

A CHRISTIAN APPRAISAL OF MANDALA SYMBOLISM IN TANTRIC  
BUDDHISM AND IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CARL GUSTAV JUNG

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*Introduction*

For the purposes of this paper, the titles "Eastern" and "Western" have been chosen to designate the Mandala concepts of the Tantrists and C. G. Jung respectively. One might perhaps just as well have termed them "Ancient" and "Modern." The chosen titles, however, are intended to point up the fact that there is a basic difference between the historical attitudes of the Oriental and Occidental man. Western man finds it difficult to see beyond this present world, while Eastern man has difficulty in giving proper attention to any world other than the spiritual. There are, of course, exceptions to this, but the generalization holds.

The attempt is here made to understand what the Tantric Buddhist sees in the Mandala, as well as to perceive its meaning for Jung. This understanding then becomes the background against which the Christian may approach the Mandala to ask, "Is there a place in the Mandala for Jesus Christ?"

I. EASTERN MANDALA

*Tantric Buddhism*

The Mandala of Buddhism is an artistic depiction of reality as a whole. It may be expressed in painting, in architecture or in colored sand or rice. But before describing a Mandala in more detail and speaking of the use to which it is put by Buddhists, one must first consider its origin.

The Mandala is not a universal symbol in Buddhism. It seems to be totally absent from the Theravada (Hinayana) and even in the Mahayana it is found principally in the Tantric sect of Tibet.

The name "Tantric" is derived from the name of the scriptures of this sect, which are called Tantras.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes this entire school is also called the Tantra. Tantrism is characterized by an exclusiveness which repudiates all other sects and by a strong stress upon invocations (*mantras*), ritual gestures (*mudras*), and other magical elements which are looked on as aids to enlightenment.<sup>2</sup>

The entrance of these elements into Tibetan Buddhism cannot be pinpointed in time with any degree of accuracy. This is due to the fact that the Tantra was originally occult and esoteric. It is only after the year A. D. 500,

1. Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), *Sources of Indian Tradition* (Vol. 56 of the *Records of Civilizations* series, ed. J. T. Shortwell et al.; New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 330. Hereafter: *Indian Tradition*.
2. Edward Conze (ed.), *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 13. Hereafter: *Texts*.

when a more public phase began, that records begin to appear.<sup>3</sup> But even after this date, Tantrism remains somewhat obscure. For example, when Edward Conze, perhaps the leading Buddhist scholar of Europe, tries to date the composition of the *Gubysamaja Tantra*, an important scripture dealing with the way to supreme enlightenment, he dates this Tantra about the year 500.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Professor Susumu Yamaguchi, Professor of Mahayana Buddhism at Otani University, Kyoto, dates this Tantra after the year 900.<sup>5</sup> This is said by way of confession that historical sources for the study of the origin of this sect, which seems to be the cradle of the Buddhist Mandala, are very rare.

The question then is, can one make any suppositions as to the origin of the Tantra which will have a significant degree of probability? The answer to this question must be affirmative. The fact is that there are such strong parallels between Tantric Buddhism and a certain aspect of Hinduism that there can be no doubt that the Tantrists borrowed from the older religion.

The parallels occur in the Hindu cult of the god Shiva. There are many aspects to this god. He is, for instance, the supreme ascetic, the divine Yogi. But for our purposes here the interesting factor is that Shaivism is also a fertility cult. If space allowed, it could be shown here that Shaivism itself had borrowed from the Earth Mother rites of the pre-Vedic Indians.<sup>6</sup> To this day Shiva is represented in his temples by a phallic symbol, usually quite large, which is known as the *Shiva Lingam*. Surrounding the *Lingam* are images of his consort. In her benign aspect she is Parvati, but more often she is the black and blood-thirsty Kali or the dreadful Durga. Outside the temple, but gazing in upon the *Lingam* will be the image of Shiva's companion, Nandi the Bull, who is also a fertility symbol.

This whole system in which a god has a female consort with whom he must unite in order to create is known as Shaktism. Parvati-Kali-Durga is the *Shakti* of Shiva, and they are sometimes depicted in one another's embrace. This sort of cult obviously leaves the door open to cult prostitution and general promiscuity as the devotees try to act like their gods. Even such an ascetic morality as that of Buddhism was unable to overcome this tendency. Therefore one finds in Tibet, where Buddhist veneration centers largely on the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva also has his *Shakti*, but the Buddhist term for her is *Tara*. There one may see Avalokiteshvara not only in the traditional Buddha pose of meditation but also in the act of sexual union with his *Tara*. Even the ubiquitous *mantra*, OM MANI PADME HUM, is probably to be translated: Ah, the jewel is indeed in the lotus! The jewel and the lotus represent the male and female genital organs.<sup>7</sup>

Now it is precisely this erotic cult which makes use of the Mandala. Why? How are the two connected? The relationship is to be expressed in the word — INTERPENETRATION. The Mandala depicts the Cosmos. All the Buddhas

3. Conze, *Buddhism: Its essence and development* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 176. Hereafter: *Buddhism*.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
5. Kenneth Morgan (ed.), *The Path of the Buddha* (New York: The Ronald Press, 1956), p. 176.
6. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 176.
7. De Bary, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

dwelt therein and manifest themselves therefrom.<sup>8</sup> He who would find the Buddha must *penetrate* to the Center of the Mandala, and this is only possible when one is invited in by Ashkobyā-Vajrasattva, the central Buddha.<sup>9</sup>

But the question still remains: Why does sexual intercourse with a *yogini* "with wondrous eyes and endowed with youth and beauty"<sup>10</sup> help one to attain to the Buddha? How could it ever come to pass that Buddhist scriptures would say, "Eat and drink, indulge the senses, fill the Mandala with offerings again and again!"<sup>11</sup> The answer lies in two aspects of the Mandala. First, it is a unifying, all-inclusive symbol. This means that both Samsara (the world of reincarnation) and Nirvana (the world of release from rebirth) are really one. There is no distinction between the two! Secondly, grouped around the central figure of Ashkobyā-Vajrasattva are four other Buddhas. To each of these five Buddhas is assigned one of the bodily senses. Put these two ideas together and the proposition becomes clear: in gratifying the sensual desires of the body, one is not really accumulating evil Karma and dooming oneself to Samsara, for Samsara is Nirvana. Likewise, in gratifying the senses one is not really gratifying oneself, but the Buddhas who reside in the senses.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as the Buddha has his *Tara*, let the Buddhist have his *Yogini*. OM MANI PADME HUM! Sexual interpenetration is a picture of spiritual interpenetration.

#### Examples of Mandalas

Not only these concepts but the Mandala itself was taken over from Hinduism, the term employed being *Yantras*. An example is the *Sbri Yantra*, which is typical in form. It consists of a square with four openings which contains four concentric circles. Within the innermost circle are five downward pointing triangles which touch five upward pointing triangles. In the very center there is a tiny downward pointing triangle which has no upward pointed counterpart.

The downward pointing triangles represent the female creative powers which, when they join the upward pointing *lingams*, bring into existence the phenomenal world. The lone triangle is the Primal Shakti and her invisible consort is the Transcendental Shiva, the Ultimate Reality which cannot be depicted.<sup>13</sup> Here also one can see the way in which the material and spiritual world (Samsara and Nirvana) are unified in the Mandala.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of time each major god had his own Mandala,<sup>15</sup> and in Buddhism the basic scheme was even used by architects in the building of temples.

8. Conze, *Texts*, p. 244.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
13. Grace E. Cairns, *Philosophies of History* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), pp. 77f.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
15. Helmut Hoffman, *The Religions of Tibet*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 35.

One fantastic example of this is the temple in Java called Borobudur, where a hill was carved into a Mandala.<sup>16</sup> Legends tell of other such structures, such as the Kalacakra temple in the lost land of Shambhala.<sup>17</sup>

The Mandala as a religious picture was taken over into some Buddhist sects other than the Tantra. One example of this is the Japanese sect founded by the belligerent and nationalistic "saint" Nichiren (d. 1282). Nichiren, in protest against the popular Amida cult, identified Ultimate Reality with a specific Buddhist scripture, the *sutra* called "The Lotus of the Wonderful Law."<sup>18</sup> In accord with this identification, the *sutra* was represented artistically in what was known as the Great Mandala.<sup>19</sup>

But the most important non-Tantric use of the Mandala is to be found in the Japanese sect of Shingon Buddhism. This is a sect founded by the saint Kukai (d. 835) after his return from China in 806. In China he had studied the Vajra (Jewel) and Garbha (Womb) Mandalas. They were the spiritual basis of a sect so distinct that it was often given the name Vajrayana, implying that it was outside the stream of Mahayana Buddhism.<sup>20</sup> Vajrayana, like the Tantra, was esoteric. Kukai called it the "secret of all secrets, the enlightenment of all enlightenments."<sup>21</sup> And, again as with the Tantra, this esoterism means that its origins are unclear. It is probably a Tantric-Taoist syncretism, formed no earlier than A. D. 300<sup>22</sup> and possibly as late as the seventh century.<sup>23</sup>

The Taoist element seems obvious. The very names "Jewel", a phallic male symbol, and "Womb" cause one to remember the Taoist *yang and yin*. For just as the Tao included the dualism of *yang* and *yin*, the Vajra and Garbha Mandalas were both aspects of the *one* Ultimate Reality, personified as Vairocana Buddha.

Both depict the Cosmos. The Vajra Mandala is the aspect of potential being. In it, Vairocana occupies the center. He is seated in contemplation upon a white lotus. He has a white halo and is surrounded by all the Buddhas. The Garbha Mandala represents the dynamic aspect of the universe. Vairocana still occupies the center, but he sits now on a red lotus and the Buddhas are arranged around him according to their powers and their specific intents.

When an acolyte was initiated into Shingon, he would throw a flower onto each Mandala. Whichever Buddha the flower came to rest upon would be his patron Buddha. Tradition says that Kukai's flower fell in each case upon Vairocana.<sup>24</sup> For Kukai, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Taoism, Hinayana, Mah-

16. Cairns, *op. cit.*, pp. 99ff.

17. Hoffman *op. cit.*, p. 125.

18. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

20. De Bary, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

21. De Bary (ed.), *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (Vol. 54 of the *Records of Civilizations* series, ed. J. T. Shotwell et al.; New York: Columbia U. Press, 1960), p. 153. Hereafter: *Japanese Tradition*.

22. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 178.

23. Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

24. De Bary, *Japanese Tradition*, p. 142.

ayana, and all buddhist sects were preparatory to religion based upon the truth contained in these Mandalas. He said, "The universe is filled with the radiance of the Four Mandala Circles representing the Buddha-world."<sup>25</sup> This sect has remained strong although it was weakened when Zen austerity made suggestive art more favored than such explicit art as the Mandalas contain.<sup>26</sup> It was also somewhat stigmatized when there grew out of it the Tachikawa sect which tried but failed to introduce into Japan the erotic practices of Tantrism.<sup>27</sup>

Having now seen something of the origin and form of the Eastern Mandala, let us next consider what it means to its devotees.

#### *The Meaning of the Mandala*

In one sense the Mandala is a didactic tool. It is a picture comprising all reality, and as such it is an aid to meditation for one who will contemplate it. And the supreme lesson which can be learned from the Mandala is the UNITY of all things. Nothing is outside the Mandala! Therefore the scriptures read: "As is Nirvana, so is Samsara. Do not think there is any distinction."<sup>28</sup> And again: "Everything is Buddha without exception."<sup>29</sup>

What Tantrism has done is to construct a syllogism. By borrowing the first proposition from the Yogacara Sect and the second from the Madhyamika Sect it was able to reach a synthesis based upon Unity and Interpenetration which is itself Tantrism. The Syllogism reads:

All is Mind.  
Mind is Void (*Shunyata*).  
Void is All.

Void is here to be understood not by "Nothing" or "Space" as the English word implies. The Void is Nirvana, which, while it is not a material existence, yet is Something. The Buddhists call it *Tatbata* (Suchness). The word "All" is to be taken literally and therefore includes also the physical world of Samsara. The *Avatamsaka Sutra*, which Conze dates about A. D. 400,<sup>30</sup> is the earliest instance in which this bridge between the Yogacara and the Madhyamika Schools is evident. In this *Sutra* the Void and Samsara are seen to interpenetrate.<sup>31</sup>

The individual who has learned this truth of Unity and Interpenetration realizes that his own individuality has no basis in reality. Vairocana, the Cosmic Buddha, the Center of the Mandala, is All. He is the Mind which *thinks* the Samsara world. The believer then has no place to go for he has already arrived. To struggle as though one still had some goal to reach would be merely to perpetuate the illusion of individuality.

When the sun of suffering has set,  
Then arises this bliss, this lord of the stars.  
It creates with continuous activity,  
And of this comes the mandala-circle.<sup>31</sup>

25. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

27. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 180.

28. Conze, *Texts*, p. 237.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

30. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 238.

31. Conze, *Texts*, p. 237.

In other words, Vairocana meditates all things into existence and the more one realizes this, the happier one will be and the less individualistic one will be. It is of great interest that at Borobudur, where the cosmic Mandala is carved in stone, the figures depicted in the outer terraces (that is, on the edge of the Mandala) are quite lifelike, but the farther in toward the center one penetrates, the more abstract the art becomes!<sup>32</sup> And within the inner terrace, there is only Vairocana!<sup>33</sup>

This theme of the increase of Unity as one penetrates deeper into reality is also evident in the Zoroastrian fire altars,<sup>34</sup> the Buddhist *Stupas*<sup>35</sup> and the Indian *Swastika*.<sup>36</sup> Even today the basic ritual act performed in Indian devotion is to circumambulate the shrine, image, relic, etc. This may well be thought of as drawing the Mandala with one's own body and confessing one's unity with all that is within the circle.

The Mandala has come to be used for many things other than its true didactic purpose of teaching Unity. We have already noticed the Shingon practice of casting flowers upon it, for the purpose of acquiring a patron Buddha, a somewhat magical notion. It is also used for conjuring the gods who appear within it,<sup>37</sup> and is probably the origin of the practice of drawing a circle upon the ground before an attempt is made to conjure, the idea being that the deity conjured will not be able to cross the line. He cannot get out of the Mandala! The Mandala also degenerates in some instances into a mere picture, perhaps of the Buddha's enlightenment<sup>38</sup> or a meritorious act of some saint.<sup>39</sup>

All of these uses of the Mandala miss the main purpose of showing man how to be reintegrated with Ultimate Reality, which is One. What is needed is the personal, inner experience of the truth which the Mandala teaches. After the Mandala has performed its didactic task by showing the true unity of all reality, it is then able to perform its soteriological task of serving as the means by which man is experientially reintegrated into the All.<sup>40</sup>

This is accomplished when one sees the Mandala within oneself, and also sees oneself within the Mandala. One perceives the Buddha in the Mandala, but also within one's own mind. This enlightenment experience is personified in the Hevajra Tantra as Candali, a mystic heat.

Candali blazes at the navel,  
She burns the Five Tathagatas,  
She burns Locana and the others,  
AHAM (I) is burned and the Moon is melted.<sup>41</sup>

32. Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

37. Hoffman, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

38. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

40. Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

41. Conze, *Texts*, p. 254.

What this says is that even the distinctions which appear in the Mandala are finally consumed, when the Mandala is experienced within. It is parallel to the common oriental view of life, especially clear in Chinese thought, that the goal of human life is to integrate into harmonious unity both inner and outer reality.<sup>42</sup>

At first glance it would appear that such a religious system as this, centering as it does on cosmic matters and necessitating introspection, would not have a great effect on the ethics of those who espouse it. The sensual aspects of Tantrism, which appear so damning to a Western mind, seem proof enough that the system tends to immorality. For the sake of balance it must be said that Tantrism does have ethical implications. It is indeed in the broad stream of the Mahayana School, the characteristic emphasis of which is *compassion*. But the Tantrist does not love his neighbor *as himself*, but because his neighbor *is himself*! The loss of individuality must entail the cessation of selfishness. The scriptures say:

The fair tree of thought that knows no duality,  
Spreads through the triple world.  
It bears the flower and fruit of compassion,  
And its name is service to others.<sup>43</sup>

Actually, of course, the enlightened one knows that there are no "others," but the "others" do not yet know that they are not really individuals. The highest service which he can perform for them is to lead them to the Mandala truth.

Grace Cairns seems to miss this ethical application of the Mandala. She speaks of the integration of man as microcosm as a way to have *power over the macrocosm*.<sup>44</sup> This is a true description of what they do who try to use the Mandala to conjure. But one can never be *One* with that which he dominates. The very concept of *using something* keeps alive the concept of duality, which is the negation of Tantrism in general and of the Mandala in particular.

## II. WESTERN MANDALA

### *Jung and His Work*

The life and over-all work of Carl Gustav Jung are intensely interesting, but outside the scope of this paper. By way of brief background it can be mentioned that he was a psychiatrist of great note, who often asked his patients to make drawings, for he felt that these drawings might be a way for buried tensions to be released. He noticed for years that certain symbols constantly recurred among patients of widely differing backgrounds. He found that they had occurred historically as far back as paleolithic times.<sup>45</sup> Certain doctors had even recorded epileptic visions which took the same form.<sup>46</sup> Such evidence corroborated Jung's analysis of the occurrence of Mandala symbols in dreams

42. Jolan Jacobi, *The Psychology of Jung*, trans. K. W. Bush (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 130.

43. Conze, *Texts*, p. 238. Italics mine.

44. Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

45. Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

46. C. G. Jung, *The Psychogenesis of Mental Disease*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Vol. 3 of *Collected Works*; New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 270.

and visions and led him to conclude that there is something in the Unconscious of man which is common to all men.

One of the most frequent drawings was a *circle* with something basic in the *center*, to which all other elements of the drawing were related. For years Jung was mystified by these recurring circles until finally someone pointed out to him the Mandalas of the orient. He at once began to apply the name Mandala to the drawings of his patients as well as to certain things which they saw in dreams or visions. He felt that that which had been expressed in the Eastern Mandalas was also coming out in the Western drawings, and this common urge he called an Archetype. He says:

Mandala means a circle, more especially a magic circle, and this form of symbol is not only to be found all through the East, but also among us; mandalas are amply represented in the Middle Ages. The specifically Christian ones come from the earlier Middle Ages. Most of them show Christ in the centre, with the four evangelists, or their symbols, at the cardinal points.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Aspects of the Western Mandala*

*The Cause.* Jung, though he coined the terms "Introvert" and "Extrovert,"<sup>48</sup> never thought the inner and outer man were utterly severed. Rather, the Unconscious plainly dictated to the Conscious what course of action should be followed. When the Conscious refuses to heed this inner voice, conflicts occur which can lead to mental illness, or which can make a cure impossible.<sup>49</sup> However, when the Conscious is about to perform the duty required by the Unconscious, *then* a Mandala will often occur as the unifying symbol of the inner reintegration taking place.<sup>50</sup> When this happens, one must make a serious attempt to understand its meaning in order to see if it sheds any light on the action which needs to be performed for the reintegration to be fully actualized.<sup>51</sup>

Broken Mandalas may occur when one's inner unity is disturbed. Jung tells a personal experience from the days when he was serving in World War One. He formed the habit of sketching a Mandala every day, in order to see if he could plot any progression of his experience. He found that on the day after he had received a very disturbing letter, his Mandala was distorted and broken.<sup>52</sup> Conversely, patients on the road to recovery find their own Mandalas "strange but infinitely worthwhile." One patient phrased his feeling for his own Mandala in words which clearly point up Jung's contention that it is a unifying symbol. The patient said the Mandala depicted "the most sublime harmony."<sup>53</sup>

47. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffe, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 384. Hereafter: *Memories*. Samples of various types of Mandalas appear as plates in Jacobi, *op. cit.* Boehme's Mandalas may be seen in his *Saemtliche Schriften* (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag, 1960).

48. Gordon Allport, *Personality* (New York: Henry Holt, 1937), p. 419.

49. David Cox, *Jung and St. Paul* (New York: Association Press, 1959), p. 308.

50. Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

51. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

52. Jung, *Memories*, p. 195.

53. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

#### Jung puts it this way:

More than twenty years earlier (in 1918), in the course of my investigations of the collective unconscious, I discovered the presence of an apparently universal symbol . . . the mandala. To make sure of my case, I spent more than a decade amassing additional data, before announcing my discovery for the first time. The mandala is an archetypal image whose occurrence is attested throughout the ages. It signifies the *wholeness of the self*. This circular image represents the wholeness of the psychic ground or, to put it in mythic terms, the divinity incarnate in man.<sup>54</sup>

*The Goal.* Every Mandala points toward a goal, and the nature of the goal has already been indicated when the Mandala was termed a *unifying* symbol.<sup>55</sup> And this goal of unity entails no eclecticism. All things are to be unified, even opposites. Jung decries the tendency exhibited in the Mandalas of Jacob Boehme, the medieval mystic, to split the Mandala into a Good-Evil dualism.<sup>56</sup> Jung would no doubt posit unresolved tension in Boehme as the root of this "split" which usually took the form of two tangent circles, one light and one dark. Actually, Boehme seems to retain the idea of unity, for, at least in some drawings, the Cross also intersects the point at which the two circles are tangent. Even Jung must agree that the unity of the Mandala is not an utterly static thing. He says:

Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is: "Formation, Transformation, Eternal Mind's eternal recreation." And that is the self, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well is harmonious, but which cannot tolerate self-deceptions.<sup>57</sup>

*Archetypes.* What Jung says in the above statement is this: The Mandala really is the self, the wholeness of the personality. Add to this the previously mentioned element of unity and one can understand how he can say that the self is the "archetype of unity."<sup>58</sup> The Mandala springs from the essence of humanity, the human personality.<sup>59</sup> This is precisely where the Western Mandala departs from the Eastern by focusing on *man*. Jung says, speaking of the Mandalas of his patients:

I have seen many hundreds of mandalas, of patients who were quite uninfluenced, and I have found the same fact in an overwhelming majority of cases: there was *never a deity occupying the center*. The Center is emphasized as a rule. But what we find there is a symbol of a very different meaning. It is a star, a sun, a flower, a cross of equal branches, a precious stone, a bowl filled with water or wine, a serpent coiled up, or a human being, but *never a god*.<sup>60</sup>

A modern mandala is an involuntary confession of a peculiar mental

54. Jung, *Memories*, pp. 334f.

55. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

56. Jung, *Memories*, p. 334.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 195f.

58. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

60. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), p. 97. Italics mine. Hereafter: *Psychology*.

condition. There is *no deity* in the mandala, and there is also *no submission or reconciliation* to a deity. The place of the deity seems to be taken by *the wholeness of man*.<sup>61</sup>

Jung is convinced that in the center of the Mandala one finds the Ultimate. There in the center all archetypes achieve unity.<sup>62</sup> And modern man has learned that he himself is the Ultimate. Why else would he be in the center of the Mandala?

*Individuation.* In individuation, unity is again the central focus. Says Jung: "I use the term individuation to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual,' that is, a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole.'"<sup>63</sup> This would seem also to contradict the oriental view that there are no "separates," but perhaps the difference is not actually so great. Does not the following statement have the flavor of Nirvana?

But again and again I note that the individuation process is confused with the coming of the ego into consciousness and that the ego is in consequence identified with the self, which naturally produces a hopeless conceptual muddle. Individuation is then nothing but egocentredness and autoeroticism. But the self comprises *infinitely* more than a mere ego. . . . It is as much one's self, *and all other selves*, as the ego. Individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to oneself.<sup>64</sup>

And in spite of the fact that this next statement speaks of "uniqueness," does it not also sound like the Buddhist experience of Enlightenment?

Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self. We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization.'<sup>65</sup>

Indivisibility and unity are exalted above uniqueness. Jung feels that his dreams which so clearly presaged the First World War can be accounted for on the basis of some sort of psychic oneness which he had with mankind.<sup>66</sup>

### III. CHRIST AND THE MANDALA

Another title suggested itself for this final section in which an attempt is made to give a Christian evaluation of both the Eastern and the Western Mandala. One might have chosen the title: Christ, Our Mandala. This had finally to be rejected as a step which might be construed as syncretistic, as if one had spoken of "Christ, our Buddha," or "Christ, our Bodhisattva." There is also the danger, for one who prefers the "mystic" East to the "technological" West, of going too far in speaking about similarities between Christianity and the eastern religions.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 99. Italics mine.

62. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Vol. 14 of *Collected Works*; New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), p. 463. Hereafter: *Mysterium*.

63. Jung, *Memories*, p. 383.

64. *Ibid.* Italics mine.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 175f.

### *Christ, Not Ashkoby*

The name usually given to the central Buddha of the Mandala, is not Vairocana, as in the Japanese sects, but Ashkoby. He is the Buddha who thinks all things into existence. Reality is said to *emanate* from him, and this emanation is the first thing now criticized in the Mandala symbolism.

Such emanationism is definitely one aspect of gnosticism. It is a declaration that thought is Ultimate Reality, that life is only in the Mind. Logically, it cannot accept Ashkoby himself as the Ultimate, for how can it be known that he is not also a gnostic emanation from some still more universal Mind? While it must be said to Jung's credit that he generally realizes that religion is beyond the reach of psychological investigation, one can find also in his thinking a form of emanationism:

I had dreamed once before of the problem of the self and the ego. In that earlier dream I was on a hiking trip. I was walking along a little road through a hilly landscape; the sun was shining and I had a wide view in all directions. Then I came to a small wayside chapel. The door was ajar, and I went in. To my surprise there was no image of the Virgin on the altar, and no crucifix either, but only a wonderful flower arrangement. But then I saw that on the floor in front of the altar, facing me, sat a yogi—in lotus posture, in deep meditation. When I looked at him more closely, I realized that he had my face. I started in profound fright, and awoke with the thought: "Aha, so he is the one who is meditating me. He has a dream and I am it." I knew that when he awakened, I would no longer be.

I had this dream after my illness in 1944. It is a parable: My self retires into meditation and meditates my earthly form. To put it another way: it assumes human shape in order to enter three-dimensional existence, as if someone were putting on a diver's suit in order to dive into the sea. When it renounces existence in the hereafter, the self assumes a religious posture, as the chapel in the dream shows. In earthly form it can pass through the experiences of the three-dimensional world, and by greater awareness take a further step toward realization.

The figure of the yogi, then, would more or less represent my unconscious prenatal wholeness, and the Far East, as is often the case in dreams, a psychic state alien and opposed to our own. . . . Our basis is ego consciousness, our world the field of light centered upon the focal point of the ego. From that point we look out upon an enigmatic world of obscurity, never knowing to what extent the shadowy forms we see are caused by our consciousness, or possess a reality of their own. . . . Closer study shows that as a rule the images of the unconscious are not produced by consciousness, but have a reality and spontaneity of their own.<sup>67</sup>

Jung is here saying that phenomenal existence is a thought emanation of the archetypal Self which is common to all humanity. As was mentioned before, this is the very reason why men now place themselves in the center of the Mandala. Man no longer has need of an Ashkoby, or, by implication, any other deity.

Such a view seems definitely to undercut history as having objective real-

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 323f.

ity. Occurrences within the phenomenal world be essentially no different from events which occur in dreams. This appears to be an over-drawn application of what is an essentially valid principle. Jung is quite correct when he says that the images of the unconscious have a reality and a spontaneity of their own. It is also true that this unconscious realm is of vast importance in determining how things happen in the phenomenal world. Both the Eastern and the Western Mandala point out to man that there is a transcendent reality with which he must reckon as he moves in the world of immanent reality, and this is most certainly a message that modern man, with his over-emphasis on things empirical, needs desperately to hear.

But the East is wrong in thinking of this "other" world as being so determinative that physical things tend to be viewed as unreal. The fact that the Buddha who dwell in the Mandala encompass all *time* as well as *space*<sup>68</sup> means that for the East *all time is One*, just as all things are One. What becomes of history if this is true? History, like all the things which it might investigate, is but a thought of the Buddha. We are then close to a docetic universe.

Jung, as a Western man, has room in his system for history but nevertheless his view does detract from the worth of history. In the place of a cosmic Buddha, he places the unity of all archetypes, the human Self. He, like the Tantrist, sees the process of reintegration taking place as a man looks *within* himself. Answers are to be found not in the empirical world, but in the unconscious which occasionally speaks out through dreams, visions, or Mandala.

Jung is open to criticism here. It is significant that he says that the Mandala will appear *just before* a step toward reintegration takes place. In the light of J. W. Dunne's experiments with prescience, can this perhaps be explained on the grounds of foreknowledge rather than by the positing of an archetype? But if there is an archetype, has Jung really demonstrated that men no longer consider this ground of their being to be a god? In other words, is he correct in saying that none of his patients ever drew a *god* in the center of the Mandala?

It is absurd to presuppose that a western man would draw a symbol for god in the form of a many-headed image or in some other way which one might find in the Orient. Jung says that his patients place in the center of the Mandala such things as "a star, a sun, a flower, a cross of equal branches, a precious stone, a bowl filled with water or wine, a serpent coiled up, or a human being, but never a god." But is not Jesus Christ the Bright and Morning Star, the Sun of Righteousness, the Rose of Sharon? Did He not die on a Cross, spilling there His Blood which is the most precious treasure on earth? Did He not institute sacraments in which He comes to people in water and in wine? As for the serpent, that is, so far as we know, the first historical form taken by the *god of this world*, under whose dominion most men still live.<sup>68a</sup> Jung has interpreted the sketches of his patients according to his presuppositions. Most of the symbols are in fact much more logically explained as divine symbols than as symbols of man. Concerning those who do draw a man, it must be remembered that God has been born of the Virgin Mary, and *made man*. And quite aside from the truth of the Incarnation, the fact is that all men, even in the West, have an

68. Conze, *Texts*, p. 248.

68a. Cf. also Christ as "the serpent lifted up in the wilderness" (John 3:14-16) — *Editor*.

anthropomorphic idea of God.

Therefore the East is wrong to think that history is no more than mental emanation-and-return of Atman to Brahman or of the Buddha Nature to the Cosmic Buddha. Jung is wrong in too easily assuming that man is now the measure of all things. The fact (stated by revelation and underscored by history) is that man has not been meditated but *created*.

The cyclical stress of the Mandala is valid, provided one realizes that the wheel of time does not turn of itself along predetermined tracks. It turns when and where the High and Holy God who fashioned it wills. He is not so transcendent that He is disinterested in our scant three dimensions. His Son, in *historical* time, chose to share these dimensions with us.

#### *Christ, Not Vajrasattva*

This section will deal not with the source but with the goal of life. It is still concerned with the *Center* of the Mandala. It must be remembered that everything within the Mandala relates to and points toward the Center. Reintegration is a return to the Center from which one originally issued.

Now the Buddha to which the Tantrist seeks to return is no longer called Ashkobyra, but Vajrasattva. Earlier the meaning of "vajra" was given as "jewel," but even this is a derived meaning. The original meaning was "thunderbolt," that is, the thing which can break all things but is itself unbreakable. It is the weapon of Indra in the Vedas. From this came the concept of something hard and clear, such as a diamond. Then, since the central concept related to divinity was Oneness and Indivisibility, the union with Ultimate Reality which comes with enlightenment or reintegration was personified in a Buddha named Vajrasattva, "The Adamantine One."

What is the goal of human life? The Mandala, whose circle represents time, answers, "That which is in the Center."<sup>69</sup> And that which is indivisible and to which all things return is what ought to be in the Center. This might fit very well with a Communistic view of life. They, too, are interested in the elimination of all distinctions, and if there were a Communist Mandala, it would probably put the classless society in the Center. In doing so, they would not be far removed from the position of Jung in this regard. It has been noted that he thinks human consciousness emanated from an archetypal Self. He also thinks that reintegration leads back to this Self:

During those years between 1918 and 1920, I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self. Uniform development exists, at most, only at the beginning; later, everything points toward the center. This insight gave me stability, and gradually my inner peace returned. I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate. Perhaps someone knows more, but not I.<sup>70</sup>

Jung says here that to develop the true human personality is the goal of life. All one's actions only "circumambulate" the self and return to it. There

69. Jung, *Psychology*, p. 69.

70. Jung, *Memories*, p. 196.

is "a mysterious center preexistent in man."<sup>71</sup> With this view, it is only proper that man be placed in the center of the Mandala. This is the very preconception which causes Jung to interpret *all* symbols drawn by his patients in such a way that they mean man.

But even while criticizing Jung, let us be honest and notice that while he says that "in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what for me was the ultimate," he also concedes that "Perhaps someone knows more." There is also some reason to think that Jung stops with the Self for the simple reason that the science of psychology can probe no farther! What is therefore an ultimate to psychology may in fact be no ultimate at all.<sup>72</sup> This is also perhaps the reason why there are so many parallels between what Jung says about the Self and what a Christian would say about God.<sup>73</sup>

Jung tries to work with the syllogism:

The Ultimate always occupies the Center.

Man now occupies the Center.

Man is the Ultimate.

Neither of the two propositions is anything more than a presupposition and the conclusion is therefore unconvincing. Even his statement: "The Oriental attributes unquestionably divine significance to the self,"<sup>74</sup> may not be true in the sense he thinks it is. Jung is no doubt thinking of the Atman-Brahman concept as promulgated in the Upanishads. There indeed "soul" of man is considered as a part of the Ultimate. But what he fails to notice is that this concept came late into Hinduism (not before 800 B. C.), that it never was universally accepted, and that in the reformation instituted by Buddha the very existence of the soul was denied. Even in those places where it was theoretically accepted, its influence was not overly great. The people quickly broke Brahman down into the three gods of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, and even then Brahma (the immanent Brahman) was too far over the people's heads, so that Vishnu and Shiva attracted most of the worshippers.

Jung might feel that this is a case of the common man's prostitution of a high concept, but he conversely feels sure that modern common people are quite right in their religious instinct when they put man in the center of the Mandala. Again it appears that he insists that the facts fit the hypothesis.

One must remember that Western Mandala is a spontaneous drawing by individuals, all of whom were suffering from varying types of mental ill-health. But the Eastern Mandalas were the carefully worked out and intentionally painted religious ideas of scholarly men whose lives were devoted to the search after ultimate truth. Common sense dictates that one may expect more valid insights into religion from the latter.

A Christian, however, is in the happy position of not having to perform the impossible task of seeking out ultimate answers in his own mental strength. God has revealed certain answers, among them the answer to the question of

71. Jung, *Mysterium*, p. 532.

72. Raymond Hostie, *Religion and the Psychology of Jung*, trans. G. R. Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1957), p. 187.

73. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

74. Jung, *Memories*, p. 325.

the goal of earthly existence. Jung himself has heard these answers but has labeled them a myth.<sup>75</sup> The answer is, according to God's own revelation, Jesus Christ!

God has revealed little about how the inner man, the soul, is constituted. Nothing is known of how it travels from the phenomenal world to the world "beyond." But those who receive Christ by faith do know that there is One who indwells them and makes His abode with them throughout life. For now, that knowledge brings joy enough. It gives patience as one waits for the day when he will return to his Creator, who came into history to seek and save men, and whom he shall then see face to face, in another world.

#### *Christ, Not Bodhisattva*

There is a Christian hymn which asks concerning the afterlife: "Will the circle be unbroken?" Let us ask this question not of the future destiny of a given family circle, as the hymn does, but rather of the eternal destiny of all mankind. Let us ask, "How can a man be reintegrated with the Source and Goal of his being, God?"

There is one aspect of the Eastern Mandala which seems to be evaded by those who write about it. Reference was made to it in describing the *Sbri Yantra*. So great, for the most part, is the attention paid to the Mandala *circle* that there are few comments made about the *square* which surrounds it! The reason is obvious. A square is much harder to relate to the center than is a circle. All points on the square are *not* equidistant from the center. And this square is even disrupted by "doors"! This square is a simple confession that something is *wrong* in the universe. Some things are not related to the center as they ought to be. More than that, what is wrong is the very fact that man wants to put himself in the center of the Mandala! Man thinks too highly of himself! Jung likes to think that there is some good in man which is always pressing out.<sup>76</sup> Notice his words:

Only gradually did I discover what the mandala really is: "Formation, Transformation, Eternal Mind's eternal recreation." And *that is the self*, the wholeness of the personality, which if all goes well is harmonious, but *which cannot tolerate self-deceptions*.<sup>77</sup>

But he is deceiving himself in his high view of man!

Tantrism likewise, in that it is antinomian,<sup>78</sup> shares this self-deception by thinking that man is essentially moral. The idea is that once man overcomes his feelings of "alienation" by realizing the unity expressed in the Mandala, he will be a whole man, that is, a good man.<sup>79</sup>

While this ideal did find expression in the lives of Tantric saints, such as Milarepa, it much more often degenerated into licentiousness, and erotic perversions. Thus it became a system which could advocate "daily intercourse in

75. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 196. Italics mine.

78. De Bary, *Indian Tradition*, p. 180.

79. Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

out of the way places with 12-year-old girls of the Candala caste."<sup>80</sup> Or: "Having found a maiden of twelve years, whose mind is firm, one should worship her in accordance with the family-practice."<sup>81</sup> This is not Mahayana compassion but hypocritical selfishness.

One may well ask whether there is really room in Tantrism for compassion. The title of this subdivision contains the word "Bodhisattva." By these "Enlightenment beings" Mahayanists mean persons who have reached such a high state that they are eligible for entrance into Nirvana. They need no longer be reborn into this world. Nevertheless, they deliberately choose to stay out of Nirvana and remain in the wheel of Samsara for the express purpose of helping others to enlightenment. But, as has been seen, Tantrism makes no distinction between Nirvana and Samsara anyway, so who needs a Bodhisattva? Saints do not need compassion, but *patience*, so that they can go on with their task of straightening out people's false ideas on the nature of reality. Tantric man does not need a Savior, but a Teacher.

For the most part, Jungian man likewise needs no Savior, and perhaps no teacher other than Jung. But in better moments Jung does speak of reintegration as *metanoia*,<sup>82</sup> a good Christian term for repentance. For the gaps in the squares of Eastern Mandalas and the men in center of Western Mandalas all point to the fact that man is sinful and needs a Savior. Sin is the disintegrating factor in the universe.

No Bodhisattva can take away the sins of men. That is a task for which only Christ is sufficient. His Atonement on the Cross *precedes* any step by man back in the direction of the center. Wholeness of manhood and reintegration with God are found only in those who have put their trust in Him.<sup>83</sup>

Salvation (without which it would be better not to have been born) comes from God, through God, to bring men back to God. And it is all given as a free gift by the grace of Christ. No *mantra* could conjure Him to appear for man's salvation. No *mudra* could prepare man to receive Him. Yet He came. The Holy Son of God became sin so that sinners could be reconciled to God.<sup>84</sup> That is why one might have titled this division of the paper "Christ Our Mandala." If ever there was a Unifying Symbol, He is it! Thanks to Him, the circle can be unbroken, East and West can meet in Him, not just at the Judgment Seat, but already now. In Him souls find the way back to rest in the God who made them. He is Himself the means of realizing the divine-human unity for which He prayed while He was on earth.

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80. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 195.

81. Conze, *Texts*, p. 224.

82. Jung, *Memories*, p. 329.

83. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 341.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 298.