Oliver Knox

The Legacy of C. G. Jung's Buddha

The Meeting of Buddhism and Jung's Depth-Psychology

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ISBN 978-3-031-97328-4 ISBN 978-3-031-97329-1 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-97329-1

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

This book explores the history and reception of Carl Jung's depth-psychological interpretations of Buddhism. In modern culture, psychology has become one of the most prevalent frameworks through which to interpret Buddhism. Buddhist meditative practices are, *prima facie,* considered to be psychological techniques and popular commentators and authors describe Buddhist doctrine as a form of noetic science. The psychologization of Buddhism, familiar to many today, does not have a homogenous history. Rather, Buddhism's transmutation into a (supposedly) psychological tradition has taken many forms, from Buddhism as an ethical psychology to Buddhism as 'mindfulness'. Many scholars of Buddhism have alluded to the significance of Carl Gustav Jung's depth-psychological interpretations in the history of the reception of Buddhism in the west during the mid-twentieth century and beyond. Yet there have been, to date, few studies detailing the context of Jung's encounter with Buddhism and the legacy of his interpretation of it. The aim of the present thesis, briefly stated, is to make good this gap in both the historiography of Buddhism's reception in the West and in the historiography of Jung's psychology. Jung played a major role in the development of the notion, mainstream today, that Buddhism is, in essence, psychological.

My argument in what follows develops in three stages. First, I shall layout Jung's engagement with Indian religious and philosophical ideas and his generalised conception of 'Eastern thought' that developed out of his own reading and his contemporary historico-cultural context. This section will also focus on how Indological ideas entered into his personal cosmology, which is recorded in his recently published Black Books. Second, I shall explore how Jung's acquaintance with contemporary scholars of Indology, predominantly those who participated at the Eranos conferences in Ascona in the 1930s, began to deepen the association between depth psychology and 'Eastern' soteriology meditative practices, both for psychologists, including Jung, and for scholars of Indology and Buddhology themselves. Finally, I shall explore how this psychologized form of Buddhism was taken up and developed in the writings of prominent authors on Buddhism, who, using their understanding of Jung's psychological model as their interpretive framework, promoted the version of Buddhism that is familiar today to many in the West. The concluding chapters discuss the legacy of Jung's interpretations, demonstrating the formative impact they had on scholars and enthusiasts of Eastern religion, particularly in the American counterculture of the 1950s and 1960s, up until the end of the first decade of the Esalen conferences in 1975. This history has enduring implications both for students of Jung and for those interested in the historiography of Buddhism.

Over the past half-century, the term 'Buddhism' has become, in the popular Western imagination, synonymous with psychological healing. News media routinely report on the beneficial mental health effects of so-called Buddhist techniques of mindfulness, citing scientific experiments on the neuropsychology of advanced Buddhist meditators. Entire psychotherapeutic treatment modalities hold so-called Buddhist meditative techniques at their core and governments and corporations have increasingly attempted to apply mindfulness practices in their policies. Interest in Buddhism as a form of secular psycho-spirituality has flourished and, at the same time, has garnered criticism, particularly among scholars of religion. This thesis explains, for the first time, the significance of Carl Gustav Jung's depth-psychological interpretation of 'Eastern' thought and its legacy from 1920 to 1975.

Jung's publications on Buddhism continue to be widely read today and his depth-psychological hermeneutic has been adopted by many other popular twentieth-century scholars and writers on Buddhism, becoming a crucial chapter in the history of Buddhism's modernization. An historical study of Jung's ideas about 'Eastern' thought and about Buddhism in particular, therefore, has broad implications for those interested in the historiography of Buddhism as it has been imagined in the twenty-first century. It is also valuable to those interested in Jung's psychology *per se* since Jung believed he had discovered, through Eastern thought, crucial cross-cultural parallels to the individuation process and his signature psychological notions. Despite the preponderance of publications on Jung's interpretations of Eastern thought, there has been very little research on how his interpretations developed and the historical context within which they were embedded. An historical study of Jung's understanding of Eastern thought, therefore, has important implications both for the student of Jung's ideas and practices, as well as for the student of modern Buddhism. Furthermore, a principal aim of the following chapters is to open up areas for future research into the encounter between Buddhism and modern psychology.

London, England Oliver Knox

Transcription

I have not included diacritics when transcribing Sanskrit or Tibetan terms. The early-twentieth-century sources that I have cited follow various transcription styles and some omit diacritics altogether. This obviated a systematic application of diacritics throughout my thesis. I have retained diacritics in quotations from primary and secondary sources.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Sonu Shamdasani, Dr Martin Liebscher and Professor Ulrich Pagel for support throughout my thesis and without whom this work would not be possible. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Jung family, for making possible the publication of previously unpublished materials from Jung's private library. I would also like to thank Rose Whiffen, my wife, and my family, who have made it all worthwhile.

Abbreviations

CW *Collected Works,* vols 1–20. S. Read, M. Fordham & G. Adler (eds), R. F. C. Hull (transl.). New York: Princeton University Press, 1953–1979.

CW B *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume B – Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolisms of the Libido: Supplementary Volume B.* London: Routledge, 2019.

Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

The term 'Buddhism' tends to conjure, in the minds of modern readers, a plethora of associations, many of which revolve around notions of psychological health, meditation and general conceptions of spirituality that emphasise inwardness and self-exploration. Over the past thirty years, numerous scholars have attempted to integrate Buddhist philosophy and meditation with psychology and psychotherapy. Examples include Mark Epstein's *Thoughts Without a Thinker* (1995), Radmilla Moacanin's *The Essence of Jung's Psychology and Tibetan Buddhism* (1985) and David Brazier's *Zen Therapy* (1995). By and large, authors of such works tend to be western psychotherapists. Most are also practicing Buddhists. The fusion of Buddhism and psychology has also led to the creation of new schools of psychotherapy, for instance, Core Process Therapy, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindful-Based Addiction Recovery, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, amongst others, all of which attempt to adopt practices supposedly derived from Buddhism in their therapeutic practices. In addition, neuroscientists and national governments have investigated the purported benefits of meditation and its effects on stress reduction, anxiety, and depression.[1] Buddhist meditation has been reconfigured into a psychological technique and appropriated into mainstream, Western culture.[2] Yet the association between Buddhism and psychology is far from new. As early as 1893, less than twenty years after the first experimental psychology course at Harvard, William James, impressed with the psychological subtlety of Buddhist doctrine, is said to have asked the Buddhist missionary, Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), who was in the audience during one of his lectures, to take his place at the lecture stand. 'Take my chair',

[1] The BBC, for example, published an article in 2012, 'Scans show mindfulness meditation brain boost', published on BBC News, 4 January 2012. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/health-16406814

[2] See Jeremy Carrette and Richard King's *Selling Spirituality*, which demonstrates how Asian wisdom traditions have become commodified and re-packaged to 'serve the eclectic interests of "spiritual consumers" in the contemporary New Age marketplace of religions' J. Carrette and R. King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion,* Abingdon: Routledge, 2005, p. 87.

O. Knox, *The Legacy of C. G. Jung's Buddha*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-97329-1_1

James remarked, 'and I shall sit with my students. You are better equipped to lecture on psychology than I am … this is the psychology everyone will be studying twenty-five years from now.'[3]

Buddhism's encounter with Western conceptual categories gathered momentum at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. During this time, shifts in conceptions of personal identity had crystallised into a general *Weltanschauung* that viewed human nature as discoverable through introspection. Charles Taylor, in his *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (1989) has argued that Augustine first bequeathed 'inwardness' to the Western tradition of thought. Augustine drew explicitly on Plotinus' philosophy that introspection coincides with contemplation of the One,[4] or, as Plotinus himself wrote, 'he who has learnt to know himself will know from where he comes'.[5] Adopting Plotinus' reflexive stance, Augustine argued that the universal moral and structural laws of the universe and knowledge of God's nature could be discovered through introspection of one's own mind and soul. Quoting the great scholar of medieval philosophy, Étienne Gilson, Taylor writes that Augustine's philosophy leads from the 'exterior to the interior and from the interior to the superior',[6] inaugurating the cultural interest in self-discovery by 'looking within', characteristic of modern notions of identity and spirituality. The adoption of a first-person standpoint with relation to inner experience, 'radical reflexivity', as Taylor calls it, is fundamental to the modern sense of identity.[7] To 'have' a self, so to speak, is a linguistic reflection of the impression that the thinking 'I', or the Cartesian *cogito*, is of a distinct nature from the 'outer' world of experience.[8] Taylor argues that the revolutionary inward turn that Augustine instigated only began to flourish in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[9]

Both religious and secular philosophies of the following centuries inherited the Augustinian reflexive stance towards the self, which gave rise to notions of spirituality that aimed at authenticity, self-expression and self-realisation, as espoused, for example, by writers and figures involved in the Human Potential Movements and Transcendentalism.[10] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau and Bronson Alcott drew upon 'oriental religions' to construct a universal religion based on the ideal of individualism. Seeking to reaffirm the mystery of the depths of the human soul that had been obscured by industrialisation and scientific rationalism, the Transcendentalists

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[3] A. Guruge, *Return to Righteousness: A Collection of Speeches, Essays and Letters of Anagarika Dharmapala*, Ceylon, Government Press, 1965, p. 681.

[4] G. O'Daly, *Augustine's Philosophy of Mind,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, pp. 1–7.

[5] Plotinus, *Enneads in Seven Volumes*, vol. 7, S. A. Armstrong (transl.), London: Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 331.

[6] Ibid., p. 136.

[7] Ibid., p. 130.

[8] E. Bermon, *Le Cogito Dans La Pensee de Saint Augustin.* Paris: Vrin, 2001.

[9] C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 127–143.

[10] Ibid., pp. 159–184.

projected onto ancient religions of the East their hopes for the spiritual renewal of western society.[11] Several decades later, in the 1870s and 80s, Buddhism began to be associated with esotericism and the occult, through Helena Blavatsky's and Henry Olcott's dramatic presentations in the Theosophical Society. Contemporaneously, in academic circles, the pioneering scholarly researches of the eighteenth and early twentieth century, such as those William Jones and Anquetil Duperron, continued to be developed by a host of Orientalists, culminating in Max Müller's fifty-volume series, *The Sacred Books of the East*, published between 1879–1910.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, therefore, Buddhism met with implicit notions of human personhood quite different to those of its cultural origins, which, in turn, have shaped the way that Buddhism has been imagined in the West.[12] Indeed, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many hoped that the architecture of the 'inner self' could become an object of scientific inquiry through the developing field of psychology, which, at the time, was attempting to separate itself from philosophy, theology, literature and other academic disciplines and trying, instead, to find a place for itself amongst the sciences.[13] Psychologists were, as Alasdair McIntyre wrote, waiting for a figure equivalent to Newton for physicists, one who would form a unifying scientific principle that would finally establish it among the sciences. By the turn of the century, there had emerged many different psychologies, each with their own foundational assumptions and epistemologies, yet no consensus amongst them over any unifying principle. Psychology was still, as William James wrote, only a 'hope of a science'.[14]

Nevertheless, it seemed axiomatic to many of the most eminent contemporary figures in psychology, for instance, Freud, Flournoy, James, Wundt and Janet, to name but a few, that self-understanding could be achieved by searching within, that is, through introspection. It began to be hypothesised that Eastern religion, and Buddhism in particular, might serve to inform or challenge western psychology. William James, for instance, invoked Buddhism in his analysis of mystical experience, arguing that its 'godless, or quasi-godless creeds'[15] and its focus on inner individual experience, as opposed to pure doctrine or transcendentalist metaphysics, justified its place among the 'completest religions' of the world,[16] alongside Christianity.[17] For James, the Buddha's enlightenment was an example of the primordial

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[11] A. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism,* New York: Colombia University Press, 1963.

[12] See, for instance, Sallie King's exposition of the differences between Buddhist and contemporary views on human individuality in S. King, *Buddha Nature and the Concept of Person,* in 'Philosophy East and West', Vol. 39, No. 2, 1989, pp. 151–170.

[13] S. Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology,* Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2003, pp. 1–27.

[14] W. James, *Psychology: Briefer Course,* New York: Henry Holt, 1920, p. 468.

[15] W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press, 2009, p. 52.

[16] Ibid., p. 171.

[17] For an overview of James' comments on Buddhism, see D. Scott, 'William James and Buddhism: American Pragmatism and the Orient', *Religion,* vol. 30, No. 4, 2000, pp. 333–352.

mystical experience, which institutional religion only 'live[d] at second-hand'.[18] As Richard King notes, James' exclusively experiential emphasis 'reflects not only the emerging discipline of Psychology, of which James himself was an important figure, but also general features of modern Western culture, such as the clearly defined distinction between the public and the private realms, the rise of anti-clericalism and modern political and philosophical trends such as liberalism, democracy and the notion of the individual'.[19] Interestingly, a contemporary of James, the psychoanalyst Franz Alexander, in his essay 'Buddhistic Training as an Artificial Catatonia', had a distinctly different view, claiming instead that Buddhist *nirvana* represented a psychological regression to intra-uterine life resulting from a 'suppression of all emotional life'.[20] By superimposing a reductive Freudian hermeneutic onto Buddhist soteriology, Alexander pathologized Buddhist monastic practice, characterising it as a denial of reality, equivalent to a psychosis.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, so-called 'Buddhist psychology' became a topic of scholarly interest. Most notable, perhaps, were the works of the British Indologist, Caroline Augusta Foley Rhys Davids (1857–1942), who had studied psychology as an undergraduate.[21] Her works, *Buddhism: A Study of the Buddhist Norm* (1912) and *Buddhist Psychology* (1914), explored the possibility of discovering equivalents to modern psychological concepts in the Pali *Abhidharma suttas,*[22] which she characterised as 'unmythological and scientific' introspective analyses of inner life.[23] Less developed claims of the same nature can also be read as early as 1844, in Burnouf's pioneering study, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism.*[24] Although Rhys Davids' publications were popular among Indologists, they had little cultural impact outside a rather narrow and elite circle of academics. Yet the imagined affinity, in popular culture, between Buddhism and modern science was not limited to the embryonic field of psychology. Claims of compatibility with contemporary scientific paradigms emerged in the early twentieth century, including the notions that the Buddha had pre-empted the scientific discoveries of magnetism, radioactivity, and had proposed a mechanistic universe based on the principle of cause and effect.[25] When Einstein's theory of relativity displaced the Newtonian model of the mechanistic universe, the focus of Buddhist apologists

[18] James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* p. 27.

[19] R. King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and 'The Mystic East',* London: Routledge, 1999, p. 22.

[20] F. Alexander, 'Buddhistic training as an Artificial Catatonia', *Psychoanalytic Review,* vol. 18, 1931, p. 129.

[21] Rhys Davids' work, and particularly the impact of her ideas on the Eranos conferences in Ascona, will be discussed in Part II, Chapter 6.

[22] C. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Psychology,* London: Luzac & Co., 1924.

[23] Ibid., p. 132.

[24] Discussing the Buddhist theory of *karma,* Burnouf stated, 'this is the truly ancient philosophical part of Buddhism, which could be called psychology and ontology'. E. Burnouf, *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism,* Buffetrille (transl.), Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010, p. 448.

[25] D. Lopez, *The Scientific Buddha,* Newhaven and London: Yale University Press, 2012.

turned away from mechanistic expositions of *karma* and onto Nagarjuna's *pratityasamutpada* (interdependence).[26]

In the early twentieth century, then, many diverse (and largely incommensurable) notions of 'Buddhism' had begun to emerge, in line with contemporaneous concerns of western society. The diversity of these permutations makes it difficult to distinguish the defining features of what we might call 'Buddhist modernism', which, to use David McMahan's definition in his seminal work, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*, broadly refers to forms of Buddhism that have 'emerged out of an engagement with the dominant cultural and intellectual forces of modernity'.[27] Despite its complex history and blurred boundaries, Buddhist modernism in the twentieth century can be loosely characterised by the themes of demythologisation, detraditionalization and psychologization,[28] whereby ontological deities and cosmologies have become translated into inner psychological processes. Perhaps the most enduring of Buddhism's re-configurations has been its infusion into psychotherapy, particularly discourses on mindfulness meditation, which has been incorporated into many cognitive behavioural therapies.[29] As Erik Braun has argued, mindfulness meditation, as it has come to be understood, has a complex history that can be traced to Buddhist reform movements in early twentieth century in Burma, during which Burmese monks, beginning with Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923) and his disciples, sought to offer accessible techniques to lay practitioners in Southeast Asia and, accordingly, focused their teachings on present-moment awareness.[30] They controversially popularised the technique of 'bare attention' to sensory objects, thereby reconfiguring notions of *sati* ('mindfulness) as historically conceptualised in the Theravada tradition.[31] The practice of 'mindfulness' that western meditators are familiar with today has its roots in Ledi Sayadaw's teachings.[32]

Cultural interest in mindfulness as a therapeutic modality only flourished in the 1970s, epitomised by the popularity of John Kabat-Zinn's first Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program in 1979.[33] In the preceding decades, namely between

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[26] Ibid.

[27] D. McMahan, *Buddhist Modernism,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 7.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Mindfulness forms the basis of many cognitive behavioural therapies, for example, Dialectical Behavioural therapy and John Kabat-Zinn's Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction.

[30] E. Braun, *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

[31] Nyanaponika Thera coined the term 'bare attention' in his popular book, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation,* which Richard Price, the founder of Esalen, used as his sourcebook on the principles and theory of meditation. J. Kripal, *Esalen: American and the Religion of no Religion,* London: University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 186.

[32] Jeff Wilson's *Mindful America* describes how mindfulness has been applied to many nontraditional concerns, for example, by businesses, members of Congress, hospitals, public schools, and even the military in the U.S.A. His work also outlines various ways in which mindfulness has been modified, both by Buddhists and non-Buddhists, to fit a scientific and therapeutic culture. See J. Wilson, *Mindful America,* 2014, pp. 78–78.

[33] G. Samuel, 'The Contemporary Mindfulness Movement and the Question of Nonself', in *Transcultural Psychiatry,* vol. 52, no. 4, 2014, pp. 2–3.

1925 and 1975, depth-psychology was a significant lens through which the cultural understanding Buddhism was conceptualised. Well known scholars and popularisers of Buddhism, such as Alan Watts and D. T. Suzuki, whose works continue to be widely read today, expounded notions of Buddhism in which depth-psychology was a central, albeit often implicit, hermeneutic.[34] The reconfiguration of Buddhism as a noetic science of the unconscious was a crucial chapter in the history of its modernisation. While there have been historical studies on other permutations of Buddhism's marriage of convenience, so to speak, with psychology, such as the above-mentioned mindfulness movement,[35] a detailed historical study of depth-psychology's cross-fertilisation with Buddhism, has not yet been written. Nevertheless, the significance of this chapter in the history of Buddhism's modernisation has not escaped the attention of many eminent and contemporary Buddhologists and historians. McMahan, for instance, argued that 'one cannot underestimate' the significance of the depth-psychological transmutation of Buddhism,[36] alluding to the essential role psychoanalytic interpretations played in the entry of Tibetan Buddhism into the West.[37] Similarly, Donald Lopez argued that although, beginning with Jung, depth-psychology has been one of the most common interpretive lenses for Buddhism, 'a thorough study', as Donald Lopez argued, 'of Jung's misreading, wilful or otherwise, of "Eastern Religions" remains to be written'.[38]

In what follows, my aim is to make good this gap in the literature by focusing on the cross-fertilisation of Buddhism and depth psychology in the period from 1925 to 1975 and the crucial role that Carl Gustav Jung played in it. Jung was the first depth-psychologist to dedicate several publications and lectures specifically to the topic of Eastern religion. This encounter was transformative, not only for Buddhism, but also for Jung's psychological theories. After resigning from the Burghölzli hospital in 1909 to devote himself to private practice and research, Jung's interests shifted from psychiatry to the cross-cultural study of mythology and religion. What ensued was over half a century of interest in Eastern thought, from the texts of the *Upanishads* and *Vedas* to Taoism. Yet of his copious interests, few traditions captured Jung's attention more than Buddhism. As late as 1949, he wrote in a letter to a friend, 'if I were an Indian I would definitely be a Buddhist. But in the West we have different presuppositions'.[39]

To put it briefly, Eastern religions and spiritual practices provided Jung with cross-cultural support for his signature psychological concepts developed in his

[34] See Part III, Chapter 9.

[35] See, for example, Erik Braun's *The Birth of Insight: Meditation* (2013), David McMahan's *The Making of Buddhist Modernism* (2013) and a series of articles by R. Scharf, 'Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience', in *Numen,* vol. 42, no. 3, 1995, pp. 228–283. Also see R. Scharf, 'Is Mindfulness Buddhist? (and why it matters), in *Transcultural Psychiatry,* vol. 52, no.4, 2015, pp. 470–484.

[36] D. McMahan, *The Making of Buddhist Modernism,* p. 53.

[37] Ibid., p. 55.

[38] D. Lopez, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography,* New Jersey: Princeton, 2011, p. 88.

[39] Jung, *Letters*, vol. 1, p. 537.

later scientific writings. As we shall see, during the epitome of Jung's interest in Buddhism from 1933 to 1939, he became convinced that Buddhists, long ago, had created psychological technologies designed to engender the individuation process. Yet his engagement with Eastern texts began much earlier, during his period of self-experimentation recorded in the *Black Books*, beginning in 1912, during which his reading in comparative religion stimulated his fantasies. Jung did not engage with the 'East' merely from an objective or scholarly perspective. Rather, the wisdom of the East, conceived as part of mankind's phylogenetic inheritance on a collective level, was also a psychological, or inner, 'discovery'.

Jung's writings on Buddhism, including his prefaces to Suzuki's *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (1939) and Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1935) are, today, still amongst the first texts on Buddhism that western readers encounter. Moreover, the association of Buddhism and depth psychology that originated with Jung, is still very much alive in popular books on Buddhism, as the following example will serve to demonstrate. The lay Buddhist and psychotherapist Mark Epstein, in his bestseller, *Thoughts Without a Thinker* (1995), whose title is in fact borrowed from a quotation from the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1897–1979) and which contains a foreword by the fourteenth Dalai Lama, writes:

> I begin with a discussion of what has always impressed me the most about Buddhist psychology: its comprehensive view of the human psyche. For Buddhism, like the Western traditions that followed many centuries later, is, in its psychological form, a depth psychology … the Buddha may well have been the original psychoanalyst, or, at least, the first to use the mode of analytic inquiry that Freud was later to codify and develop.[40]

Rather than representing Buddhism as traditionally practiced in South-East Asia, Epstein's account is characteristic of a particular strand of Buddhist modernism that I aim to examine historically. The re-mythologisation of Buddhism through a depth psychological hermeneutic results largely from the impact of Jung's work and of the scholars with whom he collaborated, particularly during the during the Eranos conferences in Ascona.[41] Scholars of religion have long understood the significance of Eranos as one of the concealed origins of many of our commonly shared ideas on esotericism and spirituality, for example, on account of its influence on the so-called 'Chicago School', founded by Joachim Wach (1898–1955) and Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). While the post-war period of Eranos has received considerable scholarly attention, the period from 1933–39, in which the 'meeting of East and West' was the principal theme of the conferences, has not been studied to the same degree. There have been, in particular, no scholarly studies on the primary texts from the early years of Eranos, between 1933 to 1939, which was a crucial time in the history of Buddhism's dialogue with depth-psychology. During these years, Jung's psychology dominated as the overarching conceptual framework through which scholars sought to understand Eastern religion. The post-war period, which included lectures from broader fields of study, including Western esotericists and

[40] Epstein, 1995, p. 9.

[41] See Part II, Chapter.5.

natural scientists, retained the general worldview of the earlier conferences, which can be recognised, as Hanegraff writes, 'by its alterity with respect to Enlightenment rationality and modern science'.[42] In brief, scholars at Eranos sought a universal and inward science of the soul that would counter contemporary scientific reductionism and the ever increasing fragmentation of modern academic disciplines.[43] The parallels found through cross-cultural study of Eastern religious ideas would reveal, they hoped, an underlying and universal psychology of the process of religious symbol formation. The second part of this book will discuss the depth-psychological notions of Buddhism that emerged at Eranos between 1933 and 1939 and Jung's place within them. Jung's association and collaboration with various eminent contemporary scholars, such as Heinrich Zimmer (1890–1943), Caroline Rhys Davids (1857–1942), Erwin Rousselle (1890–1949), Paul Masson-Oursel (1882–1956), to name but a few, will be of particular significance during this period.

The notions developed during this period at Eranos were significant precursors to the psychologization of Buddhism that emerged in the American counterculture of the 1960s and 70s. Scholars and academics such as Frederic Spiegelberg (1897–1994), D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966), Alan Watts (1915–1973) and Joseph Campbell (1904–1987), many of whom lectured or participated as audience members at Eranos, popularised notions of Buddhism in the American counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s, which were predicated on the motifs developed at Eranos. Suzuki, Watts and Spiegelberg became central figures for the American counterculture that inspired so-called 'new age' spirituality. Their expositions of Buddhism blended elements of the depth-psychological understanding of Buddhism developed at Eranos with modern emerging cultural discourses. The popular work, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (1960), by Fromm, Suzuki and De Martino, for example, fused a depth-psychological interpretation of Buddhism with psychoanalysis and mindfulness, presenting meditation as a psychological technique of immersion into present-moment experience, designed to engender 'de-repression', that is, the transformation of unconsciousness into consciousness.[44]

Two of the most characteristic elements of the American counterculture were the widespread induction of visionary experiences through the use of enthogens and an interest in Eastern wisdom. There have been many scholarly studies dealing with both subjects and the present study does not attempt a full exposition of either.[45] I shall argue, however, in Part III of this book, that there are key figures who bridge

[42] W. Hanegraff, *Esotericism and the Academy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 278.

[43] Jung, *Letters I,* selected and edited by Gerhard Adler, in collaboration with Aniela Jaffé; translations from the German by R. F. C. Hull and from French by Jane A. Pratt, 2 vols, London: Routledge, 1974, vol. 1 (1906–1950), pp. 29–30.

[44] E. Fromm, D. T. Suzuki & R. De Martino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis,* London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960, pp. 121–142.

[45] For example, W. Hanegraff, *New Age religion and Western Culture,* New York: State University of New York Press, 1998; J. Lewis, *Perspectives on the New Age,* New York: State University of New York Press, 1992; A. Versluis, *American Gurus: From Transcendentalism to New Age Religion,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

the scholarly pursuits of Eranos and the mysticism of the American counterculture of the 1960s and 70s, which, in turn, was foundational to New Age religiosity. Through these figures, the hybridisation of Buddhism and depth-psychology entered into popular representations of Buddhism. I shall focus on three figures in particular, namely Frederic Spiegelberg, D. T. Suzuki and Alan Watts, who, each in their own way, developed Jung's depth-psychological interpretation of Buddhism. Although their publications became popular in the 1960s and 70s, the intellectual history of their interpretations reach back much further. For each author, Jung's psychology and in his interpretations of Eastern mysticism, particularly his works published between 1920 and 1939, were key precursors to their own interpretations. Part III of this book will take a broader historical lens, analysing Jung's role in the development of ideas regarding the 'psychology' of Buddhism in the American counterculture between 1950 and 1970. The popularity of works by Spiegelberg, Watts and others following his psychological take on Eastern religions during this period attest to Jung's crucial role as the 'harbinger of the post-colonial Easternisation of the West'.[46] The countercultural association between Buddhism and psychedelics, transpersonal psychologies and meditative practices stemmed from Jung's depth-psychological interpretations of Eastern religion.

Previous Studies on Jung and Buddhism

Published works on Jung and Buddhism tend to fall into one of three categories. First, there are those attempting to compare Jung's psychological concepts with Buddhist soteriological principles. The majority of these are written by practicing psychotherapists and, therefore, deal with ways of integrating Buddhist notions and practices within modern Jungian psychotherapy. They apply a Jungian 'framework' to Buddhism, drawing parallels and, at times, describing the inconsistencies between the two. These works form the preponderance of publications on Jung and Buddhism. Analysing the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Jung's psychology can, in the eyes of many authors, result in a productive synthesis of both traditions, for example, by attempting to reconcile Buddhist ideas about the Self with Jung's notion of individuation. Examples include Masao Abe's *The Self in Jung and Zen* (1985), Radmilla Moacanin's *Jung's Psychology and Tibetan Buddhism* (1986), Marvin Spiegelman's *Buddhism and Jungian Psychology* (1995), Polly Young-Eisendrath's *Jung and Buddhism* (2008), Meckel and Moore's *Self and Liberation* (2000), Kawai's *Buddhism and the Art of Psychotherapy* (1996) and Aura Glaser's *Call to Compassion: Bringing Buddhist Practices of the Heart into the Soul of Psychology* (2005). Some of these authors take a more critical perspective than others on Jung's interpretations about Buddhism, yet unanimously attempt a cross-fertilisation of Buddhism and modern Jungian psychotherapeutic ideas.

[46] Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology,* 2003, p. 2.

Publications belonging to this category tend to substantiate their interpretations by drawing exclusively from Jung's *Collected Works* or from his semi-autobiographical memoir, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* often without critical historical study or contextualisation of his writings. Jung proposed many of his most significant thoughts about Eastern religion in his unpublished writings, for example, in lectures, seminars and correspondence, which do not appear in the *Collected Works.* The use of these materials will be a crucial aspect of the present work. In any case, the *Collected Works*, cannot yet, as Sonu Shamdasani has argued, be read as a definitive, self-contained corpus of Jung's ideas since they are not structured chronologically and contain historical obfuscations by the editors, as well as translation errors.[47] Furthermore, publications belonging to the above category fail to distinguish between Jung's interpretations of Buddhism and Buddhist notions as such, with reference to modern Buddhist scholarship. They tend to represent Buddhism, for instance, as an essentially psychological tradition. Such circular arguments inevitably result in an echo-chamber, in which supposed 'Buddhist' parallels with modern psychotherapy are verified by the very misconceptions through which they were initially generated. As we shall see, the notion that Buddhism is a primarily psychological tradition derives largely from Jung's own understanding (and those that followed him).

A second category of publication includes descriptions of Jung's ideas about Buddhism and Eastern religion. Harold Coward's *Jung and Eastern Thought* (1985) is an accurate exposition and comparative study of Jung's ideas about Eastern religion. Peter Bishop's *Revisiting Jung's dialogue with Yoga* (2010), Michele Daniel's *Jung's Affinity for Buddhism,* J. J. Clarke's *Jung and Eastern Thought* (1994) and Henri Corbin's *Jung and the Incarnation of Sophia* (2019) describe Jung's ideas, based primarily, again, on the evidence of his *Collected Works*. These works analyse the impact of Eastern religious notions in the development of Jung's psychology, focusing particularly on the corroboration he found for his own psychological notions from Yoga and Buddhism. Coward, for example, describes how Jung equated Yoga concepts like *citta* and *rajas,* with the concepts of 'psyche' and 'libido', concluding that the cross-cultural parallel was vital support for the development of his notion of the collective unconscious.[48] Unlike publications in the above category, they are not concerned with conscripting or developing Jung's ideas on Eastern religion to their own purposes. However, few, if any, deal with the question of how Jung's ideas about Eastern religion entered into his personal cosmology in *Liber Novus* or the *Black Books*.

Publications in this category, however, are not critical histories of Jung's interpretations. Coward's work, for instance, which is among the most successful descriptions of Jung's ideas about Yoga and Buddhism, is not concerned with the significance of the scholarly milieu and intellectual context to which they belonged.

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[47] See S. Shamdasani, *Jung Stripped Bare by his Biographers, Even,* London: Karnac Books, 2005, pp. 47–59.

[48] H. Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1985, pp. 31–33.

Figures such as Heinrich Zimmer, Richard Wilhelm and Jakob Hauer, in fact, played a pivotal role in the development of Jung's ideas on Eastern thought. Moreover, Jung's twenty-year participation at the Eranos conferences, was, as we shall see, a crucial feature of his engagement with Eastern religious ideas.[49] Publications that restrict themselves to description of Jung's ideas, therefore, tend to portray his interpretations as idiosyncratic when, in fact, they form part of a relatively unexplored strand of Orientalist scholarship that stretches back to the seventeenth and eighteenth-century.[50] Similarly, they ignore the catalysing effect that Jung's psychologization of Buddhism had on the reception of Buddhism in the West over the latter half of the twentieth century.

The final category consists of publications on Jung and Buddhism consist of those which attempt to evaluate the legitimacy of Jung's interpretations. They offer critical perspectives, often proposing arguments based on modern post-colonial perspectives, or questioning the suitability of Jung's translation of Buddhist notions into the language of analytic psychology. Many cite as evidence the dualism of the conscious and unconscious mind and its incongruity with Buddhist ideas. Oscar Gomez, for instance, in his *Curators of the Buddha* (1995), characterised Jung as 'easy prey for the postmodern Orientalist hunter'.[51] He portrays Jung, quoting the words of J. J. Clarke, as a 'spasmodic and rather amateurish' Orientalist,[52] who selectively plundered Eastern texts in an attempt to justify and promote his own psychology. Donald Lopez's exegesis of Jung's reading of the *Bardo Thodol* in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography in Books* (2011) describes Jung's ideas on the East as fundamentally equivalent with those of Theosophy. Despite Jung's overt disavowal of Theosophy, he was, Lopez argues, unaware of the underlying theosophical assumptions underpinning his interpretations.[53]

Such publications do offer critical historical analyses of Jung's ideas about Buddhism. They filter their understanding, however, through general concepts that could equally apply to many other twentieth-century commentators and scholars of Eastern religion. Gomez, for instance, concludes that Jung's ambivalence towards the East can be explained by his 'incapacity to accept the other as anything but other' and that his use of Eastern texts was, on the one hand, unbridled 'self-confirmation' of his psychological theories and, on the other, provided the 'basis for [his] critique of Western views of the individual'.[54] Despite contributing to modern post-colonial discourse, such broad-brush explanations ignore Jung's contributions to popular ideas about Buddhism, which only an intricate historical analysis can provide, including, for example, the significance of the relationships Jung fostered with

[49] See Part II, Chapters 6–8.

[50] See Part I, Chapter 3.

[51] O. Gomez, *Curators of the Buddha: A Study of Buddhism under Colonialism,* London: University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 198.

[52] J. J. Clarke, *In Search of Jung,* London: Routledge, 1992, p. 87.

[53] D. Lopez, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 88.

[54] O. Gomez, *Curators of the Buddha,* p. 200.

eminent Orientalists of his day. Moreover, Gomez's work betrays at best only a partial understanding of Jung's motivations for engaging with Buddhism. By his own admission, Jung's intention was never simply to expound 'classical Buddhism'.[55] Rather, he was interested in uncovering the universal architectonics of the psyche through the cross-cultural comparison of religious symbology. Moreover, Gomez and Lopez refer and quote from Jung's *Collected Works* and *Memories*, without taking into account the context of the passages they draw from. They juxtapose passages from Jung's writings in 1921, for example, with other passages written in 1955, to prove, gratuitously, that he was inconsistent.[56] As we shall see, however, Jung's ideas developed significantly over the course of his engagement with Eastern religion – an interest, furthermore, which spanned almost half a century.

Despite portraying his ideas as eccentric, even inaccurate, Buddhologists such as Gomez and Lopez admit that Jung's cross-fertilisation of Buddhism with analytical psychology left, in Gomez's words, 'a deep impression on the study of Asian religions, especially on the way Asian religious ideas, and to a lesser extent practices, are adopted and assimilated in the West'.[57] In his comments on Jung's interpretation of the *Bardo Thodol*, Lopez claimed that Jung's contribution to the reception of Eastern religion remains too consequential to be overlooked, as has been so far been the case. Nevertheless, the authors do not elaborate on exactly what Jung's contribution was, or how his interpretation shaped twentieth century notions about Buddhism.

A recent publication attempting to study Jung's 'misreading' of Buddhism is Ira Heldermann's *Prescribing the Dharma* (2019), in which the author claimed that Jung, and to a lesser degree the psychoanalyst Franz Alexander (1891–1964), catalysed the interest in Buddhism evident today in the West. Heldermann's publication, however, runs into many of the same issues as the above mentioned publications. Jung is portrayed as a solitary trailblazer, reading Buddhist texts alone in his library and forcing them into the image of his own psychological theories. Hardly any mention is made of the network of scholars with whom he conversed and collaborated, such as Heinrich Zimmer, Richard Wilhelm and Jakob Hauer. Even D. T. Suzuki is mentioned only in passing. Yet, to repeat, Jung's ideas did not emerge *ex nihilo*. His interpretations, while on the one hand innovative, developed from established ideas belonging to a distinctive branch of scholarly notions and presuppositions which have been largely ignored by historians and scholars of religion. Moreover, studies that ignore historical context necessarily result in a mythologization and, at the same time, a simplification of Jung's ideas. Some of Jung's most well-known psychological readings of Buddhist texts, for example, his discussion of the *Bardo Thodol*, were first suggested by scholars with whom he collaborated, whose ideas

[55] C. G. Jung, *Psychology of Yoga and Meditation*: *Lectures Delivered at ETH Zurich, Volume 6: 1938 – 1940,* transl. J. Peck and H. McCartney, ed. M. Liebscher, New York: Princeton University Press, 2021, p. 26.

[56] O. Gomez, *Curators of the Buddha,* pp. 200–203.

[57] Ibid., p. 200.

themselves are properly understood in relation to their specific cultural-historical contexts.[58]

Several works have endeavoured to provide such intellectual context with scholarly rigour. Sonu Shamdasani's *The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga* (1996), for instance, which focuses on Jung's seminar series on Tantric Yoga in collaboration with Jakob Hauer, contextualises Jung's ideas both from the perspective of Jung's psychology and from the perspective of the historiography of Tantric Yoga and its reception in the West. Martin Liebscher's introduction to Jung's *The Psychology of Yoga and Eastern Meditation: Lectures Delivered at the ETH Zurich* (2020), is, to date, the only rigorous scholarly study on Jung's interpretations of two Buddhist texts, delivered at the Eidgenössiche Technische Hochschule (ETH), Zürich, between 1938 and 1940. Sengupta's *Jung in India* (2013) provides an essential record of Jung's travels in India between 1937 and 1938. In what follows, I will draw upon these works, seeking to develop further the historical appreciation of Jung's ideas with the help of unpublished materials, such as his correspondence, annotations and lecture notes. The majority of works on Jung rely exclusively on his published material and there have been, to date, few works that draw on Jung's unpublished material, particularly his voluminous correspondences held in the ETH archives in Zürich, which reveal the significant collaboration between Jung and contemporary Indologists and Sinologists, as well as the annotations contained in his private library.

A thorough study of Jung's ideas involves several questions at the outset. First, how did Jung become interested in Buddhism and what were his sources? As we shall see, Jung's interest in Buddhism developed from a more generalised conception of 'Eastern' thought. In order to answer this question, therefore, it will be necessary to engage with his earlier interest in Eastern texts, particularly Hindu texts such as the *Upanishads* and the *Vedas*. Second, how did his ideas develop over the course of his career? Finally, how was his psychologization of Buddhism adopted and popularised by scholars of religion? The three sections of this thesis address these three questions respectively. Part I discusses the historical origins of Jung's interest in Eastern religion and his burgeoning interest in Buddhism. Here I will be concerned with expounding the philosophical context underlying Jung's later conceptions, particularly Jung's early interest in Schopenhauer and his reading of nineteenth and early twentieth century Orientalists such as Paul Deussen (1845–1919) and Max Müller (1823–1900), as well as the image of the 'Orient' presented in the literature of figures such as Hermann von Keyserling (1880–1946).

Part II discusses Jung's engagement with contemporary Buddhologists and scholars of religion, focusing particularly on his twenty-year participation at the Eranos conferences in Ascona. At these meetings, European scholars attempted to understand Buddhism in the light of modern psychological (primarily Jungian) concepts. The interpretations developed at Eranos catalysed notions about Buddhism as a depth-psychological tradition. This will be exemplified in Part III, which traces

[58] The first interpretation of the Bardo Thodol as symbolising aspects of the collective unconscious was proposed by Zimmer in his 1934 lecture at Eranos. See below, pp. 142–147.

the uptake of the cross-fertilisation between Jung's depth-psychological interpretation of Buddhism in the decades during which it flourished, namely between 1945 to 1975. A full exposition of the authors and intellectuals influenced by Jung's ideas during this period would be too vast to do justice to. My aim in the third section is, above all, to illustrate using several significant, but by no means exhaustive examples, several ways in which Jung's depth-psychological take on Buddhism was developed, as well as to open up vistas for further research in the field of Buddhism's relation to modern psychology – a topic which is becoming increasingly popular, and yet still remains to be thoroughly studied through the lens of critical and scholarly research.

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