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*It's all very simplistic, this Buddhism stuff. Contorting my mind one minute, and boring it the next. That the cause of suffering is desire (or craving) seems a little simplistic. In my commitment during this unit to learning about Buddhist practice, I have begun the practice of meditation. As well as practicing a sitting meditation focused on breath awareness, I decided to practice a walking meditation, especially when I power walk each morning, maintaining awareness of my physical responses to exercise.*

I teach in and coordinate a masters program in Analytical Psychology at a university in Sydney. One of the subjects I teach is called *Buddhist Practice and Analytical Psychology*. It's important to note that I refer to *Buddhist practice*, because it is not a study of Buddhism as a structured religion. Nominally we explore the psychological dilemma of the 'self', a concept western psychology affirms. And, of course, Buddhism too reveals the central role of the self in the human condition. The intention in our classes is to consider issues associated with the formation of self, as a psychological process and the Buddhist ideal of the dissolution of self. However, for much of the time we find ourselves in a wide-ranging conversation about story telling, therapy, individuation and religion.

Analytical psychology and Buddhist practice, how might they contribute to one another, if at all? Today there are so many different understandings of analytical psychology, Samuels<sup>1</sup> speaks of the "convoluted, diverse, conflict-ridden, post-Jungian scene". At the same time it is misleading to imagine there is a monolithic

version of Buddhism. “Buddhism in any society and culture expresses a very local character without necessarily having an interest or knowledge of Buddhism, in another place.”<sup>2</sup> Buddhism itself is a relatively modern name, derived from the discourse of spiritual doctrine and practice known “on its own ground as ... *Buddha Dharma* ... the way of the Buddha.”<sup>3</sup> So many of us who study and practice Buddhism in a country like Australia create a version that is local and imbued with the contemporary concerns of psychology, feminism and democracy. To consider therefore, where these two great discourses may meet, it feels like everywhere and nowhere.<sup>4</sup>

This paper argues a case for how the procedure of *reception theory*<sup>5</sup> informs the intellectual experience of studying Buddhism and Analytical psychology. The theory here is that we experience the ideas of Buddhism and analytical psychology as they are lived and reinvented in our contemporary setting. It is not that different to the way reception theory informs the contemporary study of literature, except perhaps that one is encouraged to receive the experience of Buddhism as a practice and analytical psychology as a therapy. Our attitudes to both Buddhism and Jung’s ideas are informed by time as much as by the original texts. W.H. Auden put it elegantly when writing his memory of W.B. Yeats that “the words of a dead man are modified in the guts of the living.”<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of Buddhist centres in the west in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen a raft of changes to what Buddhism might be, especially what it might be for those of us who live in Western communities. Some call them reforms although it is probably just as relevant to see these changes as a result of globalisation; globalisation comes and goes in many directions. In the city where I live, Sydney, in the last 20 years, there have been established no less than 60 Buddhist temples, some of them great and elaborate. Most of these temples are supported by a particular ethnic community; for example the Lao

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<sup>5</sup> Reception theory is taken from John Hunt, 2004. *The Afterlife of Gardens*, Reaktion Books, London

<sup>1</sup> Ibid

community, or the Cambodians, Sri Lankans, Tibetans, Vietnamese and so on. These communities are responding to the way a complex multicultural society like Australia is now experiencing the next phase of globalised migration, that is the overt establishment of different religious buildings and practice.

At the same time too Buddhism has gradually globalised its philosophical appeal. It might be possible, as some commentators put it, to say that the appropriation of Buddhist ideas into western thought has meant that Buddhism would inevitably be subjected to a western critical analysis. In particular enlightenment humanities, which more or less advocate a rational, empirical analysis of existence and allows for the complexity of human experience to somehow be understood as a human phenomena and not the subject of some transcendent, otherworldly or supernatural process. Buddhism locates our human psychological experiences right here, right now, in this life. In this way it appeals to what is fundamentally a secular and humanist social situation. Buddhist practice is about the mind and how it develops, it is consciousness that is primary in Buddhist psychology. The perennial problem for human beings is our sometimes-wilful ignorance as to the nature of reality. But what also seems to be happening is that Buddhist commentary and thought, which is coming from those places understood as traditionally Buddhist societies, has now adopted a sophisticated, marketing mix-up, of their respective Dharma paths. It's as if the Lamas and Masters heard Carl Jung's throw away line, sometime in the 1930's, when he said that 'Christianity has become so debilitated that even the Buddhists think it is time they sent missionaries to Europe'<sup>5</sup>

A suitable place possibly, to notice this globalisation might be with D.T.Suzuki's early attempts to explain Zen Buddhism. His writings and talks offered two contradictory categories: Zen could not be properly understood or practiced outside of the Buddhist context, while at the same time he said that the essence of Zen was transcultural, or, as he put it "Zen is the ultimate fact of all philosophy, that final psychic fact that takes place when religious consciousness

is heightened to extremity. Whether it comes to pass in Buddhists, in Christians, or in philosophers.,”<sup>6</sup> it makes no difference. What has come to pass now is that Tibetan Lamas quote Zen masters, Theravadan Vipassana teachers advocate and study Dogen, the Dalai Lama speaks with Popes and Buddhists of all traditions maintain a pragmatic borrowing from the many Dharmas.

I know that almost half of the people living in Hollywood claim to be Buddhists, if not followers of the Kabbala, but it was His Holiness the Dalia Lama who has had a big impact on the Australian community. He brought us a Buddhism without the proselytising role that many teachers take on. He tells his audience not to become Buddhists, just listen to some of the wisdom that the Buddhist teaching can impart. The Dalia Lama came over to us as a most rational, heart felt, immediate and humorous person. He appeared utterly genuine. There is a similarity here with how Jung imagined analytical psychology; as is often quoted, “I don’t want anyone to be Jungian, I want people to be themselves”.<sup>6</sup>

Papodopolous considers that one of the most important principles of Jung was his epistemological openness, his steering away from dogmatic formulation.<sup>7</sup>

I make this point about Buddhism because it is necessary to notice that Buddhism comes into our consciousness, it isn’t just another product of Western appropriation and colonial exploitation. And as the Dharma wheel turns, to employ this wonderful metaphor, so the understanding that is Buddhism, is conceived anew. Buddhist ideas are opened up, by way of this pragmatic borrowing. The notion of Buddhist practice, something different to Buddhist religion, has been the way that the broad field of psychology has been able to incorporate these insightful ways of thinking about how the mind works.

Strictly speaking however, Buddhism is a religion, it does have scriptures and ritual and many of those stories are just as miraculous and supernatural as stories one can find in any holy book, the Bible, Koran and so on. I do

acknowledge this and draw student's attention to programmes of Buddhist religious studies.

The practice then, can be interpreted as a philosophical appreciation of the mind. It is realist in orientation, and there is clear evidence that by adopting some of the actual practices, transformations in mental health can be achieved. Even the student, who I quote at the beginning of my paper, found that her power walking took on a dimension of satisfaction, which she had not before noticed. Meditation and mindfulness techniques are now widely applied in the care of people who experience distress of all sorts, from the physical discomfort of child-birth, to the management of cancer symptoms or the alleviation of anxiety caused by time in gaol or with border line personality disorder. CBT therapy and nation wide projects (in Australia) like 'Beyond Blue', an intervention strategy for young people suffering depression, have all adopted Mindfulness and Meditation in their treatment regimes.

What's happening here is that Buddhist practices can be seen to work in a clinical setting; the Buddhist heritage may or may not be acknowledged, it doesn't really matter, the techniques work. Many of the students doing our Masters degree appreciate this fact, and take up the unit to study, for this quite secular and pragmatic reason. But I have noticed too, of late, that within the *public issues media*, there is an intellectual conversation taking place, whereby some people are making a connection between matters of general social anxiety, understood more or less as a sort of cultural neurosis, and the lack of a religious, philosophical story that suits a society which has very few survival needs left to satisfy. Maslow's work has mostly been achieved, but, like the women from Wisteria Lane, the *Desperate Housewives*, something remains incomplete, unfulfilled, unsatisfied.

David Tacey recently spoke of how in Eastern Europe, after the collapse of the Wall in 1990, many people wanted to come back to their traditional faiths.

Churches were flooded (for a short while) and then the wave receded, rapidly. Why? he asks. Because the faith tradition was stuck in time, stunted, and did not respond to the spiritual needs of a postmodern, and sophisticated secular people. I think he's right in this regard, and despite the wave of American evangelical Protestantism that is taking up residency in some parts of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, most people want something like Jung comments on, that "eternal truth needs a language that changes with the spirit of the time" ('Psychology of the Transference', para. 396). Something that reflects our contemporary understanding that "all true things must change, and only that which changes remains true." (*Mysterium Coniunctionis*, para 503). Buddhism might lend itself to being a relevant living thing; and help in this changing, adapting, translating, transforming conversation.

As I have said, there are many ethnic Buddhist communities in Australia, but Westerners tend to be attracted to a Buddhism that has been represented by other westerners, like Richard Gere, who has done a lot to make Tibetan Buddhism popular. And of course westerners are very attracted to Zen. Zen is a far more paired down kind of Buddhism, it's iconoclastic, it's very interested in the arts, there is a strong aesthetic appeal, its also been very westernised, especially here in the US. The San Francisco Zen centre is a good example of a hermeneutic community who also just practice, there is certainly a connection here to Zen in Australia.

Western people like meditation because it's possible there to find some peace and, of course, the famed 'emptiness' that is perhaps at the heart of all spiritual searching. This is why the practice of meditation is growing again in other areas: some religious, some secular. Christian communities are rediscovering their meditative traditions as are Jewish people, and possibly the interest with Sufism.

Interestingly, on this matter of how Buddhism is being practiced and understood in Sydney, anecdotal research done by a Western Buddhist teacher, indicates

the quite different needs of inmates in a number of our metropolitan gaols. Among the Indo-Chinese men there is great interest in having Buddhist stories retold, especially those which have a miraculous character but also stories to do with the precepts and moral behaviour. Many of these men have only a fleeting association with the religion of their ancestors, because a calamity of migration can often be the loss of the stories told by grandparents and community elders, whereas western men want to know how to meditate and how to be mindful. For them Buddhist stories are far too foreign and strange. Nonetheless their needs seem to be how to find an inner story, how to connect, possibly even in a prayerful way. My friend who does this work tells me that the gaol has become a forum for these men who come to his 'classes' and they continue the talking afterwards. I suspect something will 'hatch and brood' because the unfolding experience of these men's story always matters. It is no different to how a patient's unfolding story matters.

*I have set up neither a system nor a general theory, but have merely formulated auxiliary concepts to serve me as tools. (C.G.Jung)*

*No one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself. ... I'm trying to free your mind, Neo, but I can only show you the door. You're the one that has to walk through it. (Morpheus to Neo in *The Matrix*.)*

Analytical psychology is for some people a clinical therapeutic discipline, but it is also a discipline of cultural making. The original genius of Jung was that he was a negotiator between paradoxical matters of the human psyche, between imagination and biology, between Body and Mind and between the psyche and our human story. He set up a system of thinking about human nature that allows links to be made across apparent impossible gaps. And so, as the secular 'becomes religious' again, it has to involve a different alchemical process, but importantly, the secular has to hold out, because the gains made in the name of humanism have been significant, and a science that is realist and pluralist in the

way it considers empirical phenomena must not allow itself to be totally absorbed into an unreconstructed religious discourse. The fact that so many people's faith has lapsed - that has to be taken seriously, and seen as a God-send. It is not simply an aberration, or a human fault. Jung was more radical than that - he was saying it was a fault in the traditions, which were no longer prophetic.

Jung was looking for a new form of religious authority around which his psychology might find justification. He seems to be saying on a number of occasions that the Christian tenets, its system of belief was in need of renewal. In an essay written in 1928 he says *what is evil for one man is good for another* and he then goes on *“after all, why should not the Buddha be right too?”* This said, Jung was consistent in his work to point out that our psychological life is one with our cultural life. The continuous practice of a spiritual exercise, for example: worship, devotion, ritual, is necessary to maintain a culture's *habit of mind*. It is this habit of mind that I find most interesting. What do we mean when we speak of such a habit?

*You have to do your own work. Those who have reached the goal will only show the way.* (Buddha). The Buddha is suggesting an imaginative approach, to engage our imagination in the work necessary as we shift the habits of our mind.

When Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva clearly saw that the five skandas were empty and that suffering and distress was transformed, and the idea that form and content was no other than emptiness, and emptiness was no other than form, then the psychological image of endless cyclic change re-emerges in our consciousness. Heraclitus understood this, and so the intellectual concept and tradition of transience is deep in our cultural story. For some time however, we have forgotten this truth. Buddhism does not deny the phenomenal world, but it points out the endless changing reality, which appears as paradoxical. For example the Heart sutra goes on to say that there is no old age and death and at the same time no ending of old age and death, there is no ignorance and no

ending of ignorance. The Heart sutra explains that to grasp this endless changing reality is to leave the mind free of hindrance, no hindrance it says, and no fear. *Our most profound convictions* says Robin Robertson, when discussing Jungian archetypes, is *that forms indeed have an existence that is independent of the mind considering them.* (Robertson, 1995)

*It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine,* (Musical Group, REM)

Teaching in a program concerned with analytical psychology one might expect that the stories told will have a life of their own and in turn effect change in another story. Many of the students in my class have only a passing association with Buddhism and so I phrase the unit discussion around the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. It seems to fit because like Jung, they too *have come to understand that psychic suffering is not a definitely localized, sharply delimited phenomenon, but rather the symptom of a wrong attitude, assumed by the total personality.* (note C.G. Jung).

The way Jung thought about religion is complex. He believed the world was in a spiritual crisis, not only because many educated and other people could no longer 'believe', but also because many of the traditions were no longer *believable*. This is our collective experience in the modern world. Religion in many ways is alienated from mainstream culture except possibly in the popularity of the concept of *spirituality*, but even so this is an idea more closely linked to the arts than religion.

While this paper doesn't provide the opportunity or time, I think there is a way to rethink religion. The British philosopher and quasi psychologist John Macmurray, along with many others takes as his starting point *the I-thou* relationship and argues that *a self* has no psychological relevance except in relation to another, acting, in what he calls personhood. I think this is something like the in-betweenness that Winnicott describes, that establishes both the mother and the

child as a psychological dynamic. Winnicott speaks of this psychology as a sort of mysticism whereby the experience of the ego-self becomes *unintegrated*, something quite distinct and different from the ego work of *integration* or *disintegration*. I think it also can be argued that the Buddhist concept of no-self might be found in this paradoxical place, between, in much the way the Heart sutra tells us that sensation, perception, mental reaction and consciousness are empty of form, and by implication empty of self identity. Macmurray goes on to say that religion is best understood as community, it takes up its form best as community. The Christian religion makes the symbolic meal with Christ and his disciples the central means through which that community works and act together. Buddhists identify the Sangha or devotional community as one of their three treasures.

To conclude by way of the story I told earlier of my friend who works with inmates in some Sydney gaols. The men there wanted different stories, for different needs, cultural as well as personal needs. So here is one. In the koan tradition of Zen Buddhism there is a question. *Why are perfectly realized saints and bodhisattvas attached to the vermillion thread?*

This is a direct question and it plainly has something to ask about the phenomenal world. Apparently vermillion thread refers to the lace work in the undergarments that prostitutes wear, and so to be attached to this thread clearly means that the saint or bodhisattva have found themselves hooked, caught by the thread and pulled into their sexual passions and desire. And it's important to acknowledge that they have 'found themselves' in their desire once again, desire is endless. The koan is making the point, that to be alive is to be attached. It is through our desires that we turn the wheel of life and death The koan doesn't cast dispersions, it doesn't castigate the wayward saint but rather, in answering this koan a student is encouraged to honour their passions, to recognise their place and power in the way they play out in our lives.

So here is a religious story. It is profoundly realistic. It speaks of our passions and desires and it doesn't judge them. Passions and desire are real, in the same way that atoms are real, they affect the world. It is a story that had been told and understood for centuries long before Freud and Jung made clear the deep psychological significance of our desires and passions. Like the atom, these phenomena change and recombine into the endlessly changing patterns that emerge in our lives; they are only provisional. But to assume that there may be some other transcendental stories, which can save or rescue us from the contingencies of life, from our passions, are infantile fantasies. One cannot be saved from life. To be sane in this situation of living is to have nothing to complain about, but a lot of responsibility to take on as we do our living.

Robertson, Robin. 1995. *Jungian Archetypes. Jung, Godel and the History of Archetypes*. Nicholas Hays, Maine

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<sup>1</sup> Samuels, A (1998) Will the Post-Jungians Survive? In A.Casement (ed), *Post-Jungians today: Key papers in contemporary analytical psychology*. (Chpt 1, pp15-32) Routledge, London

<sup>2</sup> Muramoto, S. (2002) Continuing a conversation from east to west. Buddhism and Psychotherapy. In P.Eisendrath & S.Muramoto (eds). *Awakening and Insight: Zen Buddhism and Psychotherapy* (Introduction, pp 1-12) Brunner-Routledge, East Sussex.

<sup>3</sup> Bercholz, S & Kohn, S.C. (1993) *Entering the Stream: An introduction to the Buddha and his teachings*. Shambala, Boston

<sup>4</sup> Flanagan, Annette, (2005) *Analytical Psychology and Buddhist Practice in Aisle Three: The Paradox of Parenting*. Unpublished essay presented for the unit Buddhist Practice and Analytical Psychology at the University of Western Sydney

<sup>5</sup> Jung, C.G. quoted in Clarke, J.J (ed) 1995. *Jung on the East*, Routledge, London.p.44

<sup>6</sup> Suzuki, D.T. in *Buddhist religions. A Historical Introduction* 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. 2004. Robinson, Johnson & Thanissaro. (Edits) Thomson Wadsworth, Australia.

<sup>6</sup> Jung, C.G. cited in Ravenswood, R. (1996) *The Spirit of Jung* retrieved from <http://www.pnc.com.au/ravens/jungspirt.html>

<sup>7</sup> Papadopolous, R. (1998) Jungian Perspectives in new contexts. In A.Casement (ed), *Post-Jungians today: Key papers in contemporary analytical psychology*. (pp 163-183) Routledge, London.