Individuation and Enlightenment: Knowledge of the Unknown

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ABSTRACT

This article examines individuation and enlightenment in the context of alleviating or eliminating suffering. In Eastern spirituality, suffering can unequivocally be transcended by the enlightened. Such finality is not considered possible by Jung and Jungians, who generally refute the existence of “individuated” persons. Individuation remains a never-ending process, whereas enlightenment is a transcendental state achievable by developing consciousness. Moreover, for Jung and Jungians the unconscious and the “self” cannot be fully known and a sense of individuality cannot be transcended. Contrastively, Eastern spirituality accepts that knowing the unconscious and the “Self” is possible, as is transcending individuality to be enlightened.
Introduction

Regarding "conventional truth"1 (where language and ego-self reference facilitate communication and understanding), this article critiques Jung and Jungian ideas, but does not do so with mystical spiritual traditions. For, in essence, the latter, with their emphasis on praxis, are beyond all dualities. Mysticism in general has the same format and aim: recognising Spirit is found within, and following ways out of illusory states brings about ego-self transcendence; this ends suffering, and true enlightenment issues in selfless service, or social action driven by compassion and wisdom (Wilber, Grace and Grit).

Critiques of mystical traditions are done by, among others, Rubin, who in "The Emperor of Enlightenment Has No Clothes" discusses problematic consequences regarding Buddhist ideals of enlightenment (see below). Such views could result from misconceptions caused by behaviour of people "representing" the tradition, though not acting according to its principles. Practitioners may lose the way, but the teaching cannot be blamed. This would imply not understanding Spirit's non-dual essence. When practised (lived and continuously experienced), the spirit of mysticism sees no sense in intellectualising and assessing positive and negative attributes; it transcends these. As Suzuki states in An Introduction to Zen Buddhism, "Life must be grasped in the midst of its flow; to stop it for examination and analysis is to kill it, leaving its cold corpse to be embraced" (132). Nevertheless, examining enlightenment's and individuation's commonalities and divergences is still possible. It would be unhelpful to simply say "go and meditate!" without some explanation of it and how other activities, including compassionate interaction with others, might be useful.

Individuation

In The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Jung defines individuation as "[...] the process by which a person becomes a psychological 'in-dividual' [...] a separate, indivisible unity or 'whole'" (275). This statement, like much of his work, by indicating wholeness, hints at potentially-mystical aspects. Jung, a man before his time, could not explicitly state certain things, fearing being "unscientific" in the eyes of peers, who influenced (and possibly stifled) him. Discussing knowledge, Jung comments in Memories, Dreams, Reflections: "as a child I felt myself to be alone, and I am still, because I know things and must hint at things which others apparently know nothing of, and for the most part do not want to know" (388). Jung, wishing to create a science and
be recognised by the scientific establishment, might have obfuscated matters, as the establishment, made up mainly of empirical positivists/reductionists, including Freud, was not receptive to a paradigm encompassing transcendental awareness. For this, spiritual disciplines serve their purpose.

**Enlightenment**

To understand what enlightenment entails, the definition of science should go beyond empirical and rational approaches, as spirituality and science are not mutually exclusive. According to Payutto, Buddhism "[...] welcomes scientific knowledge, recognising it as another branch of learning about the natural order" (*Thai Buddhism in the Buddhist World*, 13). Furthermore, Buddhadasa states that Buddhism has many scientific aspects which "[...] can be verified by clear experimental proof using introspection" (9). Taking valid data accumulation, following Kuhn’s criteria, and subsequent verification or falsification of results by consensual proof (Popper), to constitute "scientific," then spiritual traditions are indeed scientific; by following the scientific method: "They are inductive, experimental, experiential, and consensual [...] we could legitimately speak of 'spiritual sciences' just as we now speak of social [...] hermeneutical [...] psychological [...] and physical sciences (the latter being empirical, the others being phenomenological or transcendental)" (Wilber, *Eye to Eye*, 63-64).

Enlightenment in Buddhism is Nirvana, the cessation of suffering or liberation from all greed, hatred and delusion. Enlightened beings transcend the ego-self and serve all humanity. Transcendental experiences at the heart of mystical traditions can only be pointed to with paradoxical statements, since they are intellectually unqualifiable (Stace). The key is preparing the mind to realise intuitive knowledge.

**Knowledge and Belief**

Jung, though not enlightened, might have recognised an enlightened person had "reached there," as well as realising differences between knowledge and belief. In 1959, when asked in a BBC interview whether he believed in God, Jung’s response was simply “I know.” This may sound profound; however, as seen later, he was sometimes prone to inconsistencies and explicitly denied that the "higher realms" could actually be known.

Needham (1972), comparing "belief" and "knowledge" suggests "belief" is employed ambiguously in much cross-cultural ethnographic literature. Even in Western philosophy, its meaning is not clearly-defined, since belief
"[...] is the central problem in the analysis of the mind" (Russell 231). This generates complications when interpreting human behaviour in different societies, where conventional definitions of belief vary. Good states "[...] for the comparativist, the misplaced focus on beliefs as the primary dimension of religious life has led to mistranslations and misunderstandings of other religious traditions" (17).

Over the preceding 3-4 centuries, belief evolved from implying "holding dear, [...] appropriating to oneself what is recognised as true" to connoting "outright error or falsehood" (Good 16-17). Juxtaposing "belief" and "knowledge" causes misinterpretations of Buddhism, particularly karma, rebirth and nirvana, concepts influencing particular worldviews. Following Good's argument, these may be governed by knowledge, not belief, since knowledge requires "both certitude and correctness," whereas belief implies "uncertainty, error, or both." Transcendental knowledge (provable using introspection) recognises God/nirvana exists, and Jung. I believe (not provable as it was his experience), might have experienced such knowledge. Nevertheless, whether individuation leads to realisation of union with God or not is another issue.

The Path of Individuation

In "Individuation in the Age of Uncertainty," Gordon refers to "the path towards individuation" (269), while Rubin and others discuss "individuated" individuals. The latter term, states Samuels, is a post-Jungian appellation implying a state, but, actually, for Jung individuation is a process; it is never completed and remains an ideal concept. This contrasts with Moacanin's statement: "The Mahayana bodhisattva has attained the highest state of consciousness [...] He is, it seems to me, the most fully accomplished individuated person on whom God depends to illuminate his creation" (91). It also contrasts with Miyuki's (1985) comments that individuation implies "finality."

Jung did not offer a clearly defined method of progressing with individuation. Regarding alchemy, in The Psychology of the Transference, Jung states the time-sequence of the opus (and individuation) is very uncertain, so a typical sequence of stages may only be constructed very generically. This lack of commitment could again result from pressures Jung faced within the developing establishment of psychology, or reluctance to specify a method in rational terms, given the trans-rational nature of spirituality. Hence Jung rightly states: "God is above the opposites" (158), implying non-duality, where relativism and paradoxes are transcended.
For Jung, no one is ever completely individuated (Gordon, *Bridges*). Nevertheless, Samuels (1985), Colman (2000) and others discuss the goal of individuation, as if achievable. This is not surprising, as Jung himself states in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* that the "experience of individuation" is the "attainment of the self" (106). Von Franz also states it is to "the Self, to which the ego must submit to fulfill the process of individuation" (166). Freeman likewise alludes to finality: "The essence of Jung's philosophy of life: man becomes whole, integrated, calm, fertile and happy when (and only when) the process of individuation is complete" (xi).

Many references to individuation's goal exist in Jung's works. He mentions the mandala represents the goal of individuation (*Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*), which is the self; he also states "complete individuation" is the goal (Jung 99), and "[t]he goal of the individuation process is the synthesis of the self" (Jung, "Foreword" to Suzuki, 282-283). Yet when referring to "completed individuation" and the "road to individuation," Jung states: "[...] the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self" (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections* 327).

With circumambulation, can self-realisation occur? Can somewhere circumambulated be reached? A significant facet of individuation is that therapy can help in coping with and reducing anxiety. Importantly, it also involves an "objective relationship" between one individual and another, which allows the achievement of wholeness (*Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*). Hence: "Individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to one's self" (*Jung, The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* 226). This could imply transcending individuality and exercising true compassion, which essentially is enlightenment.

Frequently Jung hints at a mystical "something" greater than the individual, but is often inconsistent, possibly to stimulate surpassing rational thought to mystical contemplation. However, if so, why not say so, rather than avoid illumination. In defence, knowing the risks of "higher knowledge" getting into the hands (more aptly, the minds) of the uninitiated (*Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*), Jung might have favoured people's self-discovery through alchemical texts like the "Rosarium philosophorum." Similarly, referring to Chinese wisdom, Jung comments:

An ancient adept has said: "if the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way" [...] [This] stands in contrast to our belief in the "right" method irrespective of the man who applies it. In reality, everything depends on the man and little or nothing on the method. (*Psychology and the East*, 9)
Some writers indeed equate individuation to enlightenment. For Odajnyk (1998), Zen Buddhism and Jungian psychology share the same goal: transcendence of human suffering, although, according to Jung, suffering cannot be ended (Moacanin). For Odajnyk individuation comprises two phases: 1.) an individual's separation from the originally-given matrix (involving narcissism, identity, relationships, etc.), 2.) movement towards integration and wholeness, leading to "completed individuation," or the "self-actualisation" of Maslow. "Self-realisation" could be a more appropriate term. In fact, Jung states in "The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche" that individuation can be translated as "self-realisation." Nevertheless, that literally implies the self is "realised"/"lived," with individuality transcended and the mystical endeavour completed. Thus Ramana (2004) talks of "self-realisation" when referring to liberated/enlightened beings. This is not individuation – which in Jungian terms means integrating the conscious and unconscious, with the ego still there – as transcendence of the ego is necessary.

Individuation remains incomplete vis-à-vis Buddhism's transformational scheme that "begins with the ordinary, is transposed into the Bodhisattva, and ends with the Buddha" (Okano 233). Hence, the Jung-Ihisamatsu dialogue (see below) "gives the impression that the two men were arguing on different planes" (233). Turning to enlightenment, inconsistencies seem less glaring, for enlightened ones exist and enlightenment is a state, albeit transcendent.

**Paths to Enlightenment**

In Buddhism, wisdom is developed following the Middle Way (Eightfold Path), with "[...] a clearly defined step-like path of meditation practice with different techniques to suit the different propensities of individuals [...] through various levels of concentration one can progress in a graded logical fashion on the path to enlightenment" (Yeshe 28).

Mediation is often misunderstood; reality is directly encountered rather than evaded. Rahula (1998) explains that the word for meditation, bhāvanā, means "mental development" by cleansing the mind of disturbances/impurities, including hatred, lust and doubts. He adds that cultivating qualities including awareness, tranquility and confidence leads to the highest wisdom and "seeing the nature of things as they are" (68) (impermanent and subject to suffering when clung to), thus realizing Nirvana, Ultimate Truth. At the "apex" of meditation practice, the realisation of all non-dual traditions, there is purely ever-present witnessing awareness, with differentiation
between "Seer" ("Witness") and "object seen." Meditation is only a means to a transcendental end; the realisation developed can be integrated into all aspects of life.

Consciousness is developed to higher stages, from the physical and sensorimotor, through forms of operational thinking, to "super-consciousness," as in Hindu and Buddhist psychological systems. These higher stages include the region of archetypal patterns, the transcendental ground of all previous stages and, ultimately, enlightenment, which, though words may allude to it, is indescribable. "This is total and utter transcendence and release into Formless Consciousness [...] There is here no self, no God [... ] no subjects, and no thingness, apart from or other than Consciousness as Such" (Wilber, Eye to Eye, 96).

**Jung, Ego and the Ultimate Realm**

Jung might not have negated the Ultimate Realm's existence; however, he would have been unable to conceive of the "ego's" position, for him "an entity at the centre of consciousness" (Samuels 56). Here confusion arises. In *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Jung refers, apparently disapprovingly, to the term "super-conscious," as it implies "visions of such an impressive character" come from a psychic sphere "above" consciousness, rather than originating in the "unconscious psyche" (282). Jung mentions in Indian philosophy the superconscious psyche is named "higher consciousness," while it is the "unconscious" in the West (282-283). He adds that mystical experiences "suggest the existence of consciousness in the unconscious" (282-283), but asserts no consciousness can exist without a subject, an ego to which contents are related. This implies separation: the ego remaining in a subject-object relationship with other phenomena, rather than transcending such dualities, as in enlightenment. For Jung, "(...) we cannot imagine a consciousness without an ego. There can be no consciousness when there is no one to say: 'I am conscious'" (282-283).

This declaration is based on the belief that "(...) is unprofitable to speculate about things we cannot know. I therefore refrain from making assertions that go beyond the bounds of science" (282-283). Here Jung refers to empirical science, or at best rational science ("conventional truth"), but not transcendental science ("ultimate truth"). Maybe he knew of the latter, but wished not to talk of it. In *Psychology and the East*, however he did criticise the limitations of science and hint at something greater:
Science [...] obscures our insight only when it claims that the understanding it conveys is the only kind there is. The East teaches us another, broader, more profound, and higher understanding – understanding through life. We know this only by hearsay, as a shadowy sentiment expressing a vague religiosity, and we are fond of putting "Oriental wisdom" in quotation marks and banishing it to the dim region of faith and superstition. But this is wholly to misunderstand the realism of the East [...] This assertion may seem bold, perhaps, and is likely to cause a good deal of head-shaking.

(8-9)

Jung was outspoken, although little more than by stating that "higher understanding" exists, as opposed to illuminating the dim regions and dispelling the shadows, something enlightenment does. This is despite Jung's claim that he knew God. Maybe he had numinous experiences, albeit while maintaining ego-consciousness. Possibly there was sometimes no subject-object separation and a "self-experience." Analytical literature employs this term in two contradictory ways: 1.) the self remains unknown (discussed below), 2.) people get glimpses of the self in numinous terms of a brief dissolution of the subject-object dualism before ego-consciousness returns. Hence the distinction between the "personal" archetypal experience and the "collective"/"universal" one, covered by rational science and "higher" science respectively. Perhaps Jung lacked the explanatory framework to differentiate between different types of science and knowledge.

God's existence is proved not using empirical, logical or rational scientific truths (as philosophers might) and committing "category errors," but by using contemplation, rather than reason, and a direct, rather than a mediate, method. Mystics the world over realise the same experience: "[A]ny genuine discipline that conscientiously and openly displays and contains transcendental (contemplative) injunctions, apprehensions and communal confirmations [...]" prove God's existence (Wilber, Eye to Eye, 76). Scientific (in noumenological terms) proof or knowledge of God comes by developing "inner vision" to realise Spirit; hence "[...] a trained contemplative eye can prove the existence of God with exactly the same certainty and the same public nature [since transmission from teacher to student can occur] as the eye of flesh can prove the existence of rocks" (35).

The Self, Individuation and Knowledge

Jung was strongly influenced by Eastern mysticism. His concept of the "self" was taken from the Hindu notion of "Self," rather than its customary usage in Western psychology. For Jung, the "self" is comparable to "Atman" and is
“a psychic totality and at the same time a centre, neither of which coincides with the ego, but includes it, just as a larger circle encloses a smaller one” (The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 142). Elsewhere Jung calls the self the central archetype, the totality of the personality; it embraces the conscious as well as the unconscious psyche, being also our life’s goal (Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections).

Here the self relates to individuation, “attainment of the self” (Jung, “Foreword” to Suzuki, 106). Furthermore, the self is the “wholeness that transcends consciousness” (164). From these comments individuation appears much like enlightenment, with consciousness transcended and the self attained. But is it the same self? Enlightenment involves attainment, but of the “Self” (capital “S”); this is the one Consciousness, eternal, indivisible and non-dual. It is the witness of the mind and other factors in the human personality. Neither being nor non-being in the empirical sense, it is a homogeneous mass of bliss, the innermost reality” (Ramana, Ramana, Shantakara and the Forty Verses, 71).

Some contemporary Jungians indeed speak of the Self (big S), but, remaining unknown to them, as to Jung. I stick to the term self (small s) to differentiate with enlightenment’s Self, which can be known and realised. Jungian writings describe the self in different ways, and differentiating these might be helpful. This is beyond the scope of this article. I do not wish to dichotomise enlightenment’s Self as “spiritual” and the Jungian self as a profane facet of human individuality. This would not do the latter justice.

In some respects the self and the Self might be similar, because Jung may have contemplated numinous experiences. The striking difference relates to knowledge, the fundamental criterion here. Simply said, for Jung and Jungians the self cannot be known; whereas the Self can, not conventionally (rationally), but using the contemplative eye discussed above. Among others, Young-Eisendrath and Salman reinforce Jung’s comments that the unknowable (including the self) cannot be known. In “A Well-lived Life,” Rubin adds that areas of ourselves (and the interpersonal and external world) will always remain “opaque and undiscovered.” He also states: “The spiritual ideal of attaining perfect and complete knowledge of ourselves is, as Jung recognized, a romantic wish that has seduced spiritual seekers” (394).

The problem here is again of separation into subject-object domains, such as creator (God) and created (human), or that sought/grasped and the seeker/gasper. In Buddhism such duality or bifurcation causes suffering. It also renders God an ontological “other,” divorced from humanity and other creation. This contrasts with the Self, where no such differentiation exists. Here Self-realization equates to Nirvana, where, in Zen terms, the True Self is attained (Abe).
Nisargadatta, arguably Self-realised/enlightened, comments: 'As long as you are outside my state, you will have Creators, Preservers and Destroyers, but once with me you will know the Self only and see yourself in all" (179). This could accord to transpersonal functions of the self, of which Jung talks, acting as a primary source of empathy, but if, like individuation, the self involves a process (in moving towards wholeness) rather than a state (Colman, Salman, Samuels) there is still duality.

The Self, like enlightenment, is a (transcendental) state, and knowledge is the key. Regarding the method of practice, Ramana comments:

As the Self of a person who tries to attain self-realization is not different from him and as there is nothing other than or superior to him to be attained [...] the seeker of Liberation realizes, without doubts or misconceptions, his real nature by distinguishing the eternal from the transient, and never swerves from his natural state. This is known as the practice of knowledge. This is the inquiry leading to self-realization. (The Spiritual Teachings of Ramana Maharishi, 19)

Consciousness, Unconsciousness and What is Known

A fundamental difference between the Self and enlightenment, and the self and individuation is the extent the unconscious can be known. Heisig states "Jung's idea of an individuated Self is an integration of conscious and unconscious forces achieved in ego-consciousness" (52). Since for Jung individuated beings do not exist, his words on the matter deserve attention.

For Jung, the process of individuation is the becoming of the self, involving the mutual integration of consciousness and unconsciousness. Therefore: "The real meaning of coniunctio is that it brings to birth something that is one and united" (The Psychology of Transference, 86). This, Jung states, is the union of opposites, integration of the shadow, unconsciousness and consciousness. Likewise, the transcendent function brings about synthesis, with two elements transcended, such as Hegelian notions of thesis and antithesis (86).

How this is achieved is not stated in an explicit, step-by-step manner comparable to Buddhism's path, though it may be the essence of the analytic process. Integrating the conscious and unconscious could imply harmonising them, thus a lack of conflict, yet the unconscious remains unknown. For Jung "the union of opposites on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational thing [...] it is a process of psychic development that expresses itself in symbols." (Psychology and the East, 23) Regarding the Indian idea of Atman, Jung states this has 'personal and cosmic modes of being [that] form an exact parallel to
the psychological idea of the self" (103). However, he adds that it manifests paradoxical nature and can only be expressed by means of symbols, which appear in dreams and spontaneous fantasies and find visual expressions in mandalas (103). What about consciousness? Can the paradoxical nature not be experienced in a conscious state, such as enlightenment? Rubin states: “For an individual to be enlightened they would have to be certain that they were completely awake without trace of unconsciousness or delusion.” (“The Emperor of Enlightenment May Have No Clothes,” 207) Alternatively, enlightenment can be described as “no unconsciousness” (Lobsang Raphay, qtd. in Rubin 201).

Jung comments favourably that in Chinese “Tao” implies “to go consciously, or the conscious way” (Psychology and the East, 23), but goes on to say he has no further investigating the conscious path. While Jung probably had an idea of the all-encompassing nature of what he called the self, he is unlikely to have known of the meditative path that illuminates the unconscious. This remained an irreconcilable matter with his friend Jean Gebser, who, recognising consciousness’ witnessing function according to Eastern traditions, reiterates previous comments: “There is no so-called Unconscious. There are only various modalities or intensities of consciousness […]” (Gebser’s original italics, qtd. in Feuerstein 39). The matter is definitional and whether one is aware/mindful or not. Hence Yeshe proposes in Becoming Your Own Therapist, we do almost everything unconsciously, eating, drinking, talking, unaware of our behaviour and mental attitudes. He concludes the human mind is mostly unconscious, ignorant.

Buddhism says little of the unconscious, though in Tibetan Buddhism “latent states of consciousness” are discussed and the Abhidhamma Pitaka talks of the “foundation consciousness.” This is similar to the unconscious in Western terms, being inaccessible to normal consciousness. Varela states the difference is, whereas the unconscious cannot be accessed by waking consciousness (this only being possible through dreams, hypnosis and the like), what is stored in the foundation consciousness can become conscious.

The foundation consciousness forms a continuum from “beginningless time,” transmigrating through successive lifetimes; it is accessible through direct introspection during meditation (Varela). However, the Dalai Lama states that ideas about the foundation consciousness exist in conventional terms, where there is a sense of ego-self, not substantially, since no ego-self exists to experience them (Varela).

Suzuki (1998) offers another perspective on the consciousness-unconsciousness relationship by arguing that Zen’s doctrine of “no mind” (no sense of separate ego-selfhood) is “the unconscious,” as it is “no consciousness”;
this is "fundamental." Nevertheless, it is unlike the unconscious of Western psychology, which considers unconsciousness underlying consciousness as a submerged mass of psychological factors (Suzuki). Defining the unconscious of "no mind" baffles psychologists precisely because it is the unconscious (Suzuki). If not knowable, as Jung and Jungians argue, confusion naturally arises. The "no mind" unconscious, though, simply means being detached, untainted by "objective conditions in one's own consciousness" (Suzuki, "The Zen Doctrine of No Mind," 31). Getting there, in Buddhism, involves logical and psychological leaps:

The logical leap is that the ordinary process of reasoning stops short, and what has been considered irrational is perceived to be perfectly natural, while the psychological leap is that the borders of [ordinary] consciousness are overstepped and one is plunged into the Unconscious which is not, after all, unconscious. This process is discrete, abrupt and altogether beyond calculation; this is "Seeing into one's Self-nature." (28)

Sustained development of consciousness, through meditation, exposes the various layers/levels/grounds of "the unconscious"; awareness of them, including confronting one's shadow, ultimately allows direct experience/knowledge of the Self (Wilber, Eye to Eye). Contrastively, Gordon states: "Jung realised that it is impossible to realise the self directly" (Bridges, 143); if it were said to occur, Jung would call it "inflation of the ego," and total inflation would imply psychosis or delusion. Pathologising such experiences confuses an important distinction. The subject-object breakdown, which threatens an individual's security base or that which allows subjective experience of "selfhood" relative to "other" objects, could indeed be termed "psychosis" in psychoanalysis and "enlightenment" in Buddhism. The fundamental:

[...] issue becomes whether the subject-object distinction can break down in different ways: why the mystic can swim in the same sea that drowns the psychotic.

In sum, the Buddhist critique of ego-self implies that anxiety is essential to the ego because it is the ego's response to its own groundlessness, something more immediately threatening than fear of death in the future. (Loy 159)

Anxiety about "groundlessness" may appear uncommon precisely because it is so well repressed. Religion traditionally consoled people, by reassuring that anxiety would be put to rest, or that groundlessness would be grounded
in God/Nirvana (Loy). The ego-self, with its narcissistic-individualistic tendencies must be transcended. Witnessing events in meditation allows “stepping back” to generate greater mindfulness. However, one must surpass this, as “the Witness in you is the highest pointer toward Spirit and the last barrier to Spirit (Wilber, Grace and Grit, 102). The Witness eventually has to dissolve/die to identify with Spirit, as “(e)ach death at a lower level is a rebirth on a higher level, until the ultimate rebirth, liberation, or enlightenment” (102).

**The Polemic of Suffering**

Curiously enough, Jung recognised that the essence of Buddhism is deliverance from suffering by means of maximum development of consciousness. He even calls the Buddha “one of the supreme helpers on the road to salvation” (Psychology and the East, 211). Nonetheless, Jung also mentions:

> tensions between the psychic pairs of opposites ease off only gradually; and, like the alchemical end-product, which always betrays its essential duality, the united personality will never quite lose the painful sense of innate discord. Complete redemption from the sufferings of this world is and must remain an illusion. (The Psychology of the Transference, 36)

Maocanin states that “in Jung’s thought the unconscious can never be totally conscious and the process of individuation is never completed, whereas to the Buddhist it is possible to know all of the unknowable and become fully enlightened” (92). However, she adds “Buddha and Jung both focus on the deliverance of suffering,” not long after saying: “But unlike Buddha, Jung does not perceive the possibility of an end to suffering” (116). Moreover, she states that “identity of the personal with the universal Self [...] non-duality [...] is the total freedom and ultimate bliss, the goal of tantra, and I suggest that Jung’s entire work gradually leads to the same goal: the experience of unus mundus” (114). This is after stating that “Jung cannot conceive of the possibility of achieving total non-duality, a state of atonement” (Maocanin 95); for, in Jung’s words: “One cannot know something that is not distinct from oneself... I therefore assume that, in this point, Eastern intuition has overreached itself” (qtd. in Maocanin 95).

Rubin, critiquing Buddhism, proposes: “A deeply unconscious assumption in Buddhism is that suffering is bad [but] suffering that is worked through can deepen and enrich human life, by generating greater knowledge” (“The Emperor of Enlightenment May Have No Clothes,” 208).
It can, which explains why India, with much hardship, has produced many enlightened beings. Buddhism does not teach suffering is bad. *Dukkha* is generally translated as “suffering,” which unfortunately conveys pessimism. Literally *dukkha* means “unsustainable” and “incapable of providing perfect happiness” (Chah 35), implying everything in life and the world is characterised by impermanence, emptiness or instability (Rahula 17).

The oftencited dialogue between Zen master Shin’ichi Hisamatsu and Jung is interesting here. Abe (1998) suggests Jung seems uncertain, initially stating that psychotherapy tries to reduce suffering, though some will still remain, while negatively reacting to the possibility of emancipation of suffering, as Christ and Buddha intended. Later, though, Jung says liberation from suffering is not inconceivable, given that inner wisdom is applied; consequently he states psychotherapy’s and Buddhism’s aims are identical (Abe). This is potentially confusing, given previous comments and Jung’s words regarding Ramana Maharshi, someone he eulogises while stating his teachings are important for Westerners as well as Indians: “The identification of the Self with God [...] is a specifically Oriental realisation, as expressed in Sri Ramana’s utterances. Psychology cannot contribute further to it, except remark that it lies far beyond its scope to propose such a thing” (Jung, “Foreword” to Ramana, ix).

Jung “studiously avoided all so-called ‘holy men’” (Memories, Dreams, Reflections 305) making do with his own truth and not accepting from others what he could not attain alone. Unlike Indian spirituality, Jung does not seek freedom from opposites (evil-good), for he wishes to “persist in the state of lively contemplation of nature and of the psychic images” (306). He wishes utmost participation, not withdrawal, which is fine, because enlightened ones do this; and Jung rightly warns against the perils of succumbing to evil: “we must, therefore, not succumb to anything at all, not even to good” (361).

Ramana (2004), who discusses ever-present awareness/consciousness, including during sleep, sees no problem with transcendence of suffering, or knowing the Self. Neither does Hisamatsu; with Jung (see Abe), he argues that, as psychoanalytic therapy deals with individual cases, when one disease goes another appears in an endless cycle (Samsara). For Jung the root of all possible psychic disease is the collective unconscious, the unknown self which causes psychological hindrances; contrastively, Zen aims at “cutting away the root of human consciousness and realising No-self (Abe).

Later, Jung accepts freedom from the collective unconscious is possible, but it is a realm that can never be completely known; for Jung the mind’s depth is *objectively* viewed from the side of the conscious “T” as the unknown collective unconscious (Abe). In Zen, such an objective approach is
overcome, the practitioner enters the mind's depth and breaks through it by becoming identical with it; hence the denial of human consciousness, including the collective unconscious Jung deals with (Abe). Effectively the Zen practitioner overcomes the unknown by becoming one with it, achieving No-mind, or the Original Mind realised beyond the Jungian framework of mind (Abe). The problem of suffering does not arise, hence liberation from the Buddhist chain of Dependent Origination (Patticasamuppāda) where cycles of ignorance, rebirth and suffering continue incessantly. Contact between sense organs ("internal") and sense objects ("external"), which gives rise to sense-consciousness, is vital. For if ignorance arises, it causes suffering; but if, instead, mindfulness and wisdom prevail, wise feelings and then wise want (chanda) arise, without any ignorance. Wise want does not cause clinging/attachment; consequently there is no becoming and birth of a sense of individual self, and no suffering.

End of the Way

Rubin argues: "The emptied inner world of the Enlightenment experience sounds more barren and impoverished than expansive and liberating. Renouncing self and others leads not to freedom, but to self-alienation" ("The Emperor of Enlightenment May Have No Clothes," 210). True enlightenment is not self alienation; it issues in selfless service. There remains the matter of fitting individuality into the aforementioned situation, which troubles critics of Eastern spirituality. The (transcendental) fact that a sense of a permanent, separate ego-self is an illusion does not imply no individuality. In empirical-rational conceptual terms this cannot be grasped. How this paradox can be lived depends on praxis. Lama Govinda aptly describes essential oneness with the universe

in which differentiation and uniqueness of function are as important as that ultimate or basic unity.

Individuality and universality are not mutually exclusive values, but two sides of the same reality, compensating, fulfilling, and complementing each other. This experience does not dissolve the mind into an amorphous All, but rather brings the realization that the individual itself contains the totality focalized in its very core. (qtd. in Moacanin 85)

As for maintaining consciousness in an enlightened state, the issue of what is and is not known is revisited. Suzuki (1991), considered enlightened by many and eulogised by Jung ("Foreword" to Suzuki), states that
designating unknown recesses in our minds as “sub-conscious” or “supra-conscious” is incorrect, for there is no “beyond,” “underneath” or “upon” in our consciousness. He adds:

The mind is one indivisible whole and cannot be torn into pieces [...] the Zen psychologist sometimes points to the presence of some inaccessible region in our minds. Though in actuality there is no such region apart from our everyday consciousness [...] When the koan breaks down all the hindrances to the ultimate truth, we realise that there are, after all, no such things as “hidden recesses of mind” or even the truth of Zen appearing all the time so mysterious. (Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, 108)

Jung’s uncertainty when considering certain transcendental truths is acceptable, given his experiences; projecting these to others, including the Buddha, is unhelpful. For instance, he states: “Have I lived in the past as a specific personality [...]? I do not know. Buddha left the question open, and I like to assume that he himself did not know with certainty.” (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 349) I disagree, though accept that fully understanding the universal natural law of cause-and-effect (*Dhammaniyāma*) is unnecessary, as through simplicity one can still transcend suffering. Such understanding exceeds normal comprehension. The Buddha taught that “insisting on thinking about such things could make one go crazy” (Payutto, *Good, Evil and Beyond*, 47). Existence of these issues is not negated; it just means that, for the uninitiated, it is not worth pondering over using rational thought, nor will blind faith resolve matters. Yeshe comments:

they don’t teach you continuity of consciousness in school; you don’t study the nature of the mind [...] in college. But if you [...] investigate your mind through meditation [...] you will recognise the continuity of your own consciousness. (16)

**Concluding Comments**

Jung’s contribution to psychology and resolving individual-collective problems is immense. Nevertheless, inconsistencies in his opus and writings of Jungians remain. The situation can stimulate discussion and further research into overcoming suffering, although higher reaches of consciousness remain labelled “unknown.” Jung states: “The unconscious can be reached and expressed only by symbols [thus] the process of individuation can never do without the symbol” (*Psychology and the East*, 30) The latter comment might be so, not the former. Jung adds that symbols are the unconscious’s
primitive exponent, but also correspond to the conscious mind’s highest intuitions; well, those known to him. In meditation one can proceed to levels beyond the “subtle realm,” where symbols and “various high-archetypal illuminations and intuitions occur,” to the “causal realm” and ultimately to unified “fundamental ground,” the Self (Wilber, *Eye to Eye* 115-122).

Enlightenment’s aim is transcendence of suffering, and selfless service. Individuation aims to reduce suffering, more explicitly, to harmonise unconsciousness and consciousness and approach wholeness. The former is a completed (transcendental) state, the latter a process that cannot be completed. Despite differences, an individuating person might be not far off enlightenment, by largely having reduced narcissism and attained equanimity. As for what Jung would say about enlightened beings, two possibilities exist: 1.) they have transcended suffering (ultimately accepted possible by Jung in dialogue with Hisamatsu), 2.) this is not possible (as Jung and Jungians state repeatedly). Potentially disturbing is that the next step would be saying they are either deluded thinking that they have transcended suffering (or achieved union with God) or they are outright psychotic.

The problem for Jung is the ego must always be present when there is consciousness, and the subject-object duality cannot be transcended. There is also the issue of unconsciousness, covered so much by Jung and Jungians. This is given great significance and considered largely inaccessible (at least through conscious means) and unknowable. In Eastern spirituality, the unconscious is not considered so important, nor is contemplation of dreams considered significant for progressing spiritually. Emphasis is on developing consciousness, expanding awareness and getting to know the unknown.

**Notes**

1. Attachment to “conventional truth” causes confusion as opinions differ; yet with “ultimate truth,” “…there is no confusion, because the principle naturally functions by itself” (Payutto, *Good, Evil and Beyond*, 93).

2. Though potentially problematic from a Jungian perspective, the term “ego-self” is used in a Buddhist context (Pali: *ata*), to describe individuality/selfhood felt as distinct from other phenomena and causing a sense of “I,” “me” and “mine.” In Eastern spirituality, ego-self identification is the source of all suffering (e.g. Budhidasa; Ramana).

3. “Empirical” here indicates the philosophical approach whereby detection is through the five senses, hence excluding the realm of phenomenology or beyond.
4. Unlike in Buddhism, the idea of the ego as an obstacle, and its transcendence, are not present in analytical psychology. In Buddhism to end suffering the ego (ego-self) or the ‘observer,’ conscious of experiences, does not disappear; there is simply no attachment to these. Possibly this quality is present in the ‘ego-Self’ reunion described by Edinger (1960); however, in Jungian writings the point is generally not enunciated or lucidly explained.

5. This implies that one of the three realms of body, mind and spirit “is made to wholly substitute for another realm […] things (flesh) are confused with thoughts (mind) are confused with transcendentals insights (contemplation) (thus) facts try to replace principles and principles try to replace God” (Wilber, Eye to Eye, 9).

6. Part three of the Pali Canon (Tipitaka).

7. Western psychology could include waking manifestations of the unconscious, e.g. Freudian slips or transference relationships in analysis. Of these, people might become aware, as with projections. Nevertheless, the process is arguably less comprehensive or widely-practised than that of generating awareness of unconscious contents through meditation.

References


