

Jung and Buddhism

The Archetype of the Self as a Reflection of Buddha-nature



September 28th at 7:30 pm

In his 1948 foreword to D.T. Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, Jung highlights the enlightenment experience of satori as the "unsurpassed transformation to wholeness" for Zen practitioners.

On his deathbed, Jung was reading Charles Luk's *Ch'an and Zen Teachings: First Series* and wrote to his friend Miguel Serrano:

"I have just finished reading a book by a Chinese Zen Buddhist. I felt as if we were talking about one and the same thing and were simply using different words for it. The use of the word 'unconscious' is not the decisive thing; what counts is the Idea that lies behind this word."

Human beings have a natural inclination to relate to that which is sacred, transcendent and numinous. We do this in varied forms across cultures, ages, belief systems and socio-economic divides.

The numinous Other touches our lives on a personal level through suffering, relationships and dreams. It touches us on a collective archetypal level through politics, shared experience and the profound impact of religious imagery and tradition. Since raw interaction with the numinous void can be transcendent or destructive, there are forms that have built up through spiritual traditions that clothe this primordial formlessness with archetypal images that point to the core of its non-conceptuality. One of these "formless forms" is Carl Jung's conception of the Self, which became the core archetype of wholeness and personal development within his life's work and the resultant field of Analytical Psychology. Within Buddhism, we find another example of an archetypal image that communicates something about the direct experience of formlessness, which is sometimes referred to as the Buddha-nature.

Jung stressed that the analyst start with a stance of unknowing (particularly with dream images), thus allowing the formless to communicate through taking on various forms within the interactive field.

In Buddhism, the impermanence of all that arises takes precedence over the habitual grasping that it triggers in us as it arises and decays from moment to moment. In Jungian analytical work, the analysis can offer a *temenos* for the fluidity of soul images as it integrates impossible polarities via the transcendent function.

Due to these striking similarities between Jung's Self and Buddhist articulations of the Buddha-nature, these are perhaps two languages that have the capability to touch a primordial common underlying truth which can only be fully discovered through direct experience.

In this experiential lecture, we will explore these relationships and how they show up in potent and profound ways in our daily lives and throughout the life cycle as we continue along the individuation journey.



Joel Kroeker is a Swiss-trained Jungian Analyst with a private practice based in Victoria, B.C. He is a long-time Buddhist practitioner in the Shambhala tradition and is an authorized meditation instructor and clinical supervisor.

Tickets at the Door \$15 Members \$20 Non-Members Museum of Vancouver

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