

# Prenatal Psychology, Analytical Psychology and Buddhism

Part I: A Clinical Case

Part II: Theoretical Discussion

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**Keywords:** Psychic Birth; Analytical Psychology; Buddhist Practice; Synchronicity; Prenatal Regression

**Abstract:** The first part of this paper describes a psychic birth, which took place with the twofold help of Jungian Analytical Psychology and Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism. In the course of a seven-year analysis, the patient – a Swiss flutist aged 27 – was able to overcome a severe phobia of excrement. The decisive improvement, however, took place only after she started regular Buddhist practice. We can therefore ask ourselves the following questions: “had she not started practicing, would she still be in analysis? Would it only have lasted longer but her phobia disappeared completely, or would certain aspects have remained and she would just have been able to cope with them well?” This is of course an open – but challenging question – that compels us to be attentive to the possibility that the two ways of spiritual and psychological development can complement each other and be used in parallel.

The second part of this paper discusses in particular the prenatal aspects of this possible complementation. It is hypothesized that the practice of chanting of the mantra *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* – which is the basic aspect of the Buddhist doctrine of Nichiren Daishonin (founded in Japan in 1253) – can significantly help a person to synchronistically change those aspects of the personality which have been structured in ontogenetically and phylogenetically prenatal times.

**Zusammenfassung:** *Pränatale Psychologie, Analytische Psychologie und Buddhismus.* Im ersten Teil dieser Arbeit wird eine psychologische Geburt beschrieben, die mit der zweifachen Hilfe der analytischen Psychologie und des Buddhismus zustande gekommen ist. Im Laufe einer siebenjährigen Analyse ist es der Patientin – einer siebenundzwanzigjährigen Schweizer Flötistin – gelungen, eine schlimme Schmutzphobie zu überwinden. Die entscheidende Besserung fand jedoch erst statt, nachdem die Patientin eine regelmäßige

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buddhistische Praxis begann. Es stellt sich daher folgende Frage: „Hätte sie nicht zu praktizieren begonnen, würde sie immer noch in Analyse sein? Hätte es bloß länger gedauert, aber ihre Phobie wäre völlig verschwunden oder wären einige Aspekte geblieben und sie wäre nur imstande gewesen, mit ihnen besser fertig zu werden?“ Diese Frage kann natürlich nicht beantwortet werden. Die Fragestellung ist jedoch interessant und herausfordernd und muß uns auf die Möglichkeit aufmerksam machen, daß diese zwei Wege seelischer und psychologischer Entwicklung sich gegenseitig ergänzen und parallel angewendet werden können.

Der zweite Teil dieser Arbeit behandelt im besonderen die pränatalen Aspekte dieser möglichen Ergänzung. Es wird angenommen, daß durch die buddhistische Praxis eine Person – auf synchronistische Weise – jene Aspekte ihrer Persönlichkeit verändern kann, die seit ontogenetisch und phylogenetisch pränataler Zeit strukturiert worden sind.

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## Part I: A Clinical Case

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### Introduction

We would like to present a psychic birth, which took place with the twofold help of analytical psychology and Buddhism.

The patient – C. – was born and raised in Basel (Switzerland). Her father is Italian, her mother French-Swiss. As she is musically very talented, she decided, at the age of 20, to move from Switzerland to Rome to study flute at the Conservatory. A few months after her arrival in Rome, her boy friend left her. Although he was a negative person for her, she loved him very much: “For me”, C. says, “a period of very deep suffering began, which I tried to alleviate by joining a Buddhist group. After I had practiced for two months, I met my analyst, and I think that meeting this person was the first benefit of the practice”.

After a very short period of time, however, she interrupted both analysis and Buddhist practice: “I always behaved that way: I used to run away from all activities or relationships immediately after having started them; but in most cases, after a while I would go back to them”. She did, in fact, resume her analysis shortly afterwards, and did not interrupt it until its conclusion seven years later. To Buddhist practice, however, she went back – as we will see later on – only after several years, but from that moment it became a constant of her life.

The reasons why C. sought psychological help were deeper and much more complex than the suffering caused by the end of a love story: “I decided to see a psychologist because, besides the pain caused by the end of an important, although destructive, love story, I had suffered from a severe phobia since I was 14. The object of my phobia was excrement, especially that of dogs. I was particularly anxious when I walked in the street, because I feared that I would tread on excrement. I was obsessed that a part of my body, my clothes or something I was wearing or carrying, could touch the floor; I saw scenes of dirt everywhere, even where nobody else could see them. I was scared to leave my apartment because I knew that on my returning home I would spend many hours washing myself and

my clothes, and trying to calm down from my crisis. I did not understand my phobia and therefore couldn't accept it, and was constantly very angry and depressed about what happened to me. After several years of analysis, I did not live my life with so much anxiety any more; I knew that, on returning home, I would need some time, a quarter of an hour, to check my clothes, shoes, etc. The decisive improvement, however, took place only after I started regular Buddhist practice. Therefore I often ask myself the following questions, to which I know no answer can be given: had I not resumed practicing, would I still be in analysis? Would it only have lasted longer but my phobia disappeared completely, or would certain aspects have remained and I would just have been able to cope with them well?"

### **First Year of Analysis**

Shortly after the beginning of her analysis, C. had the following dream: "I am in a swimming pool. I feel very much at ease. I swim completely immersed in the water and do not feel the need to emerge in order to breathe. I know that there is the sea nearby. Although I am attracted by it, the idea of leaving the protected swimming pool terrifies me".

We can compare C.'s dream with her posture in analysis. For many months, C. sat the entire hour completely immersed in herself, as if she were closed in a maternal womb; she always looked down to the earth, to which she addressed her words, whispering.

In her daily life as well, C. had an "intra-uterine" attitude: "I think", she says, "that I developed the phobia in order to protect myself against a form of life which I was too scared to live; the phobia prevented me from seeing and doing anything; on the one hand, because it took all my energy and attention and on the other hand because the fact of being sick gave me a justification for my passivity. In my daily life, I felt comfortable and protected in my bed only. For a long period, I spent an enormous amount of time in bed: besides sleeping, I ate, read, did everything in bed".

"When I started asking myself why my phobia had excrement as its main object", C. goes on, "a very disagreeable situation of the past came back to my memory. It happened in Calabria (a region of southern Italy), in the village where my father comes from. I cannot exactly remember my age, but I was in that phase preceding adolescence when one is no more a child. I suddenly felt the need to go to the toilet. I should have expressed this need, but I was paralyzed inside and thus incapable of doing so. But I was also unable to keep back the excrement. At that age, not being able to keep back one's excrement is a very unpleasant experience. At the beginning, my father had a reaction of reproval, but then it was he himself, not my mother, who helped me to clean myself. I would have preferred her to do this, as I was no baby any more. As a matter of fact, it was always my father who helped me, even in situations where a certain intimacy was required. My mother was always absent. My father told me that when I was born my mother was already severely depressed and often did not clean and change me for hours".

It was only towards the end of her analysis that C. learned more about the causes of her mother's depression. Her mother had been an unwanted child, and was born despite the double attempt of her mother – i.e., C.'s grandmother – to

about her: "My mother", C. says, "seems to have really wanted to be born, thus confirming the Buddhist conviction that one chooses to be born. From the point of view of prenatal psychology [at that time, C. was reading Ludwig Janus' book *Wie die Seele entsteht*] we can easily imagine how the fact of being unwanted influenced the later psychology of my mother. Although my grandmother accepted and loved my mother once she was born, my mother must have been a disturbing element in her life. My mother was a girl who was always alone. She was left alone for hours while her mother went to work, and she had a pile of newspapers for a baby-sitter. When her mother came home, she found my mother in the same position as when she had left her. My mother describes herself as a good girl. However, being so good can also mean that one is completely incapable of expressing oneself".

C.'s mother met her future husband when she was 17 and immediately fell in love with him. They married after several years, and during the honeymoon – unexpectedly and inexplicably (because she was having her menses) – C.'s mother became pregnant: "My mother", C. says, "wanted to have children, but not immediately after her marriage; she would have liked to go on working for a while. My father told me that although she was cross with him, she nevertheless faced the delivery very bravely and with serenity. And, after the deep suffering caused by an event which she had not expected nor wished so early, she prepared herself physically and psychologically for my birth. She never considered the pain of delivery a distressing experience, but transformed the event into a joyful moment, a transformation which she was not able to extend to other aspects of her life."

Because of her depression, C.'s mother was never really able to psychologically contain her daughter, nor to help her in situations of strong discomfort. Similar to C.'s later behaviour, she also woke up very late in the morning and spent much time in bed, which she considered her shelter. C. and her by six years younger brother were often left alone for hours. Furthermore, C. was often entrusted by her mother with responsibilities that were too big or entirely inappropriate for a young girl. For example, when C. was only four years old, her mother asked her if she was supposed to divorce her father; or better, if the two of them – she and her mother – should divorce him: "Of course", C. says, "I answered that I wanted both parents, and many years later my mother said that she had not divorced my father because of my answer. This was a great psychological violation. My parents always quarrelled, and I could not do my homework. I spent many nights listening to and trying to comfort my mother, who complained and cried. Then, after having slept only a few hours, I went to school. My school grades became increasingly worse."

In addition, C.'s mother was very critical towards everything her daughter did. When C. came home from school, her mother always asked her about her grades, and even when they were good, she compared them with those of the other pupils. The comparison weakened her daughter's self-confidence and made her feel constantly guilty, with the result that in every area of her life, even in the choice of her dresses, C. did not do what she herself wanted, but only what her mother wanted her to do. "I think", C. says, "that my phobia of dirt, i.e., my feeling of always being dirty, was linked to a constant sense of guilt. I often did what others wanted me to do. I was not able to assert my opinion and my personality. Later on, I shifted to the contrary until I finally found the middle way. I was always scared of deceiving others. I feared their judgement and therefore never took a clear position, and

this caused me an enormous amount of difficulties, because if one never takes an initiative, one never risks and therefore never grows. Many people hated the fact that I did not take a clear position. I behaved that way because when I was a child both my father and my mother tried to draw me towards their own position and I so learned to avoid showing any preference for the one or the other. I had to make a great effort to learn to have my own opinion”.

Even though in practical life C.’s father was a very good and reliable person, his emotional relationship with C. was not very good until very recent times: “My father”, C. says, “is a very silent person who, especially in the past, never directly expressed what he felt. He has had a quite difficult life. He grew up in a family with a very authoritarian father who did not allow him to express himself personally and professionally. My father was then forced to emigrate from Calabria to Switzerland, where he finally found a very good job. Despite his professional success, my mother always criticized him. She never stopped projecting on him the image of the ‘fairy prince’ and is still waiting for him to become the person she would like him to be. My father, although it does not appear at first sight, is a very understanding person with a natural capacity for compassion. In these last years, after I started recognizing the real person hidden behind the distorted image my mother had transmitted to me of him, the relationship with my father has grown deeper and more intense. Today we are much more able to express what we really feel for each other. My father has changed very much and has started to talk openly with me”.

The relationship with C.’s mother also improved at the end of her analysis, as we will see later on.

## **Second Year of Analysis**

In the second year of analysis, C. had the first dream that was meaningful in terms of her development: “A strange meeting of dubious persons is taking place in a big house with an elevator. I am standing outside, in the rain, waiting for the bus which has to drive me to school. At a certain point, I start walking. I am looking for something, but I am doing it gropingly, as if I were, or pretended to be, blind. Then, there is a person beside me who wants to guide me. I say that I have the same English lesson every week on Tuesday in the house I dreamed at the beginning. Finally, always with the help of the guide, I reach the sea. There are other people there. I am not sure if I am still blind.”

“The fact of being, or pretending to be, blind”, C. says, “makes me think of my fear of facing life and its difficulties, which made me stay almost always in bed. I associate the guide with the analytical work [Tuesday was the day in which C. had her analytical session, where she was, so to say, learning a ‘foreign language’], which is leading me from darkness to light, from the closed swimming pool to the open sea, which in the first dream I saw from far away but did not dare to reach”.

In this period, C. also experienced improvements in her exterior life: she passed two exams at the Conservatory, felt more energy, took many initiatives and was “happy to be alive.”

### **Third and Fourth Year of Analysis**

However, the following year (the third year of analysis) – as it often happens – she regressed, left the Conservatory and spent almost the entire year in a sort of “incubative” immobility.

It was only in the fourth year of analysis that she made a further step in her development which can be seen in the following dream: “I am in a tower. I am wearing a marvelous wedding dress, which I chose myself. Suddenly I am in the living room of my mother’s mother, my grandmother, in Basel. My mother and my grandmother oppose my marriage, because it is with my negative boyfriend, J.; they take me away from the tower on a funicular.”

Here, for the first time, appears the figure of her maternal grandmother. C.’s grandmother has in fact been a very positive person in her life. Born in a farmer’s family of 17 children, she grew up in the context of hard work. She lost many younger brothers and sisters and also later in her life lived many difficult moments: her Italian fiancé left for the war and never returned. She became pregnant with C.’s mother when she was 30, and was not yet married and, as we mentioned before, attempted an abortion twice but did not succeed. After her marriage, she had another child, a son, who is ten years younger than C.’s mother. Her marriage, probably caused by the pregnancy, was not a happy one, especially because her husband was often drunk. She was widowed quite early: “My grandmother was a very funny and witty person”, says C., “always good-humored, strong, loving, but with an obsessive need of tidiness. When I went to visit her, I always found her dusting the apartment. Whenever she ate bread or biscuits, she bowed her head backwards, in order to let the crumbs fall directly into her mouth and to avoid soiling the floor with crumbs!”.

She was very broad-minded and talked openly with her granddaughter about sex and her love affairs, something she did not do with her own daughter. She was very determined, economically independent, liked traveling, shopping and eating in restaurants, and she often took C. with her. She represents a very positive figure for C., who has a memory of a good relationship with her.

Commenting the above-mentioned dream, C. said that she felt that both women – her grandmother and her mother – in fact were her grandmother. It is the grandmother in the double, thus reinforced shape, who hinders her self-destructive marriage. This dream seems to express the interior detachment from a negative animus, represented by a man like J. Even though the outer separation had occurred earlier, the inner image still remained because after J. she had had other negative experiences with men. It also shows that C. is making her first steps towards autonomy, because she had prepared herself alone, whereas in the past she had been dependent on her mother, even in selecting clothes to buy or to wear.

Another very positive dream with her grandmother occurs shortly afterward: “My grandmother is the owner of an herbal shop. The basket I am carrying falls to the floor. I am desperate, I try to pick up the contents from the floor: dried flowers, three small red and white dice and an enormous vegetable which I start eating. My grandmother tries to console me, telling me that nothing serious has occurred, that these things happen in life, and then stresses that the basket is still intact.”

“There is much wisdom in this dream”, C. says. “The herb shop is connected with nature and to everything related to nature. This aspect is very strong in me. There is also an aspect of positive psychological transformation: seeing that the basket has fallen to the floor, I have a feeling of loss, but my grandmother stresses that there is no reason to despair, because the container is safe and can be filled again. In addition, dried flowers are useless; I used to like dried flowers, but slowly I changed my mind: they get dusty, and it is like wanting to keep alive something which is dead. The dice could mean luck and fortune, the wish to risk . . . even though they are the colour of Switzerland . . .”

During this fourth year of analysis, C. finally really started, in her own words, “to take my life into my hands”. During this year, she did not play nor study the flute. She started working, although irregularly and with many difficulties: “The period when I spent all my time trying to control my phobia was over”, she says, “and a period of concretisation had begun”.

In this period, C. had several dreams in which she saw herself flying, either with no aids or with parachutes or balloons. Sometimes she fell into the water – despite the help of her instructor – but finally in another dream she managed to climb a very steep ascent: “At the beginning, I think that I won’t be able to manage it. Then I succeed, and when I arrive at the top of the hill, I meet a flutist. I want to introduce myself to him, play something for him, but my flute is broken. It’s strange, I succeed in climbing a steep hill, but my flute is broken.”

Probably, the musical part had to be sacrificed for a period in order to allow other aspects of her personality to emerge: “I would never be able”, C. says, “to separate from my flute, because music has been my positive karmic tendency; studying and playing it has always been easy and pleasant for me. However, at a certain point, when I decided to face and defy my real difficulties and problems, the flute lost its protective function for me and therefore was, at least for a certain period, no longer at the centre of my life.”

### **Fifth Year of Analysis**

At the beginning of her fifth year of analysis, C. had the following dream: “There is a fortress and, inside, an Oriental procession which, clandestinely, leads me outside the walls. I am hidden in a basket or a baby-carriage, covered with a sheet. There is much confusion outside the walls: traffic jam, red lights, noise. I am left alone to face all that confusion”.

In the period in which C. had this dream, she had resumed practicing after a five-year interruption. However, after one month she stopped again until October of the same year, when she took up the practice once more and never interrupted it again. Commenting on this dream, C. says: “Analysis had taught me to manage my life, and Buddhist practice was now providing me with energy to go out into the world. In that period, I started having much more confidence in myself. One of the principal aims of Buddhist practice is to positively transform our life. This means taking one’s life in one’s hands, but this is only possible if we know what kind of life we wish to have. I think that this understanding surely is the task of analysis. One cannot practice in order to change one’s life if one does not know what one’s life is, i.e. if we do not know who we are, and what we want. We can

compare the practice to the fuel which allows the engine of the car to move. But the car with the engine has to be constructed through psychological work”.

In the middle of the same year, after she had definitively resumed practicing, C. had the following dream: “The teacher I had when I was at elementary school asks me to help her with her afternoon work. The way to the school – the real way I used to go to reach this school in Basel when I was five years old – is very muddy, and I often turn back to check if it is only earth. I nonetheless feel well. On the way, some Japanese people ask me if there are some icy stretches in that area. I am very proud to answer that yes, there are some there, because it is a Gletscher [=glacier] area. Running, because it has become late, I finally reach the school, which is not the school but an apartment, and the lady is not my real teacher but an unknown person. However, I like both the lady and her apartment. The apartment has an Oriental style, the style I would like to live in. The lady, who works in her apartment, is teaching music to some children, who are picked up by their parents, immediately after my arrival because it is late”.

This dream seems to drive C. back to her phylogenetic and ontogenetic origins: the glacial period in Switzerland and her first childhood. Icy stretches are something static and cold which has to be transformed. The cold and negative mother is slowly changed through the spiritual development of Buddhist practice. But the glacial period can also be considered a second birth of mankind. A rebirth could therefore perhaps have taken place (as in the dream of the cavern later on) through Buddhist practice, symbolized by the Japanese. The dream also shows an adult version of C. as a teacher who leads an autonomous life in a cosy interior atmosphere.

The last month of that same year was quite tormented again. C. had a dream in which for the first time she was able to take off and fly: “I am able to lift myself from the floor and fly. I fly in a position which is either seated or completely reclined. While I fly, I follow a path which is full of curves in the country. There is somebody dying and I am a bit astonished and sad, I am scared of death.”

“The feeling of flying is very pleasant”, C. says, “especially because I feel that I can control the flight, the taking off, the direction. I see myself deciding to lift myself from the floor and fly. The person who is dying probably is an aspect of my old personality”.

On the other hand, however, she also had to fight with moments of deep regression: “I am at home, in my bed with somebody else, probably my mother. Strange worms try to anchor me to the mattress. I am eating something in bed, maybe milk and Christmas cake. Then, I am on a ladder leading down to a tiny street. A van arrives and I know that I have to go and save somebody. I am very much concentrated in this enterprise, which I take very seriously”.

To be blocked again in bed with her mother can be interpreted as being again somehow shut in the maternal womb. However, she also seems conscious of the fact that a part of herself has to be saved, that she has to go on developing herself.

### **Sixth Year of Analysis**

After a few month of regular Buddhist practice – we now are at the beginning of the sixth year of analysis – C. started feeling consistently better: “The first benefit

of intense and regular practice surely was the fact that I was able to wake up in the morning without all the anxieties which usually affected me and therefore it became easier for me to get up early. However, as I was really tired of my phobia, for a period of two months I practiced two hours a day. Shortly afterwards, I had what I consider the second great benefit of the practice: I met S., the man with whom I am now living. And then, one day . . . I realized that the phobia had disappeared”.

We can consider the following dream as testimony to this important development: “I go to bed directly, without washing myself and changing my clothes. I feel free. The following day, I decide to go to my parents’ apartment in Basel to collect certain items to take with me to Rome. My mother is astonished to see me. She has guests, and the apartment is much sunnier and not depressing and anxiety-producing anymore”.

In addition to the freedom from her phobia, this dream seems to symbolize positive changes in her interior maternal house, which is no longer dark and anxiety-producing – as it actually was in the past, when her depressed mother took little care of it – but has become tidy and sunny, open to people.

From now on, her dreams will more often be linked with Buddhist practice: “There are several Buddhist meetings, during which I practice for hours together with some friends. Then, I see a room which resembles the living room of my parents’ apartment in Basel, with a grand piano and a gohonzon in it\*\*”.

Here, and in the following dream as well, we clearly see another change in the interior house. There seems to be a positive merging of the old and the new worlds.

“I am in my father’s village, practicing with other people in a room expressly reserved for this purpose. The houses in the village are still the ancient ones, that existed in my grandparents’ time, whereas in reality they have all been rebuilt. Then, I walk carrying a juzu\*\* with me”.

C. also started dreaming ever more often that she drove her own car, a dream which can be interpreted – especially in the light of later events – in symbolic terms (taking charge of one’s life) as well as real ones (obtaining a driver’s licence).

But there also are dreams of regression, such as this one: “I am with father and mother in a vast and green landscape. Flying, we see that part of the landscape is burning, but my parents are not worried at all. Landing, I fall on horse excrement. I am scared, but not terrified”.

“I must say that horse excrement never scared me as much as that of dogs. Furthermore, I associate the dog with the town, and the horse with the country. And for me the country is linked with freedom. I would have liked very much to ride horseback. The excrement of horses is healthy because it is also used as fertilizer. And this seems more natural to me.”

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\* The gohonzon is the object of cult of Buddhist practice in Nichiren Daishonin’s teachings. It is a parchment, on whose center is written *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*. It represents one’s life in the state of enlightenment.

\*\* The juzu is a chain made of small pearls. It has the form of human figure: a head, two arms and two legs. It is kept in one’s clasped hands during practice, in the shape of a 8 (symbolizing the infinite) and means ‘to keep one’s life in one’s hands’.

We will later see with Sahlberg how the sense of disruption in birth is associated with dog-excrement.

### **Seventh Year of Analysis**

Towards the end of the seventh and last year of analysis, C. had the following dream, in three parts:

“1) I am waiting to enter a cavern full of people, many of them Buddhist. A man at the entrance to the cavern pronounces a word with a twofold meaning. At first, I only understand that he says that I have been in prison. However, immediately afterwards, I realize the second meaning of this word: those who had little money in the past have the possibility of entering the cavern paying little money. I enter the cavern and explore it.

2) I start playing a basketball match. There are some empty, airless balls. Everybody expects me to play wonderfully, which I cannot do with those balls; suddenly my father arrives and gives me a wonderful white ball.

3) I am with somebody on a small cliff. I see other people plunging into cars, but I refuse to do so. I know that I could jump if only there were water underneath. There is a ladder and I descend in seated position from the rock”.

The phobia had been C.'s prison for many years and had made the quality of her life very poor. However, the suffering caused by it forced C. to enter deeply into herself – through analysis first and Buddhist practice afterwards – in order to understand and then transform the reasons and causes which lie hidden underneath it. Thus, the very fact that she had been prisoner of herself had allowed her to enter the cavern and explore it. The exploration of the dark cavern, with many Buddhists inside, can mean, on the one hand, that C. had to enter into contact with deep and obscure layers of the psyche in order to know and understand herself better. On the other hand, as the cavern can also be considered an enormous receptacle of energy, through the contact with very deep layers of her psyche, which can reach as far as the cosmic unconscious, she also had the possibility to strengthen and transform herself very deeply.

Commenting the second part of the dream, C. says: “Basketball has been very important for me. It is the only sport which I played with real enthusiasm during adolescence and it was a splendid period with the competitions, the victories. I like team play very much and I associate this with Buddhism as well. I adored playing but had to stop because I was doing too many things. When I had that dream, I was suffering again from anxieties and had fallen back into a very bad daily rhythm. I had many physical problems. I am struck by the fact that beside the deflated balls was a white one, given to me by my father. White is the color of purity, of the lotus flower. I think that this dream must be connected with Buddhism and with Buddhahood”.

“The third part, the one with the rock – jumping into cars – could seem connected with destructivity. However, the car is also a symbol of autonomy. When I say that I am willing to jump into water only, I interpret this as wanting to do only what gives me a sense of security. The dream might be telling me that I am searching in my unconscious, that I am going on an interior path, but that I am still very prudent.”

We will see later that this part of the dream may also be connected with Sahlberg's interpretation of the Buddhist group as a therapeutic group, which substitutes a bad maternal with a good paternal womb. C.'s father is a positive womb. He has always been so, even though C. recognized it, on a conscious level, only very recently.

Immediately before the end of her analysis, C. has several dreams of successful and unsuccessful pregnancies:

"Aurora, a Buddhist woman, is ready to deliver her second child, a boy. She already has a girl and her husband is beside her. At the end, he makes a toast to the Buddhist friends. Many persons have gathered around her".

"I am forced to have an abortion, not because I do not want to keep the child but because the pregnancy would have harmed me very much. I am sitting on a bench, with my legs spread. A doctor is pumping. I do not feel anything, but at a certain point I see blood flowing and then everything is over. Even though I have not suffered very much pain, I am terribly upset. A male nurse tries to comfort me".

"I am preparing myself for the delivery, but I am not pregnant yet. I am just practicing. I lean against a wall with my legs bent and am doing breathing exercises. I am very proud of myself because playing the flute has taught me to breathe very well."

We can connect breathing with meditation. Paying attention to one's breath and breathing gives the idea of the concentration on one's own energetic center. While not in the Buddhist practice followed by C., breathing is generally an important meditative technique which allows one to enter into contact with one's deep interiority. C. seems to be preparing herself for important changes in her inner world, as expressed in the following dream, the last one she had during analysis: "I am on a road in Rome. The city is dark. I walk and the road starts leading upwards. The more I walk, the more the road starts to become green. At the beginning, the dream is in black and white, then colors appear. I continually see more trees and green. I enter into a marvelous valley, where there is a house, and from outside I observe an ordinary family scene. There seem to be people who love each other, arguing but communicating. I feel this sensation as if it were my own. I am the only person who has discovered this place, and nobody knows that in the center of the city there is this enchanted valley".

"I think", C. says, "that this dream expresses my interior path. I had started in a state of darkness – in Buddhist terms we could say of hell – and had now reached my positive interior center and was starting to experience the state of joy and of light, I even dare even say of . . . Buddhahood".

## **Conclusion**

After the end of her analysis, C. had following dream: "I am pregnant, and I feel as if I really were. I am convinced that I am in the seventh month of pregnancy, but a Buddhist friend says that I am in the ninth month and will deliver very soon".

"I think that the numbers seven and nine can be associated with the Buddhist seventh and ninth levels of consciousness. The seventh level of consciousness still is a very conscious and mental state, whereas the ninth level of consciousness is the

state of deepest unconsciousness. According to Nichiren Daishonin, it is identical with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo (Please see Part II). The Buddhist friend in the dream calls my attention to the fact that I have the wrong psychological attitude. Instead of clinging to thought and reasoning, I should have more faith and rely upon my deep unconscious capacities, my vital energy, upon Nam-myoho-renge-kyo”.

The following night, she dreamed that she passed her driving test, and this really did occur two days later.

Having started as a foetus, as we have seen in the first dream, C. has become, as we can see in these last two dreams, a mother; a mother who has learned to drive the car of her life independently.

In this period, many other important things happened in C.’s life. She had gone back to Basel, after an absence of two years, and for the first time she was happy there. Her mother was very nice and tender with her, invited her to a restaurant, and for the first time they could speak very openly together: “For years, I did not have any positive feeling for my mother. I felt only indifference and a great distance between us. But at that moment, I felt the need to take a step towards her, to improve the relationship with her, because I had gone a long way, I had overcome my most important problems – even though there were others, of course, to work upon – and I also understood that one has to start in one’s own family to resolve problems of relationships. So I started having positive feelings for my mother, developing compassion and felt the need to help her. I also felt that my mother had changed. She had bought herself a book, *The Tao of Women*, which I think expressed her decision to start doing something for herself as a woman as well as a first approach to Oriental thought”.

There is a second important aspect linked to this trip to Switzerland: “In the past, each separation from my boyfriend, no matter how short, was connected with the fear of losing him; as I was very unhappy when I stayed with my parents, I very soon felt the need to run back into my boyfriend’s arms. This last time, however, I missed him in a normal way. I had learned to deeply understand the transience of things. I knew that I would suffer should I lose S., but I also knew that if this should occur I would not start doubting the sense of my life because my core was strong and would remain intact. I felt that I did not depend on others any more”.

Probably C.’s greatest conquest is expressed in her own final words:

“In Switzerland, I understood deeply for the first time the sense of this sentence: freedom does not mean living in the absence of any restriction, but means possessing the firm and steady conviction that every obstacle can be overcome. In general, each misfortune in front of which we do not succumb, becomes fortune. I felt free. I was free.”

### **Buddhist Practice**

As we have mentioned at the beginning, and as C. herself repeatedly mentioned in the course of the work, a particular aspect characterizes her analysis: Buddhist practice.

“I had been looking for something since I was a child. In karmic terms, we could say that, as a child, I had already deliberately chosen difficult situations which would give me the opportunity to purify my karma, to reach the conscious-

ness of the Universe, to experience the sense of totality, enlightenment, rebirth. Later on, I felt the strong need to come to Rome. In Rome, I read Siddharta and solved my problem. When I entered the Buddhist group, I knew that I had finally found what I was looking for. At that moment, I needed to increase my vital state and ‘take my life into my hands’. It is not by chance that, shortly after having come to Rome, I met my analyst, who allowed me to take ‘the reins of my life into my hands’. As already mentioned before, the main difficulty of the Buddhist practice which I follow – based on the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin – is linked to the fact that one is supposed to practice for one’s life. It is very difficult to follow this kind of Buddhism if you have not developed at least a minimum of respect for and consciousness of your life”.

On the links between analysis and Buddhism and its reciprocal influence, more can be found in Part II. Here, we would like to conclude with several unusual but relevant parallels between C.’s case history and Buddha’s life, based on O. N. Sahlberg’s paper, “Ungeboren, ungezeugt, neu eingestiftet: Kleinod im Lotos – Buddhas Weg zum Ursprung der Liebe” [reprinted 1998 in an amplified form in *The International Journal of Prenatal and Perinatal Psychology and Medicine* 10(1): 97–124].

I) Sahlberg places Buddha’s sufferings in relation with a threefold – pre-natal, peri-natal and post-natal – trauma: 1) Buddha’s mother Maya denied not only the pregnancy but even the sexual relationship with her husband, which – only in order to conceive a child – she had accepted in a state of drunkenness, i.e., in an unconscious state. 2) Shortly before the birth of her child, Maya went to visit her mother and during her travels, in the forest, the baby was born without any competent help. 3) After a week, Maya died of post-partum fever (as Sahlberg hypothesizes) and Buddha was raised by his father’s second wife.

We find here a first astonishing parallel. The similarity between the pregnancies of Buddha’s mother and C.’s mother, who – as we related – remained pregnant unexpectedly and against her will.

II) Sahlberg explains how Buddha repeated the experience of his conception and birth and how he succeeded in overcoming their negative influence on him. According to Sahlberg, this occurred in two steps:

In the first step, Buddha relived his birth and the death of his mother. He continually ate less, until he fed himself with excrement, his own and that of cows. Then he collapsed and fell to the floor into his excrement and urine. In this moment he relived the “sacred serenity”.

Sahlberg compares the succession of these sufferings to Grof’s matrixes of birth. Particularly interesting for us is the third matrix, the fight for birth, in which Grof states (quoted by Sahlberg) that “one feels like dog excrement smeared on the floor”. The foetus in this stage can suffocate in the faeces of the mother: *inter urinam et faeces nascimur*. In Sahlberg’s interpretation, in the moment of sacred serenity, Buddha overcame his prenatal and birth trauma.

The second step, the liberation from suffering, occurred through the four stages towards nirvana and the three night watches. According to Sahlberg, in these phases of regressive meditation, Buddha went back to the elemental stage of biological life. He relived the phases of the implantation of the egg, the beginning

of the connection with the cardiac circulation and heartbeat of the mother, the origins of love. He thus found the good maternal uterus, the awakening of feelings.

We have seen how C. – who suffered from a phobia of dirt, particularly of excrement – overcame her phobia with help of analysis and Buddhist practice. On the basis of what is stated in the Part II, we hypothesize that C.'s experience was similar to Buddha's. Buddhist practice enables one to come into contact with the deepest levels of the collective unconscious, which Sahlberg calls vegetable life and Alexander biogenetic law. And this process significantly helped her to transform those traits of her personality that had probably been structured since prenatal times.

III) As C. practices Buddhism mainly within a group, we can draw a third parallel with Sahlberg's text: the practice as a pre-natal therapeutic group leading to the awakening of feelings. According to Sahlberg, Buddha – who transformed his own experience into a teaching for his pupils – created a pre-natal therapeutic group. The pupils found themselves in the pre-natal sphere, in a good womb, connected with a good maternal heartbeat, as Buddha's heart and the heart of the community substituted the original heartbeat of the mother. Buddha replaced the maternal womb, which had caused the first negative birth, by a paternal womb, in which the second birth, the rebirth could take place.

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## Part II: Theoretical Discussion

*Erika Gsell*

### **Psychoanalysis, Analytical Psychology and Buddhism**

The extraordinary and astonishing resemblance between Freudian psychoanalytic method and Buddha's regressive meditation has been shown by Alexander as far back as 1923. The aims of Buddha's teachings are therapeutic, he says, and his method is regression through introversion. According to Alexander, meditation systematically repeats the evolutionary path backwards and tends to destructure the physical and psychic personality. The different levels of the meditation-scale are nothing other than psychological states reached through a chronologically precise destructuring of the personality and correspond to the chronological development of a real analysis.

Whereas Alexander has compared psychoanalysis and Buddhism, I would like to compare analytical psychology and Buddhism. Other authors have compared Jungian analytical psychology and Buddhism. On the one hand, Eric Pettifor (1998) has stressed the parallels between Zen Buddhism and Analytical Psychology, in the sense that "both paths are transformational. The paradox in each of them is that the transformation is becoming more oneself, one's true self". On the other hand, Chuan Yuan Shakya considers the possibility of the positive integration of the two approaches: "Jung's Depth Psychology tells us why we are the way we are. Zen provides the methodology by which we can change the way we are".

As I have tried to demonstrate more extensively in another paper (1998), there are many similarities between Buddhism, especially Buddhism in the interpretation of Nichiren Daishonin, and the Analytical Psychology of Carl Gustav Jung. In particular, I think that the chanting of the mantra *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*<sup>1</sup>, which is the basic aspect of the Buddhist doctrine of Nichiren Daishonin (founded in Japan in 1253), can contribute greatly to the understanding and transformation of very deep levels of our psyche. Moreover, I hypothesize that the changes which occur through the practice of chanting can be considered a synchronistic phenomenon.

The reasoning by which I reached this conclusion is as follows: Jung uses the concept of synchronicity to describe the simultaneousness between a certain psychic situation and one or more external events. The two events temporally coincide; however, they are not causally related, but have the same or similar sense (von Franz 1988, 1996; Jung 1982a, 1982b, 1989a, 1989b).

According to Jung, synchronistic phenonema – which can be described as moments during which the psyche and matter no longer appear as separate realities but are coordinated in a unique and meaningful situation – occur when an archetype<sup>2</sup> imposes itself. The activation of an archetypal content takes place when a person is in an excited state, i.e., a state of high emotional tension. According to Jung, people's faith in the effectiveness of prayer is based on the experience of synchronistic events.

According to Nichiren Daishonin, the daily chanting of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* leads to enlightenment<sup>3</sup> through deep contact with the mystical law. With the

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<sup>1</sup> *Myoho-renge-kyo* is the title of the Lotus-Sutra and literally signifies "Mystical law of the Lotus-Sutra". The preceding *Nam* means: "to dedicate one's life". Therefore, "*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*" as a whole means "I dedicate my life to the mystical law of the Lotus-Sutra". *Myoho* means "mystical law". It is the universal principle, according to which the energy of life has its effects on a human being. *Myoho* also refers to the eternal rhythm of life and death. *Renge*, which means lotus flower, is the law of the simultaneousness of cause and effect. Finally, *Kyo* means "Sutra," i.e., the voice or teaching of a Buddha; in derivative form, it signifies sound, rhythm, vibration and therefore also the practice of chanting. *Kyo* also refers to the vital energy of universal phenomena: everything which exists, has always existed, and will always exist, is an expression of the mystical law (Causton 1993, 1998; Ikeda 1966, 1982, 1996; Mazzini 1995; Vigorita et al. 1996; Watson 1996a, 1996b)

<sup>2</sup> According to Jung, the contents of the collective unconscious – unlike the contents of the personal unconscious, which initially were conscious and then became unconscious, because they were forgotten or repressed – were never previously conscious and are not acquired individually. Jung called these innate dispositions or pre-existent forms of our psyche archetypes. The real essence of the archetype, states Jung, cannot be perceived consciously; it is transcendent, "psychoid". Archetypes per se are absolutely unobservable structures, and only in crucial moments, when they are stimulated through internal and external necessities, do they produce archetypal images, archetypal fantasies, thoughts, intuitions, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Nichiren Daishonin (Ikeda 1966) states that in the Lotus Sutra, Buddha does not teach giving up earthly desires. On the contrary, a life based on the mystical law is able to transform them into enlightenment. In terms of the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin, therefore, the sentence "give up one's attachments" has to be interpreted as "enlighten oneself through one's attachments".

help of chanting, one can not only reinforce, transform and develop the complete potential of the Self, but also change circumstances in the outer world, since the psychological and physical aspects of life are not separate but influenced by each other. New causes can thus be put into existence, enabling the basic tendency of one's life, i.e., one's karma,<sup>4</sup> to change.

In my opinion, as the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo strongly contributes to inducing those states of intense affect in which an archetypal content is activated, the inner and outer changes which occur through it can be considered a synchronistic event.

### **Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, Synchronicity and Biogenetic Law**

According to Buddhism (Causton 1993, 1998; Ikeda 1966, 1982, 1996; Mazzini 1995; Vigorita et al. 1996; Watson 1996a, 1996b) there is no division between the physical and psychological aspects of life. The life of each human being is eternal because it is part of the Universe, and the Universe exists eternally. The Buddhist concept of eternity of life is equivalent to the physical law of the conservation of energy and matter, according to which they are never dispersed, but only transformed.

Life and death are one and the same. Life becomes existence through birth and non-existence through death. Non-existence does not, however, mean absolute nothingness; it is a potential state (ku). Birth is condensation of the universal life in a single Self, and death is re-dispersion of the same Self into the universal continuum.

The mystical energy, accumulated in latent states, enables life, which has been stimulated by an external influence, to manifest itself anew, giving full expression to its individuality. It will then return to the latent state to "gather" energy for the next birth.

When a person in a state of hell<sup>5</sup> is reborn, his or her life remains in that state of hell. However, through practice and compassion<sup>6</sup>, the karma can be changed

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of cause and effect is one of the basic principles of the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. According to Buddhism, there is no effect without cause, and each cause must have an effect, independent of the time it takes for it to appear. Tightly linked with the law of cause and effect is the concept of karma. "Karma" is a Sanskrit word meaning "action". It indicates that as a consequence of the law of cause and effect, each action creates a future action, and this produces an uninterrupted eternal chain. Karma is not a force which lies outside man, because it is in fact the totality of causes and effects which have been established in the past and which have a deep influence on present actions.

<sup>5</sup> Hell is the lowest and Buddhahood is the highest of the of the ten worlds (i.e., the ten states in which a person can live in various moments of his life). In between are: hunger, animality, anger, humanity, rapture, learning, realization, bodhisattva.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike other interpretations of Buddhism (cf. Alexander), Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism is not asocial at all. In the Sutra Vimalakirti, he explains clearly that true meditation does not consist in being seated under a tree, but in having an active role among people, embracing verity. Buddhism cannot be separated from the real world. The true spirit of meditation (practice), therefore, consists in the expression of one's wisdom and in the fight for one's own and other people's happiness (Ikeda 1966).

and the person can, after death, be immediately reborn with a better karma. The source of this rhythm, which is in perfect harmony with the rhythm of the universe, is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

Myoho, as we have seen before (see footnote 1), also refers to the eternal rhythm of life and death. Myo means death, ho life. Life and death, existence and non existence, are both expressions and functions, i.e., two phases of Myoho-enge-kyo. Myoho-enge-kyo is the mystical law, the eternally immutable law of the Universe which penetrates the essence of life and death. It is life in its original state (Causton 1993, 1998; Ikeda 1966, 1982, 1996; Mazzini 1995; Vigorita et al. 1996; Watson 1996a, 1996b).

With the introduction of the principle of synchronicity, Jung showed that it is possible to consider the fields of psyche and matter on an unified basis. In his opinion, psyche and matter probably are but two aspects of the same secret of life, which he calls *unus mundus*, one world. According to him, the reality which we introspectively try to describe as collective unconscious could be the same unknown and unknowable reality which atomic physicists try to describe from outside as a material reality.

The psyche (collective unconscious) is, in his opinion, a sphere of reality that is situated, as a spectrum, between the infrared pole of material and bodily reactions and the ultraviolet pole of the formal ordering structures, the archetypes. At its ultraviolet pole, i.e., at its deepest, archetypal level, it is a formal ordering structure beyond time and, in its entire extension, the expression of the *unus mundus*, the mysterious unity of spirit and matter, the secret essence of life. According to him, the deepest layer of our psyche is pure nature, nature which contains everything, including matter.

Synchronistic phenomena, in which the same sense manifests itself in the psyche and in the disposition of a simultaneous external event, show that there apparently exists an a priori knowledge of something which cannot be known at a certain moment, which Jung calls "absolute knowledge". Synchronicity, Jung says, presupposes a sense which in respect to human consciousness is a priori, a sense which seems to be external to the person.

According to Alexander (1923), Buddhist meditation can be understood on the basis of the principle of the identity of biological and psychic states, i.e., of the reciprocal validity of biological and psychological knowledge, reflected in Spinoza's statement: "Ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum – The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things".

The main concepts of his reasoning follow: The ultimate aim of Buddhist meditation is psychological and physiological regression to nirvana, i.e., the intra-uterine state. The objective is to overcome birth, to overcome the eternal cycle of rebirth.

In the deepest level of meditation, Buddha has recognized the eternal karmic law, the circle of eternal rebirth. Nirvana means not only total regression to the beginning of development, but also means knowledge and memory. The knowledge and memory of all forms of existence, of all primordial geological periods, is the fundamental biogenetic law. Buddha has recognized this fundamental biogenetic law, living and experiencing embryological life through his affective regression.

The most profound level of unconsciousness is nothing but the psychic reflex of the very first biological events which is synthesized in the term “embryological development”. It is exactly this deep layer, which we can call phylogenetic knowledge, which Buddha arrives at in his regressive meditation.

Buddha has lived the fundamental biogenetic law on a subjective basis. However, this subjective knowledge is contained in each form of knowledge, including our apparently objective knowledge of the exterior world. The connections in one’s Self are the same as those in the exterior world, because the Self is only one particular aspect of reality (Alexander 1923).

## Conclusions

The biogenetic law which, according to Alexander, Buddha met through his subjective affective regression, is the most profound level of unconsciousness, embryological development, phylogenetic knowledge, the karmic law of eternal rebirth. However, Alexander specifies, subjective knowledge is also contained in the apparently objective knowledge of the world, because the connections in one’s Self are the same as those in the exterior world (based on the principle of the identity of biological and psychic states, i.e., of the reciprocal validity of biological and psychological knowledge).

In my opinion, Buddha’s subjective regression to the fundamental biogenetic law corresponds, in terms of Jungian analytical psychology, to the contact with the deepest and most archetypal level of the collective unconscious, and in terms of Nichiren Daishonin Buddhism, to the ninth level of unconsciousness, to life in its original state, which is identical to Nam-myoho-renge-kyo<sup>7</sup>.

The identity of subjective and objective knowledge and of the connections in one’s Self and in the exterior world correspond to the Jungian *unus mundus*, the mysterious unity of spirit and matter, the two poles of one and the same unknown essence of life which Nichiren Daishonin calls Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

The Buddhist statement of the unity and reciprocal influence of physical and psychological aspects of life perfectly mirrors the Jungian principle of synchronicity (and vice versa). Both are in fact based on the conviction that psyche and matter must be considered nothing other than different expressions of the identical eternal energy.

I therefore think that the Buddhist practice of chanting – which allows one to come synchronistically in contact with the vital energy of the Universe – can

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<sup>7</sup> According to Buddhism, in the human psyche nine levels of consciousness exist. The first five correspond to the senses: eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness. The remaining four are levels of mind consciousness. The sixth level of consciousness controls the perception of the outer and material world. The seventh level concerns our inner and spiritual world and guides our capacity for thought and judgement. The eighth level is the “repository” of karma (*alaya*). The ninth level of consciousness – called *Amala*, which means pure and uncontaminated – is a very deep level of unconsciousness, deeper than the one experienced in dreams. It is a state beyond time, and expresses the essence of life, the pure and inexhaustible vital energy of the Universe. *Amala* represents the source of energy for all spiritual and psychic activity. Nichiren Daishonin identifies the ninth level of consciousness with Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

significantly help a person to change his or her karma, i.e., those aspects of the personality which have been structured in ontogenetically and phylogenetically prenatal times.

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