potentiality. To suppose that nirvana requires the end of discrimination and the loss of this world is completely in error. This teaching as a philosophic principle goes all the way back to Nāgārjuna (c. AD 200) who takes the Buddha's doctrines of anattā (not-self) and anicca (impermanence) to a radical extreme. Not only is there no substantial self and no permanence in reality, there is no Buddhahood and no nirvana. Reality for Nāgārjuna is emptiness.

To apprehend this emptiness, or void, one must have the correct viewpoint. One may see things either (1) under the aspect of eternity (*paramārtha satya*) or (2) from the viewpoint of human finitude (*samvṛiti satya*). From the viewpoint of finite, mortal apprehension, the delusion of substantive existence to concede apparent or empirical existence of the world around him, and at the same time maintain that from the viewpoint of eternity all this was delusory and unreal. . . . Nāgārjuna's argument might be paraphrased as the assertion of a kind of universal relativity. All things possess only relative being; nothing really or ultimately exists.<sup>21</sup>

The immediate implication of this position is that the world of relativity and that of nirvana are one and only seem to differ by virtue of being

<sup>19</sup> Evans-Wentz, W. Y., *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrine* (Oxford London, 1935), p. 233, n. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (NY, 1967), p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> Hutchison, John A., *Paths of Faith* (NY, 1969), p. 155.

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seen from different points of view. D. T. Suzuki, in his study of the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, insists that identity between nirvana and samsara is fundamental to Mahāyāna Buddhism.

So long as dualism is adhered to, there is no Nirvana, no self-realization. Light and shadow, long and short, black and white—they are mutually related; when they stand alone each by itself, they have no meaning. So with Nirvana. When it is sought after in relation to Samsara, we have a sort of Nirvana. But this kind vanishes when separated from the condition of mutuality in which it exists. True Nirvana is that which is realized in the oneness of Nirvana and Samsara, absolute or *sūnya* in its nature and above the relativity of eternalism and nihilism. Mahāyāna followers strive to realize this kind of Nirvana.<sup>22</sup>

The aim of this doctrine is to countermand the other-worldly tendencies of Buddhism. The message is that reality is one; that it is now; and that it is universally common property for those who are willing to accept it.

This world is the Buddha-world  
Within which enlightenment may be sought.  
To seek enlightenment by separating from this world  
Is as foolish as to search for a rabbit's horn.<sup>23</sup>

The bodhisattva, then, in this branch of Buddhism, becomes a very human hero. The Chinese Buddhist Master Fen-yang (947–1024) is speaking about Mañjuśrī, a bodhisattva who is often grandly deified:

There are some Buddhist learners who have already made the mistake of seeking for Mañjuśrī at Mount Wu-t'ai. There is no Mañjuśrī at Wu-t'ai. Do you want to know Mañjuśrī? It is something at this moment working within you, something which remains unshakable and allows no room for doubt. This is called the living Mañjuśrī.<sup>24</sup>

In this view, the bodhisattva is not a god with superhuman compassion as his only motivation. Compassion is there, of course, but it does not solely explain his reason for not crossing over. He feels deeply for all

<sup>22</sup> Suzuki, D. T., *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra* (London, 1930), p. 129.

<sup>23</sup> Goddard, D. A., *A Buddhist Bible* (NY, 1938), p. 352.

<sup>24</sup> Chang, pp. 98–99.

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suffering beings. His heart is "full of karuna (love) for all beings who are unable to step out of the dualistic whirlpools of sat and asat. . . . His own heart is free from such attachments as are ordinarily cherished by the unemancipated, but that which feels persists."<sup>25</sup> "That which feels" is that aspect of him that continues to belong to that which is human. He identifies himself (including his own nirvana) with all other creatures and sees himself (including his own ignorance) as inseparably interinvolved.

Lin Yutang writes: "The word bodhisattva, the most important doctrine of Mahāyāna religion, is such a common Chinese word that we use it in speaking of sweet child (like the word 'cherub') and of clay doll."<sup>26</sup> This common applicability of the term seems to me to be further evidence of its egalitarian application and of its movement from metaphor to model for ideal self.

What is the nature of this stopping or pausing just short of the goal? It is not a position of absolute detachment and is in no way monastic. The bodhisattva is fully in the world. He may have a wife, children and possessions. He may even be in a position of power and authority. What is the explanation for this double position of both in and out of the world? It can be understood as the act of a superhero whose compassion for all creatures is almost beyond belief. Or, as Suzuki understands it, the bodhisattva is not acting altogether altruistically.<sup>27</sup> In fact, he is something of a hedonist, in the best sense. He is motivated by a special understanding of the way things are. Simply put, his pleasure depends on the pleasure of all: his attainment of nirvana depends on its attainment by all.

To what extent can this "stopping short" be compared to the prayer of young Augustine: "Lord, give me chastity, but not yet?" Certainly the theology of his time required that an either/or choice and sacrifice must be made. The prayer seems to be motivated by carnal or egocentric need. He wanted to put off a higher goal and task that was for the moment too difficult. There is no indication in Augustine of an attempt to accommodate both spheres—the spiritual and the carnal. He was simply putting off a difficult calling.

The reverse is true of the bodhisattva. Early Buddhism was clear in its teachings of samsara (cycle of rebirth, repeating an experience of life and death) as painful. One should seek to get out of it as soon as pos-

<sup>25</sup> Suzuki, p. 221.

<sup>26</sup> Lin Yutang, *The Wisdom of China and India* (NY, 1942), p. 493.

<sup>27</sup> Suzuki, pp. 219–220.

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sible. For an early Buddhist, nirvana is the ultimate cessation of this misery and to postpone it is the ultimate folly. But the bodhisattva does postpone it, not for a while, but virtually forever—until all creatures are in nirvana. If one considers nirvana as a place to be in the future, then this act of putting off by the bodhisattva can only be understood as that of a martyr-savior.

If, however, nirvana is understood as a “state of mind,” “an understanding,” “a special attitude,” then the picture is quite different.

But as for the Bodhisattva he never enters into Nirvana as he has a deep insight into the nature of things which are already in Nirvana even as they are. . . . They (Bodhisattvas) are already in Nirvana because their views are not at all beclouded by discrimination. To them no discrimination takes place as to things seized and seizing.<sup>28</sup>

In one sense the bodhisattva’s position must be considered as “stopping short” but to the degree that he is enlightened, he realizes that there is nothing short of which he has stopped.

In our attempt to understand the motivation of the bodhisattva, the pivotal issue is the relationship between prajna (special knowledge) and karuna (compassion). Is it pure compassion that makes him “pause” and wait forever for all suffering creatures? Or is his “pausing” a reasonable response to a special insight he has concerning the nature of all things? Most scholars insist that it is both principles operating in unison.

Mahāyāna stands firmly on two legs, Prajna and Karuna, transcendental idealism and all-embracing affection for all kinds of beings, animate as well as inanimate. The former sees into the unity of things and the latter appreciates their diversity. The Bodhisattva weeps with suffering beings and at the same time realizes that there is one that never weeps, being above sufferings, tribulations and contaminations. Buddhist life finds its perfect realization in a harmonious blending of the two conceptions: philosophically, the one and the many, sat and asat; religiously, the pure and the defiled.<sup>29</sup>

Jung was attracted to the human aspect of Buddhism. He wrote that the “Buddha is the more complete human being. He is a historical per-

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

sonality, and therefore easier for men to understand. Christ is at once a historical man and God and therefore more difficult to comprehend."<sup>30</sup> The model for self that Jung sought was not of a purely idealistic nature. In his writing, "The Holy Men of India," he expresses his disdain for and suspicion of the purely wise and holy man.

The man who is only wise and only holy interests me about as much as a skeleton of a rare saurian, which would not move me to tears. The insane contradiction, on the other hand, between existence beyond Maya in the cosmic Self, and that amiable human weakness which fruitfully sinks many roots into the black earth, repeating for all eternity the weaving and rending of the veil as the ageless melody of India—this contradiction fascinates me; for how else can one perceive the light without the shadow, hear the silence without the noise; attain wisdom without foolishness.<sup>31</sup>

The man that fascinated Jung "... has found meaning in the rushing phantasmagoria of Being, freedom in bondage, victory in defeat."<sup>32</sup>

It seems to me that the figure that Jung seeks is the bodhisattva—that miraculous figure whose only miracle is the full realization of his human potential. D.T. Suzuki writes of that full potential.

Thou art it. . . . All the Bodhisattvas including the Buddha are ourselves and their doings are our doings, They looked so full of mystery, they were miracles, as long as they were observed from this earthly end, where we imagined that there was really something at the other end; but as soon as the dividing-wall constructed by our imagination is removed, Samantabhadra's arms raised to save sentient beings become our own, which are now engaged in passing the salt to a friend at the table, and Maitreya's opening to the Vairocana Tower for Sudhana is our ushering a caller into the parlour for a friendly chat. . . . This again reminds us of P'ang's reputed verse—

How wondrously supernatural!  
And how miraculous this!  
I draw water, I carry fuel!<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, p. 279.

<sup>31</sup> *Psychology and Religion*, CW, Vol. XI, par. 953.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 953.

<sup>33</sup> Suzuki, *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, Third Series (London, 1934), p. 65.

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Jung writes in Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, "Like the Ego is a certain experience of Myself, so is the self an experience of my ego which however is no longer experienced in the form of a wider or higher ego, but in the shape of a Non-Ego."<sup>34</sup> This is exactly the point of "no-mind" or "the man of no title" and the goal of the bodhisattva.

The bodhisattva stands clearly for self as that borderline entity; borderline in the sense of being both of this world and out of it—possessing consciousness but also somehow being in alliance with the unconscious domain. Jung thoroughly studied Nietzsche's Zarathustra figure. One aspect of Zarathustra pictures the stance of the bodhisattva.

Zarathustra looked at the people and wondered. Then he said: "Man is a rope, stretched between beast and *Übermensch*—a rope across an abyss. A dangerous crossing over, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping."<sup>35</sup>

This is the particular moment I wish to examine: the bodhisattva/self in its reflexive position—pausing, looking back, just prior to crossing over. It is dangerous to the self/bodhisattva because so much is invested here; because looking back runs the risk of losing the goal; because of the delicate distinction between self and loss of self; or because of the distinction between self and ego. Zarathustra is certainly a dangerous projection of this figure. The bodhisattva and the self seem forever to be on the edge of the much promised and sought after wholeness (nirvana). Looking back is a risk. Paradoxically, looking back is necessary to wholeness. Kwan-yin (a Chinese female bodhisattva) is often pictured as suspended between heaven and earth; between Kwan-yin and earth is a zygote—an unborn baby in embryo. The self seems forever so suspended.

In myth and legend, the hero often finds himself in a borderline situation—on a frontier. It is in this position that he acts, and strangely enough, he acts not only in response to his own condition but seems to suggest that his action is a model for everyone. Erik Erikson considers this aspect of the hero in one of the last crisis stages in development toward maturation.

In his epilogue to *Young Man Luther*, he suggests that the hero internalizes the problems of his age and deals with them intimately as though

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<sup>34</sup> Jung, in D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (Rider, NY), p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Chicago, 1957), p. 6.

they were private life or death issues. Surprisingly, this private struggle can become the model of behavior or answer to the problems of an age. He writes of this period as an

... integrity crisis which again leads men to the portals of nothingness... and that for him all human integrity stands or falls with the one style of integrity of which he partakes... He acts as if mankind were starting all over again with his own beginning as an individual, conscious of his singularity as well as his humanity... To him history ends as well as starts with him.<sup>36</sup>

This is exactly the stance of the bodhisattva and is exactly that stance to which the self is drawn.

It was surely by design that Jung left the great bulk and the heart of his work virtually inaccessible to conceptual systematization. If anything he took the term 'self' out beyond the reach of conceptualization and its tendency to reduction and reification. But at the same time, he was energetically involved in enlarging the working edges of the self as concept. I believe that certain specific generalizations which characterize the self emerge in Jung's writings. These characteristics can be best portrayed as operating as an open system. I propose that the self, as Jung defines it can be regarded as:

- |                         |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Superordinate system | 4. Uniting symbol        |
| 2. Goal                 | 5. Agent                 |
| 3. Center of opposites  | 6. Archetypal expression |

The self is simultaneously all of these aspects. Each aspect is dependent on the others within the superordinate system and there is overlap between the various features or aspects of the self. I am dealing with self in the context of health and the self as definitive of health. Jung was a psychiatrist and he dealt with the pathology of self. He also fashioned a psychological theory that gives perspective into the creative function of self. The latter is my concern. The self can be viewed as either process or structure. It is a matter of perspective and surely one implies the other. For the moment, however, I am emphasizing the structural features but I insist (with the model of open system) that it is impossible to think of this as structure without process. I am suggesting that Jung's concept of self

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<sup>36</sup> Erikson, Erik H., *Young Man Luther* (NY, 1962), pp. 260-262.

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can be viewed as an open system and can be regarded as having these six discernible aspects.

Further, I propose that the bodhisattva is an adequate and stimulating metaphor to this conceptual model. This metaphor is admittedly a bridge built from the Western conceptual end. Even so, it must be recognized that the foundations of the bodhisattva are ideally rooted in ideology and history at the other end. This is as much as we could hope for in a bridge between the cognitive and intuitive approaches. Without going into extensive detail, I will summarize the nature of these six aspects and then employ the bodhisattva figure as metaphor to illuminate Jung's picture of self.

## SELF AS GOAL

Jung points out that the self is not a given condition along with the state of consciousness. Rather, it is latent in the unconsciousness and must be sought after and worked at as a goal. The discipline of this task is called "individuation" and requires of an individual that he disown all that is not natural to him. He must resist being collectivized by the coercive dictates of the primordial unconscious and being deracinated by the arrogance of the conscious ego. This prize of self is not a singular end product. Rather, it involves a never ending series of maturational stages. For Jung, self is an ideal potential, characterized by the quality of wholeness, toward which one aspires forever.

The language of both Jung and Buddhism is a study in elaborate avoidance of metaphysics. The language of both strives to be purely empirical. They are making an effort simply to report certain psychological features they have explored and developed. The central purpose of this great effort in both sources is to avoid the philosophic and experiential hazards around the issue of the substantiality of the self.

Eliot Deutsch suggests that the theory of nonreality of the "substantial" self, so prominent in Buddhist teaching must be understood in both historic and psychological context. "The assertion that the empirical self is an ever changing, unstable pattern of feeling, thought, etc., does not contradict the Upanishadic view; it represents only a different emphasis."<sup>37</sup>

Both Jung and Buddhism insist that, as an object, self is a hazard, and

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<sup>37</sup> Deutsch, Eliot, *Humanity and Divinity* (Honolulu, 1970), p. 116.



that selfhood is a heuristic abstraction. The self, in this sense, is not something that is owned as an exclusive entity. The Buddhist sūtras continually deny the existence of self in this sense. But the goal of Buddhism, nirvana, is seriously misunderstood in the West as simply the peaceful loss of all identity.

The bodhisattva figure, as an ideal expression of maturation, is a direct contradiction of this misinterpretation. The vows made and disciplines entered into represent a regimen of heroic effort to achieve some goal. The career of the bodhisattva is divided into stages or epochs, called bhūmi.<sup>38</sup> The word denotes 'earth', 'place' or 'region' and has a connotation of 'stage', 'level' or 'state of consciousness'. The bhūmi can be considered stages of sequential maturation and are descriptive of the levels of achievement. Bodhisattvahood itself is described as the ideal goal of wholeness, completion of potentiality, at-one-ment. Nothing is lost in the tragic sense—all is gained. This is exactly Jung's description of self as goal.

#### SELF AS CENTER OF OPPOSITES

Jung pictured the self as a borderline condition. Self, in this sense, can only be considered in its functional role. He speaks of it as that "... desired midpoint of the personality, that ineffable something betwixt the opposites."<sup>39</sup>

The self as a center of opposites takes on a spatial feature which expresses itself as a bridge, borderline, condition-in-between or midwife. The solitary "I" of the self finds itself alone and in between all conscious distinctions. The "I" becomes conscious of its interstitial posture with the recognition of inside/outside, self/not-self, male/female, yin/yang, etc.

The creative role of self in this position is arbitration. The intransigent ego and the overwhelming unconscious domain struggle for dominant expression. The self, at its creative best, acts as midwife. This condition of in-between is captured in the image of the bodhisattva—both in his task and in his position. "A Bodhisattva is a being compounded of the two contradictory forces of wisdom and compassion. In his wisdom, he sees no persons; in his compassion, he is resolved to save them."<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Extensively detailed in Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankavatara Sutra*, pp. 222 et passim.

<sup>39</sup> *Two Essays*, CW, Vol. VII, par. 282.

<sup>40</sup> Conze, Edward, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (NY, 1951), p. 30.

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That he maintains in this position and acts out of it is the very mark of his creativity. He remains at the point of tension with respect to motivation. Does he act out of compassion or out of hedonism? Such questions are not solved once and for all but are suffered or confronted experientially at each volitional juncture. His very position just short of nirvana is one of ambiguous tension. Such is the abode of self as experienced. Its place is in the midst of an eternal becoming; in transit between the unconscious sphere and consciousness; in tension between the "I" and "not-I." This is the condition of both self and bodhisattva.

### SELF AS UNITING SYMBOL

From an altogether different perspective and in a different expression of itself, the self is not only that point of tension between opposites but it is also the symbol for the resolution of those opposites. Jung speaks of that position of creative tension as the "transcendent function."

The shuttling to and fro of arguments and affects represents the transcendent function of opposites. The confrontation of the two positions generates a tension charged with energy and creates a living third thing . . . a movement out of the suspension between opposites, a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation.<sup>41</sup>

This living third thing is the self as it presents itself in myth and dreams as the symbol for wholeness. Jung reports from his analytic inquiry that the self seems to "present" itself in dream content as a 'goal-seeking' figure. It appears in forms, ranging from obvious hero figures to obscure mandalas. The central characteristic of this presentation is that it points toward wholeness in the form of a totality symbol. Empirically, the self seems to consistently present itself as a union of opposites, ". . . it can also appear as a united duality, in the form, for instance, of *tao* as the interplay of yang and yin."<sup>42</sup>

Jung found that when the conscious ego treated the self as a Thou (in Buber's sense—a uniting symbol), it (the ego) is caught up in the symbol, transformed and enhanced by it. The bodhisattva is a uniting symbol par excellence. He not only stands between all opposites, he stands for the

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<sup>41</sup> *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, CW, Vol. VIII, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> *Psychological Types*, CW, Vol. VI, p. 460.

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union of those opposites. He does not avoid death or rebirth—rather he exemplifies the continuing resolution of both. So it is with nirvana/samsara, truth/illusoriness, enlightenment/compassion, maleness/femaleness, the jewel/the lotus, yang/yin, the bodhisattva stands as the *mysterium coniunctionis*.

Speaking of monks who seek the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in exalted places, Suzuki writes:

Do you wish to know where he is? There is something this very moment at work in you, showing no tendency to waver, betraying no disposition to doubt—this is your living Mañjuśrī. The light of non-discrimination which flashes through every thought of yours—this is your Samantabhadra who remains true all the time.<sup>43</sup>

## SELF AS AGENT

The self as agent is a crucial issue of our picture. The self must be something more than object (that which is acted upon); it must also be subject. The problem is to find its place between the hazards of servility and hubris. If the ego is the sole agent, the result is ego inflation and disaster. It is necessary for the ego to take its rightful place in intensive, localized consciousness. In this position, it is capable of sensing the world and ordering its perceptions into conceptions. It is capable of choosing, intending and making concrete the object of its attention. The ego can more fully function in this domain, if it realizes its proper relationship to the self that consists also of the unconscious. Here the self as agent must shift its weight in between ego and self into a position that Erich Neumann calls the ego-self axis. From this position, the self is truly agential but not ego-maniacal.

On the crucial issue of the agential role of the self, Jung took great pains to differentiate between the ego and the self. The doctrines of Buddhism and the disciplines of the bodhisattva likewise put great emphasis on the false claims of the ego. The insight of both Jung and Buddhism is that the self is not the ego but is rooted in the totality of the universe and yet somehow expressed in its particularity as “suchness.”

Jung sees the universal aspect of self as rooted in the unconscious; for the Buddhist, it is rooted in the Buddha-being. For the individual to ignore

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<sup>43</sup> Suzuki, pp. 65–66.

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his roots in the universal principle is the ultimate in folly. The individual must find his sense of self both in the conscious and the unconscious domains—in sat (existence) and asat (nonexistence). It is also the task of the individual to accept the responsibility of consciousness.

Jung points out that the self must accept its full responsibility in the domain of consciousness, volition and sensation. Certainly, this is not the totality of self but it is an important feature. The bodhisattva takes his first step by "arousing the thought." The bodhicitta is a truth that can be known and he sets out to know and act upon it. "The Bodhisattva would be a man who does not only set himself free but who is skillful in devising means for bringing out and maturing the latent seeds of enlightenment in others."<sup>44</sup>

Because the supreme test of the bodhisattva is his eternal readiness to serve, he must discipline himself in the nonexperience of ego. This task is assisted by his contemplation of the principles of the interpenetration of all things, or the principle of "form is emptiness and emptiness, form." The final goal is knowledge or wisdom but the means indicated is action. Ego-clogged acts tend to enslave.

... but the candidate for the Wisdom of the Other Shore behaves consistently as though he had already left behind the delusion of the world display. In every act of his daily living he makes a decision in favor of the self-transcending alternative, until at last, as a consequence of infinitely numerous deed-experiences of this kind, he does actually transcend the delusions of his phenomenal psychology: thenceforward he behaves instinctively as though his ego, with its false impressions, did not exist.<sup>45</sup>

As a discipline, this could well be adapted to Jung's prescriptions for individuation. The hazards of ego-possession or inflation are vividly illustrated in case studies. However, it must be noted that the Buddhist doctrine goes a step beyond that of Jung. Whereas Buddhism would completely dissolve the ego, Jung would shift the sense of self apart from, but inclusive of the ego. To the extent that the bodhisattva remains forever in existence with the accompanying implications of involvement with ego to that extent there is only a difference of degree. To the degree that

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<sup>44</sup> Conze, p. 128.

<sup>45</sup> Zimmer, Heinrich, *Philosophies of India* (NY, 1951), p. 545.

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Buddhism posits the elimination of the ego as an idea, there is a distinct difference of opinion. Obviously this is one of the central ideological impasses between East and West.

Nevertheless the parallel still holds. The self and the bodhisattva exist in a world in which their freedom, choice and action are crucial. Zimmer speaks of action in his chapter on "The Way of the Bodhisattva."

Practice precedes insight; knowledge is the reward of action: therefore try! That is the thought. For it is by doing things that one becomes transformed. . . . Knowledge is to be attained . . . not through inaction (as in the Jaina and the classic Yoga disciplines) but through a bold and advertent living of life.<sup>46</sup>

### THE SELF AS ARCHETYPE

The self as archetype is too simply worded. Rather, the self seems to operate from an archetypal base and present itself as an image which seeks fulfillment in consciousness and action. Just as the physical body seems to operate out of a genetic design that is discernible by its pattern the psyche possesses general and typical modes of functioning. These are based in archetypes. They are inherited possibilities which reflect backwards to collective experience and point forward to specific potential.

Across the threshold of consciousness come images of saoshyant (the recurring one), the hero, the god/man, etc., which bid to be recognized and integrated in order to fulfill a potentiality. The conscious ego that can entertain such archetypal images of self will tend to be transformed by the images. It is as though the unconscious is fecund with the image of a potential self. Its prolific expression seeks to be fertilized.

Basic to Buddhism is the concept that Buddha-being lies inherent in all things waiting to be fulfilled. In discussing the bodhisattva, Suzuki writes: "Owing to its self-expanding and self-creating power, a great loving heart transforms this earthly world into one of splendor and mutual fusion, and this is where the Buddha is always abiding."<sup>47</sup> And again, describing the

. . . way that the Bodhisattva comes: he comes where an all-embrac-

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 544.

<sup>47</sup> Suzuki, p. 63.

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ing love abides, because he desires to discipline all beings; he comes where there is a great compassionate heart, because he desires to protect all beings against sufferings; he comes out of the skilful means born of transcendental knowledge because he is ever in conformity with the mentalities of all beings.<sup>48</sup>

Only the word "archetype" is missing from the many descriptions of the bodhisattva's appearance and function. He appears when the occasion is right for him to fulfill himself. He also appears in the form and functions in the manner that will fulfill his own nature. Jung speaks of the self as an archetype and more specifically as the organizing archetype or the archetype of order. In his most comprehensive work on the self, he states it is "the real organizing principle of the unconscious."<sup>49</sup>

At this point, Jung presents his case in as strongly empirical a way as is possible for this subject matter. Out of the thousands of dream studies appeared a factor that demanded attention. There appeared in these dreams an insistent theme which not only bid for psychic wholeness but prescribed the nature of that wholeness. It was as though the self itself (with the aid of its unconscious domain) symbolically presents its own prescription for wholeness. Jung called this aspect of self the self-archetype and it seems forever to be working as an organizing principle toward its own wholeness. The bodhisattva, in his training, is taught that he is no more seeking something than he is being sought after. Chang Chung-yuan writes:

Master Po-chang asked a student to poke in a fire pot in search of a burning coal. When the student reported that there was none, Po-chang poked deep in the fire pot and extracted a small glowing piece of charcoal which he showed to the student saying, "Is this not a burning piece? . . . The Sutra says, 'To behold the Buddha-nature one must wait for the right moment and the right conditions.' When the time comes, one is awakened as from a dream. It is as if one's memory recalls something long forgotten. One realizes that what is obtained is one's own and not from outside one's self."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>49</sup> Jung, *Aion*, CW, Vol. IX, Part II, p. 204.

<sup>50</sup> Chang, p. 201.

## SELF AS A SUPERORDINATE SYSTEM

The self as a superordinate system is an abstract construct which is not experienced, but posited—much like the structure of the atom. It is at once a hypothetical center (and unity) and a total content of personality. It is not identified with or circumscribed by the conscious ego. In an ideal sense the self and the conscious ego hold one another in mutual regard. This superordinate system acts like an abstract universal within which operates the particular, the concrete and the unique aspects of self. Intellectually, it may be considered a transparent unity—or as a “hypothetical summation of an indescribable totality.”<sup>51</sup>

We are saying that the self expresses itself in five distinct ways. These aspects overlap in an interdependent complexity that is confusing without context. This context is the referential self, which I have designated as the superordinate system.

The figure of the bodhisattva also presents itself in Buddhist literature as a multidimensional expression. The seeming duplicity of the bodhisattva in all of his expressions is not duplicity at all when viewed from a certain vantage point. He is altruistic from one point of view and self-fulfilling from another. What is the general frame of reference within which the bodhisattva makes sense? One can say that this context is historical. At one time, he expresses himself one way, whereas at another time, he expresses himself differently.

However, D.T. Suzuki is not content with this explanation. Suzuki, of all the scholars who write on the bodhisattva, presents the most esoteric picture. He would be the last to consider the condition of the bodhisattva to be a state of being that is once and for all achieved. This is so because there is nothing to achieve—there is only the way or process. Yet he uses the term “bodhisattvahood” to describe the condition within which the bodhisattva takes his various expressions. The term serves the same function as superordinate system.

The term “superordinate system” has the quality of a formal abstraction. It is the opposite of a personal framework. It serves as a neutral carrier. It is in this sense “empty.” It is that abstract form out of which rises the drama of self experienced as selves. In this context Edward Whitmont writes: “The Self as a predisposition which is ‘empty’ in itself actualizes

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<sup>51</sup> *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, CW, Vol. XIV, par. 129, n. 66.

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as representational images and as patterns of emotion and behavior."<sup>52</sup>

Suzuki writes of the self as "comparable to a circle which has no circumference, it is thus Sunyata, emptiness."<sup>53</sup> Here again is that aspect of self that is describable only as an extreme abstraction. Suzuki discusses Rinzai's term for self: "the true man of no rank," which is sometimes called the "Way-man." He describes self as "... a kind of metaphysical self in opposition to the psychological or ethical self which belongs in a finite world of relativity. Rinzai's man is defined as 'of no rank' or 'independent of' or 'with no clothes on'."<sup>54</sup>

Later, in Suzuki's description of the bodhisattva, he again calls upon Rinzai's figure of the

man of no title: he is the one who is in the house and yet does not stay away from the road, he is the one who is on the road and yet does not stay away from the house. Is he an ordinary man or a great sage? No one can tell. Even the devil does not know where to locate him. Even the Buddha fails to manage him as he may desire. When we try to point him out, he is no more there, he is on the other side of the mountain.<sup>55</sup>

The bodhisattva, as a mystical figure, has the facility to carry an abstract form out of which emerges the expressions of a theme. He is that mythological format that is the occasion for the emergence of the hero, the man/god, the promised self. He is a framework within which our expectations are made possible and meaningful. As a figure in literature, he offers the advantage of perspective. One can view him at a distance and therefore witness more clearly the dynamics of his drama. At the same time, I can know that he not only acts for me, but he is my most intimate nature.

In Jungian terms, the bodhisattva figure was not originally invented as a means to entertain us or to solve our awkward problems. To the extent that he captures our attention and imagination—to that extent he is native to our preconscious origin. He emerges as an overt expression of our covert questions. The occasion for his appearance and all his characteristics are created by our most private fears and hopes.

We respond to the heroics of the bodhisattva figure because we re-

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<sup>52</sup> Whitmont, Edward C., *The Symbolic Quest* (NY, 1969), p. 236.

<sup>53</sup> Suzuki et al., *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (NY, 1960), p. 25.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.



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spond to our inner needs. Because of fear or ignorance, we are tempted to project all of this inner dynamic onto the outer drama. It is often more dramatic and always safer. The task of maturation or individuation is to recognize and own one's projections; to allow one's own inner image to emerge; to give a conscious form to that image so that it is neither inhibited nor preconditioned. I propose that the bodhisattva, as metaphor, is a valuable tool in that work.

T. W. Organ relates the following story from the Vedantic tradition:

Ten men were once fording a swift river. Upon reaching the other shore, they counted themselves to see if all had arrived safely but alas . . . each man could count but nine men. A passerby, hearing their wailing over the loss of a comrade, counted the men and discovered they were ten. He then asked each man to count, and when the counter counted but nine, the stranger touched him on the chest and said, "Thou art the tenth."<sup>56</sup>

I suggest that the passerby is the bodhisattva. He is not the self. As an historic figure, he stands for the conceptual model of self. As a metaphorical figure, he points to the experiential self. But as bodhisattva self, he is truly a passerby. He appears only to disappear, but not before he touches those of us who count and wail and informs us, "Thou art the tenth."

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<sup>56</sup> Organ, T. W., *The Self in Indian Philosophy* (The Hague, 1964), p. 22.