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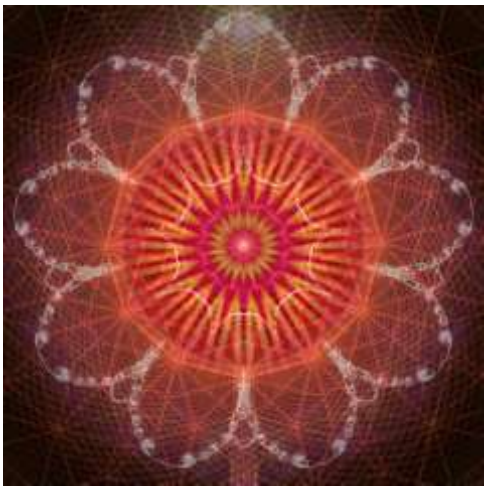

The Esoteric Quarterly

An independent publication dedicated to the trans-disciplinary investigation of the esoteric spiritual tradition.

Esoteric philosophy and its applications to individual and group service and the expansion of human consciousness.

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The Esoteric Quarterly

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The Esoteric Quarterly

Contents

Volume 10, Number 4. Winter 2015

The mission of the *Esoteric Quarterly* is to provide a forum for the exploration of esoteric philosophy and its applications. Full-length articles and student papers are solicited pertaining to both eastern and western esoteric traditions. We also encourage feedback from readers. Comments of general interest will be published as Letters to the Editor. All communications should be sent to: editor@esotericquarterly.com.

Editorial

The Afterlife, the Apocalypse and Musical Esotericism

The great religions are in accord in their beliefs about the immortality of the Soul and its posthumous journey into the afterlife. Eschatological concerns about death and dying, the end of ordinary reality and safe passage to a nether world played an especially important role in Egypt, Tibet and ancient Greece and resulted in various manuals such as the Egyptian and Tibetan Books of the Dead, or in the case of the Orphic Mysteries, the Gold-leaf instructions for dealing with the rulers of the underworld. Christianity is also concerned with the theme of death and the afterlife as evidenced by *Apocalypse of St. John.* However, these texts have been frequently misunderstood due to the general disregard given to the mystical and esoteric symbolism they contain, omissions which the first three articles in this issue seek to redress.

Our first article in this issue is part of a series by Iván Kovács exploring several early 20th century Tibetologists. The initial article, which appeared in the Winter 2013 issue, surveyed the life and works of the French Tibetologist, Alexandria David-Neel. This work examines the life and works of W. Y. Evans-Wentz, the American anthropologist and pioneer in the study of Tibetan Buddhism and its transmission to the West. The article begins by touching on Evans-Wentz's scholarship, his influences and his travels. This is followed by a brief summary of his Tibetan tetralogy and then a more in-depth discussion of the first of these four books, the famous Tibetan death text, the Bardo Tö-dröl, which Evans-Wentz christened, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead.* The article also includes a discussion of the book's commentaries and forewords by such notable figures as C. G. Jung and Lama Anagarika Govinda highlighting the fact that the Bardo Tö-dröl was much more than a funerary text.

The second article also examines systems of belief regarding death and the afterlife. The article, *Journey of the Soul in the Afterlife*, by Aaron French, compares ancient Egyptian visions for living and dying with the Greek Mystery Cults. French begins his investigation with one of the most famous funerary texts, the so called Egyptian Book of the Dead, which consists of a group of mortuary spells, rituals, prayers and hymns designed to help both the living and the dead confront, prepare and pass through the dangers of the underworld to attain an afterlife of immortality and bliss. The article also examines the initiatory practices and afterlife conceptions of the ancient Greek Orphic Cults and Dionysian Mysteries. Although the ancient Egyptian and Greek funerary customs are usually viewed as being significantly different, this comparison uncovers the marked parallels and motives behind the various beliefs and practices they both share.

Our next article, from Dorje Jinpa, provides an alternative interpretation of one of the least understood and most controversial books in the Christian Bible—*The Apocalypse of St. John*. The article draws upon the new Terra Lucida teachings and the writings of both the Tibetan Master Djwhal Khul and Rudolf Steiner to demonstrate that *John's* secret and sacred vision concerns a great event in which the physical substance of the Earth together with all its beings will be alchemicalized into a heavenly body or "Body of Light." Jinpa's decoding of the archetypal images and symbolism in the *Apocalypse* gives credence to an entirely different futurist view of a new evolutionary impulse resulting in the initiation and the spiritualization of the world.

The last article in this issue examines the life and works of Richard Wagner, one of the most

controversial and misunderstood figures of the nineteenth century. The article explores the psychological, political, philosophical and sociological foundations of Wagner's creative genius in both his written works and his music dramas along with his interest in myth and metahistorical processes. The composer's anti-Semitism and his attitude toward the Jews are also discussed. Although the article touches upon the complex and enigmatic world of allegory and symbolism embedded in his operas, its primary focus is the astonishing range of esoteric and spiritual ideas which both inform and emanate from the temple of his music. More importantly, the article shows that Wagner's greatest concern was humanity's innermost soul and the creation of an all-embracing form of art that would transform its perilous social, spiritual and political state.

In addition to the featured articles, this issue includes two book reviews. They are: *The Path to Higher States of Consciousness: A Collection of Esoteric Essays*, by Iván Kovács, and *Nicholas & Helena Roerich: The Spiritual Journey of Two Great Artists and Peace-makers*, by Ruth A. Drayer.

We also include several inspirational poems. The "Poems of the Quarter" offered in this issue are by Nirmala, a spiritual teacher and poet in the Advaita Vedantic tradition, whose works also appeared in the Fall 2011 edition of this journal. The poems featured here are from a collection of works titled *Gifts with No Giver: A Love Affair with Truth*.

Finally, we draw your attention to our "Pictures of the Quarter" featuring the paintings of Charmion von Wiegand (1896-1983), which were generously contributed by the Michael Rosenfeld Gallery in New York. Von Wiegand, an American journalist, painter and art critic, drew inspiration for these paintings from eastern philosophies, especially Tibetan Buddhism, Chinese astrology, tantric yoga, and Theosophy. According to Dr. Jennifer Newton Hersh, "Von Wiegand's mature works reflect her core beliefs: the universe is a single living substance; life is the expression of a dialectic process based on opposites; the goal of living is to achieve oneness; and reality is reached by progressing through stages toward higher states of consciousness." For more information on Von Wiegland's abstract mandalas we encourage you to visit: www.michaelrosenfeld.com.

Donna M. Brown
Editor-in-Chief

Publication Policies

Articles are selected for publication in the *Esoteric Quarterly* because we believe they represent a sincere search for truth, support the service mission to which we aspire, and/or contribute to the expansion of human consciousness.

Publication of an article does not necessarily imply that the Editorial Board agrees with the views expressed. Nor do we have the means to verify all facts stated in published articles.

We encourage critical thinking and analysis from a wide range of perspectives and traditions. We discourage dogmatism or any view that characterizes any tradition as having greater truth than a competing system.

Neither will we allow our journal to be used as a platform for attacks on individuals, groups, institutions, or nations. This policy applies to articles and features as well as to letters to the editor. In turn, we understand that the author of an article may not necessarily agree with the views, attitudes, or values expressed by a referenced source. Indeed, serious scholarship sometimes requires reference to work that an author finds abhorrent. We will not reject an article for publication simply on the grounds that it contains a reference to an objectionable source.

An issue of concern in all online journals is potential volatility of content. Conceivably, articles could be modified after the publication date because authors changed their minds about what had been written. Accordingly, we wish to make our policy clear: We reserve the right to correct minor typographical errors, but we will not make any substantive alteration to an article after it "goes to press."

We also want to acknowledge that as the original sponsor of the *Esoteric Quarterly*, the *School for Esoteric Studies* retains the copyright of the material in volumes 1-8.

Poems of the Quarter by Nirmala

A selection of poems from:
"Gifts with No Giver"

where is absence of desire
once I dreamed there would only be bliss
now I am in awe of the ordinary
now I am content with longing or no longing
desires do not disturb the source of all desire
life and death carry on as they always have
and always will
only the dreamer is gone
behind the flow of imagination
beyond any effort to be still
dancing in the ebb and flow of attention
more present than the breath
I find the origins of my illusions
only the dreamer is gone
the dream never ends

why fear this moment
when no thoughts come
at last I lie naked
in the arms of experience
why fear this moment
when no words come
at last I find rest
in the lap of silence
why fear this moment
when love finds itself alone
at last I am embraced
by infinity itself
why fear this moment
when judgment falls away
at last my defenses
fail to keep intimacy at bay
why fear this moment
when hope is lost
at last my foolish dreams
are surrendered to perfection

Pictures of the Quarter by Charmion von Wiegand (1896-1983)

Charmion von Wiegand
The Diamond Path, 1966-1967
1966-67, gouache on paper, 28 1/4" x 21 1/4", signed and dated
Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY

Charmion von Wiegand (1896-1983)
Vajrayana, 1969
oil on canvas
48" x 36", signed and dated.
Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY'

Charmion von Wiegand (1896-1983)
On the right, *Invocation to The Adi-Buddha, 1968-70*
oil on canvas, 50" x 27", signed and dated.

On the left, *Offering of the Universe, 1964*
oil on canvas, 72" x 28", signed and dated.
All paintings courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery LLC, New York, NY.

Quotes of the Quarter

The importance of the Tibetan tradition for our time, and for the spiritual development of humanity, lies in the fact that Tibet is the last living link that connects us with the civilizations of the distant past. The mystery-cults of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Greece, of Incas and Mayas, have perished with the destruction of their civilizations and are forever lost to our knowledge except for some scanty fragments.

The old civilizations of India and China, though well preserved in their ancient art and literature, and still glowing here and there under the ashes of modern thought, are buried and penetrated by so many strata of different cultural influences, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the various elements and to recognize their original nature.

Lama Anagarika Govinda, *The Foundations of Tibetan Buddhism* (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1969), 13.

The Tibetan Book for the Dead is a book written especially for benighted and bewildered souls. It acknowledges that enlightenment is difficult, and that it takes many repetitions of the key message for there to be any significant spiritual effect. It repeats its message that we, and only we, are the source of our desires, our interpretations, our evaluations, our pleasures, and our fears, and that we can render such sources of suffering ineffectual, if we were only to interpret the apparent seriousness and significance of the world as the play of our own creation. In this respect, *The Tibetan Book for the Dead* is a book of practical wisdom comparable to Epictetus' Handbook; it offers a set of advisories intended to reduce suffering and to guide all people, not just the select initiates, toward a rebirth of personality and composure—a rebirth to take place not within a life after clinical death but within our very present life.

Robert Wicks, The Therapeutic Psychology of "The Tibetan Book of the Dead," *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 47, No.4 (Honolulu, HI, University of Hawaii, 1997), 494.

The question of the pagan or Christian origin of the Book of Revelation is…of little importance. The intrinsic value of the book lies in its magnificent epitome of the Universal Mystery—an observation which led St. Jerome to declare that it is susceptible of seven entirely different interpretations. Untrained in the reaches of ancient thought, the modem theologian cannot possibly cope with the complexities of the Apocalypse, for to him this mystic writing is but a phantasmagoria the divine inspiration of which he is sorely tempted to question.

Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teaching of all Ages* (Los Angeles, CA: The Theosophical Research Society, Inc., 1988), 185.

On the hypothesis that the Bible, as divine revelation, contains a record of God's dealings with mankind throughout the ages, the historical element has been unduly emphasized, while books that are purely allegorical and mystical have been construed as history. For several centuries it was attempted to give the *Apocalyps*e an historical presentation; and failing this, through the lack of any record of past events that would serve this purpose, it was next interpreted as a history of the future, that is prophecy. At the present time, the *Apocalypse* is the despair of theology; the ablest scholars in the ranks of the orthodoxy frankly admit that it must be regarded as an unsolved and possibly insoluble enigma. They translate its title "Revelation," yet it reveals nothing to them. Literally "ἀποκάλυψιν" means "disrobing" or "un-veiling;" but *Isis* in her *peplum* was not more safe from profane gaze than the *Apocalypse*, nor is any book in all of literature more heavily veiled.

John M. Pryse, *The Apocalypse Unsealed* (New York, John M. Pryse, 1910), 2.

When the ancient books of the dead first came to the attention of Western scholars, they were considered to be fictitious descriptions of the posthumous journey of the soul, and as such, wishful fabrications of people who were unable to accept the grim reality of death. They were put in the same category as fairy tales- imaginary creations of human fantasy that had definite artistic beauty, but no relevance for everyday reality.

However, a deeper study of these texts revealed that they had been used as guides in the context of sacred mysteries and of spiritual practice and very likely described the experiences of the initiates and practitioners. From this new perspective, presenting the books of the dead as manuals for the dying appeared to be simply a clever disguise invented by the priests to obscure their real function and protect their deeper esoteric meaning and message from the uninitiated.

Stanislav Grof, *The Experience of Death and Dying: Psychological, Philosophical, and Spiritual Aspects*. Online at: www.stanislavgrof.com/pdf/Death%20and%20Dying.pdf.

In the mystical tradition of Egypt, the experience of death and rebirth was not necessarily bound to the time of the biological demise. The sacred temple mysteries of Isis and Osiris gave neophytes the opportunity long before old age to confront death before old age or disease made it mandatory, and to conquer it and discover their own immorality. In initiatory procedures of this kind, neophytes not only lost their fear of death, but also profoundly changes their way of being in the world. The ancient Egyptians saw such close parallels between the archetypal adventures of the sun god during his diurnal-nocturnal journey, the states associated with biological death, and the experiences of neophytes in the sacred mysteries, that they considered them effectively equivalent.

Stanislav Grof, *Books of the Dead: Manuals for Living and Dying* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1994), 11.

We see through Wagner's art, a glimpse of this world as it is and are released from our blinkered human-centric viewpoint even for a fleeting moment, where the world appears as one undifferentiated whole, where there is no distinction between the entity doing the thinking and the things being thought about, where philosophy, music, voice, stage performance and set meld into an indescribable Whole, greater than the sum of its parts, taking us out of and beyond ourselves, obliterating the distinction between subject and object and conveying something of the Ultimate to us.

Kenneth Hutton, *Schopenhauer*, Wagner Society of the United Kingdom, August 2006, 10.

The musician is controlled, as it where, by an urgent impulse to impart the vision of his inmost dreams…Only from an awkward side of consciousness can the intellect derive its ability to seize the Character of things… We are conscious of the existence of a second world, perceptible only through the ear, manifesting itself through sound… It is this inner life through which we are directly allied with the whole of Nature and these are brought into relation with the Essence of things that eludes the forms of outer knowledge, time and space… Music draws us at once from any concern with the relation of things outside us and—as pure form set free from Matter—shuts us off from the outside world as it were, to let us gaze into the inmost Essence of ourselves and of all things…

We are given an image almost as timeless as it is spaceless, an altogether spiritual revelation; and the reason why it moves us so invisibly is that, more plainly than all other things, it brings to our consciousness the inner most Essence of Religion free from all dogmatic fictions.

Richard Wagner, *Beethoven*, 1870, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, trans. by William Ashton Ellis (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truener and Co., Inc., 1896), 68-79.

The Tibetan Tetralogy of W. Y. Evans-Wentz: A Retrospective Assessment - Part I

Iván Kovács

 [1]

The Dharma-Kaya *of thine own mind thou shalt see; and seeing That, thou shalt have seen the All – The Vision Infinite, the Round of Death and Birth and the State of Freedom.*
Milarepa, *Jetsun-Khabum*[2]

Abstract

This article is part of a series of articles dealing with four early 20th century Tibetologists. The first article of the series dealt with the life and work of the French Tibetologist, Alexandra David-Néel, and was published in the Winter 2014 issue of the Esoteric Quarterly. The present article takes a closer look at the life and work of the American Tibetologist, W. Y. Evans-Wentz. It begins with his biography, which mainly deals with his travels and the circumstances of his scholarship and writing. This is followed by a short summary of his Tibetan tetralogy. Then each of his four books is discussed in greater detail, including the commentaries and forewords by scholars and commentators such as Donald S. Lopez, Jr., C. G. Jung, Lama Anagarika Govinda, Sir John Woodroffe, and W. Y. Evans-Wentz's own comments. When appropriate, excerpts from the texts of the translations are themselves sampled and discussed, and often comparisons and parallels drawn between various schools of thinking, so that the texts are thereby more colorfully elucidated. The conclusion briefly discusses the merits and sincerity of Evans-

About the Author

Iván Kovács is qualified as a fine artist. As a writer he has published art criticism, short stories and poems, and more recently, articles of an esoteric nature. He is a reader of the classics and modern classics, a lover of world cinema, as well as classical and contemporary music. His lifelong interest in Esotericism was rounded off with several years of intensive study with the Arcane School.

Wentz's scholarship and his importance as a pioneering Tibetologist. Due to the length of this article it was found to be more practicable to publish it in two parts, Part I concluding with the discussion of the first book of Evans-Wentz's tetralogy, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. The remaining three books and the conclusion to this article will be discussed in a forthcoming issue of the Esoteric Quarterly under Part II.

W. Y. Evans-Wentz: The Biography of an Eccentric Orientalist

In the photograph preceding the frontispiece to the Oxford University Press edition of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Walter Evans-Wentz is posing with the book's translator, Kazi Dawa Samdup, dressed in the costume of a Tibetan nobleman. This is a somewhat ostentatious way of showing his alliance to, and admiration for, Tibetan culture and its philosophical and religious traditions. In many respects, Evans-Wentz's personality remains an enigma. From what little can be deduced from the variety of fragmented biographies that have been written about him, one imagines him to be rather reserved and impersonal in his dealings with people. It appears as if no one knew him intimately enough to provide a detailed character sketch, which tends to add to the mystery of his personality. This allows for little else than access to the workings of his mind as they are revealed from his copious writings.

He was born as Walter Yeeling Wentz on February 2, 1878, in Trenton, New Jersey. He only added his mother's surname, Evans, which is of Welsh origin, to his existing surname while studying at Jesus College, Oxford.[3] He did this because it brought him closer to the British tradition that prevailed at such a typically English university as Oxford. His father's surname, Wentz, which is of German origin, was thus cleverly supplemented to achieve this. The truth is that he spent a much shorter time at Oxford than he did at Stanford University, where he received both his B. A. and M.A. However, he liked to project the image of an Oxford man by signing his books "W. Y. Evans-Wentz, M.A., D. Litt., D. Sc., Jesus College, Oxford."[4]

One of Evans-Wentz's biographers, David Guy, describes Evans-Wentz as "a dreamy, lonely youth, who liked to spend his afternoons lazing beside the Delaware River, sometimes (surprisingly, for a lifelong prude) without his clothes."[5] He goes on to say that it was on one of those afternoons that Evans-Wentz had what he described an ecstatic-like vision. He had been "haunted" with the conviction "that this was not the first time that [he] had possessed a human body, but now there came a flashing into [his] mind with such authority that [he] never thought of doubting it, a mind picture of things past and to come. [He] knew from that night [his] life was to be that of a world pilgrim, wandering from country to country, over seas, across continents and mountains, through deserts to the end of the earth, seeking, seeking for [he] knew not what."[6]

Regarding Evans-Wentz's religious upbringing, biographer David Guy writes that he was raised a Baptist.[7] But another source, a brief biographical history written by Thomas V. Peterson and William A. Clebsch, compiled from the Evans-Wentz Papers of Stanford University, states that Evans-Wentz had been raised a Unitarian in the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson.[8] Regardless of which version is correct, David Guy goes on to say that as Evans-Wentz grew older, the family began to embrace the ideas of the spiritualists and freethinkers, and Evans-Wentz developed a particular interest in the occult.[9] He was still a teenager when he read Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine* and thereby became interested in the teachings of Theosophy.[10]

Having developed an interest in theosophical literature early in his life, it was little wonder that Evans-Wentz found his way to the American Section of the Theosophical Society, which had its headquarters in Point Loma, California. This happened at the turn of the century when he became a member, and made the acquaintance of Katherine Tingley, who headed the Society. Tingley encouraged Evans-Wentz to enroll at Stanford University, where

he had the privilege to study with William James and William Butler Yeats.[11] When Evans-Wentz made their acquaintance, both James and Yeats were authorities in their own right. James was occupied at the time with his Gifford Lectures, which would later be published in book form as *The Varieties of Religious Experience*,[12]and Yeats was an established Irish poet who in 1903 had become President of the Irish National Theatre Society and was making his first American lecture tour.[13]

Evans-Wentz appeared to be cut out for an academic career. At Stanford, he first obtained his B.A. majoring in English and then did his M.A. under William James, from whom he developed an interest in the study of religious experience and the philosophical idea of a panpsychic reality that permeates all of human existence. After he finished his studies at Stanford, Evans-Wentz went to Europe, and in 1909, earned the Docteur-es-Lettres at the University of Rennes for literary studies dealing with Celtic folk-lore. It was at this stage that he added Evans to his name, and thereby affirmed his own part-Celtic ancestry. No sooner had he finished in Rennes, than he earned the Bachelor of Science in Anthropology from Oxford University for work done on the Celtic fairy-faith, which led to the publication of his first book, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911).[14] It was during his practical research for the material of this book that Evans-Wentz traveled extensively through Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Cornwall, Brittany, and the Isle of Man collecting stories from the locals about pixies, fairies, and goblins.[15]

It might well be asked at this stage how Evans-Wentz managed to finance his extensive travels. The truth is that he had followed in his father's footsteps in the real estate business and was unusually successful. He made great profits from quick sales, mortgages and land transfers.[16] By late 1913, his finances were in such a good state that he could allow himself a gentleman's existence. For this he had his father to thank, who had renegotiated his leases, and his monthly income had risen to $1600, which was a large amount of money in those days.[17]

Also, in late 1913, Evans-Wentz traveled to Ireland and visited the painter, poet and mystic AE (G. W. Russell) and W. B. Yeats, who were both living in Dublin. Next he visited the Latin countries, but was appalled by the lack of public morals in such metropolitan cities as Rome. When he crossed over to Greece he experienced it as a calmer interlude and found his visit to Delphi highly inspiring. "It is a rare privilege" he admitted, "to visit the sites where great souls of past times have lived and thought."[18]

After a short sojourn, Evans-Wentz's next major stop was in Egypt. Although he did not intend to stay there long either, he was caught up in the frenzy that was caused by the First World War, and he was held up in Egypt for 29 months. He kept himself busy by exploring the major sites on the shores of the Nile. Ken Winkler writes the following about him at this particular stage of his life: "For several months he just drifted along, visiting Luxor and Abydos, the home of the original cult of Osiris, the temple of the seven shrines and the temple of the 'mysteries of antiquity.'"[19]

Towards the end of 1915, Evans-Wentz went to Alexandria, where he was detained under suspicion of being a German spy, and had to insist on an official investigation to clear his name. By this stage, his intention was to move on and sail for India. It was an old Oxford acquaintance, T. E. Lawrence, later more popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia, who helped him realize his intention. A letter dated 12/10/16, which was written by Lawrence, reads as follows: "Dear Wentz, there is no difficulty about getting to India. To be on the safe side we have wired to ask if they can allow you to wander about as you please."[20]

In India an array of new opportunities awaited Evans-Wentz. His first major stop was the headquarters of the Theosophical Society in Adyar where he visited with Annie Besant, who was then President of the Society. Then he headed north and visited Amritsar and studied the Sikhs.[21] He also visited many ashrams

and met with several sadhus, the most prominent among them Swami Syamananda Brahmachary; Sri Yukteswar Giri,[22] who was the guru of Paramahansa Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*;[23] and Swami Satyananda, who would prove to be quite instrumental in Evans-Wentz's spiritual development.[24]

In 1919, Evans-Wentz arrived in Darjeeling, a British hill station on the southern slopes of the Himalayas, where he acquired a worn Tibetan manuscript. Some sources state that it was from a monk, others that he acquired it in the bazaar. Eager to have the manuscript translated into English, Evans-Wentz made the acquaintance of the local superintendent of police, Sardar Bahadur Laden La, who provided him with a letter of introduction to Kazi Dawa Samdup, who was the headmaster of the Maharaja's Boy's School in Gangkok.[25]

The late Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup was of the opinion that, despite the adverse criticisms directed against H. P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author's intimate acquaintance with the higher *lamastic* teachings, into which she claimed to have been initiated.

Making the acquaintance of Kazi Dawa Samdup proved to be the turning point in Evans-Wentz's life, as it would lead to the commencement of his magnum opus. The manuscript that Evans-Wentz showed to Kazi Dawa Samdup was nothing less than the *Bar do thos grol chen mo*, which under their joint handiwork would become *The Tibetan Book of the Dead.* This was to be followed by the consequent publication of other Tibetan sacred texts which he also edited and annotated, and which in their totality would become his Tibetan tetralogy.[26]

The time that Evans-Wentz and Kazi Dawa Samdup spent together amounted to no more than a few months, but their collaboration would, nevertheless, produce material for three books, namely *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927), *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* (1935), and *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* (1954). Upon completion of the translations, Evans-Wentz moved back to the ashram of Swami Satyananda to practice yoga. Kazi Dawa Samdup and Evans-Wentz met one more time before the former's appointment to the post of Lecturer in Tibetan at the University of Calcutta in 1920, but it was a short-lived career because Kazi Dawa Samdup died in 1922. Evans-Wentz went to visit his family in 1924, and received from them a manuscript translation of *Rje btsun bka' bum (The Hundred Thousand Words of the Master)*, which Evans-Wentz edited and published as *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* (1928).[27]

After Kazi Dawa Samdup's death and prior to the outbreak of World War II, Evans-Wentz spent time traveling between the three places that had meant the most to him, namely India, England, and California. Then his life took a bizarre turn. He settled down in a small room in the Keystone Hotel in San Diego, where he would spend the next 23 years of his life. He chose this place because it was near the city's only vegetarian restaurant and the public library. There remained one passion in his life, the discovery of his own sacred space: which was Mount Cuchama, a few miles away near the Mexican border. (It needs to be mentioned that Mount Cuchama, "the exalted high place," was once used by the Diegueno Indians as a restorative pilgrimage center.)[28] Having been a real estate speculator all his life, he bought up as much of the land as he could, and occasionally spent some time there to practice "the Dharma, the Buddhist 'way of truth.'"[29]

In a late diary, Evans-Wentz wrote: "I am haunted by the realisation of the illusion of all human endeavours. As Milarepa taught; buildings end in ruin; meetings in separation; accumulation in dispersion and life in death. Whether it is better to go on here in California where I am lost in the midst of the busy multi-

tude or return to the Himalayas is now a question difficult to answer correctly."[30]

Evans-Wentz died on July 17, 1965, at the age of 87. During the funeral service held for him, the traditional liturgy from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* was recited.[31]

A short summary of the Tibetan tetralogy

In a little more than a decade it will be a hundred years since the first volume of W. Y. Evans-Wentz's Tibetan tetralogy, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, was published. This Tibetan Buddhist text was the first ever to be translated into English, and published for the first time by Oxford University Press in 1927. It was closely followed by *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* in 1928, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* in 1935, and *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* in 1954.[32]

The way in which Walter Evans-Wentz's name relates to his Tibetan tetralogy is neither that of author nor even as translator, but as a studious, and dare one say, somewhat obsessive compiler and editor, who wrote lengthy introductions and numerous annotations to the books that appeared under his name. He also worked hand in hand with the translator, Kazi Dawa Samdup, and in his own words describes himself as Kazi Dawa Samdup's "living English dictionary." There is no record regarding their precise manner of collaboration, but one can assume that Kazi Dawa Samdup's knowledge of Tibetan was more comprehensive than that of English, and that much of the actual phrasing and terminology of the translation must have come from Evans-Wentz himself.

Although Kazi Dawa Samdup was responsible for all the translations of the first three volumes of the tetralogy, in volume four, or *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, his handiwork only extends to Book III, which adds up to no more than 14 pages out of a total of 261.[33]

The most famous volume of the tetralogy is undoubtedly the first, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, or as it is known in Tibet, the *Bar do thos grol*.[34] It is a funerary text, that is intended to be read to a dead or dying person so that he or she will hear how to find liberation in the intermediate state between death and rebirth or, if that is not possible, to find an auspicious place to reincarnate in, preferably in a land that is characterized by purity.[35] The title of this book was inspired by another funerary text, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, because Evans-Wentz perceived parallels between the two texts, and saw in them evidence of an ancient "art of dying" which he supposed had once existed among the Egyptians, the initiates of the "Mysteries of Antiquity," and Christians of the Middle Ages.[36]

Donald S Lopez, Jr., Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies at the University of Michigan, in his new foreword to *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, writes as follows: "Despite the greater fame of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it is the second volume in the tetralogy, *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* that is the most successful in the series. It has been widely used in college classes on Buddhism for decades, and excerpts from the book have appeared in numerous anthologies of Buddhist texts, often as the sole Tibetan selection." Rather bluntly, and clearly to the discredit of Evans-Wentz, he adds: "One reason for its success is that Evans-Wentz exercised more restraint in the editing of this volume than the others."[37] *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa* was not the result of Evans-Wentz's and Kazi Dawa Samdup's collaboration, but the single-handed work of Dawa Samdup, who translated it in the period between the years 1902 and 1917, two years before Dawa Samdup and Evans-Wentz had actually met.[38] It is needless to say that this book is a biography, but important to point out that Milarepa is an eleventh-century yogi and poet, and the most legendary saint in Tibetan Buddhist history.

Unlike the first two volumes of the tetralogy, which are the result of single texts, the third volume, *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* is a translation of seven separate texts. The first four texts originated in the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Buddhism, which is the sect of Marpa and Milarepa. The first of these contains aphorisms by Milarepa's renowned disciple Sgam po pa, entitled *A Garland of Jewels [of] the Supreme Path.*[39] This work is followed by a series of texts that are very different in nature

to the prosaic tone of the aphorisms, and contain advanced tantric instructions that are normally intended for initiates and that often require considerable preparatory practice.[40] The last, or seventh text, is one of the most famous Buddhist sutras, called the *Heart Sutra,* which contains the renowned doctrine of emptiness. It is no longer than a page in length and most Buddhists know it by heart and can recite it on demand.

The fourth volume of the tetralogy, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, was translated by several different people. It consists of three sections or books. Book I is an English summary of portions of a work entitled the *Injunctions of Padma (Padma bka'i thang* yig). It is a biography of Padmasambhava, the Indian tantric yogi who is credited with introducing Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century. The book is the result of the combined efforts of the police chief, Sardar Bahadur S. W. Laden La; a Sakya monk named Bsod nams seng ge; and Evans-Wentz.[41] Book II, consists of a text which was translated by the two Sikkimese monks Lama Karma Sumdhon Paul and Lama Lobzang Mingyur Dorje. Its authorship is ascribed to Padasambhava and is entitled *The [Yoga of] Knowing the Mind, Seeing of Reality, Called Self-Liberation, From 'The Profound Doctrine of Self-Liberation by Meditation Upon the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities.'* It is part of the larger work that also contains the *Bar do thos grol*, or as it is known in English, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead.*[42] The last book, Book III, is also the shortest, and is entitled *The Last Testamentary Teachings of the Guru Phadampa Sangay.*[43] Phadampa Sangay was a contemporary of Milarepa, who went from India to Tibet to teach the dharma.[44] The text, as mentioned above, was translated by Kazi Dawa Samdup.

The First Book of the Tetralogy: *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*

When one takes a closer look at the most-recent publication of the Oxford University Press edition of W. Y. Evans-Wentz's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (2000), it becomes apparent that apart from the translation of the basic text, and the meticulous footnotes that go with it, there is an accumulation of additional material which amounts to more than half of the entire book. Firstly, there is the new foreword and afterword by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., Professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies; four prefaces written for various editions of the book by W. Y. Evans-Wentz; a psychological commentary by the famous Swiss psychiatrist, Dr. C. G. Jung; an introductory foreword by the well-known expositor of Tibetan Buddhism, Lama Anagavika Govinda; a foreword by Sir John Woodroffe, British Orientalist and author of *The Serpent Power*; and finally a lengthy introduction with 15 subsections by Evans-Wentz himself. To do proper justice to this book it is necessary to comment on the above aspects, even if briefly, and thereby establish how they manage to provide a clearer understanding of the translated text.

Donald S. Lopez, Jr.'s Foreword

The contemporary scholar and up-to-date Tibetologist, Professor Donald S. Lopez, Jr. has provided much valuable information about Evans-Wentz's tetralogy. As regards Evans-Wentz himself, Lopez points out the following: "He never learned to read Tibetan; perhaps he did not feel it necessary, almost as if he already knew what the texts must say. And if they did not say that, there was always recourse to their esoteric meaning, something he discusses in length in his introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*."[45] Lopez, nevertheless, acknowledges the importance of the tetralogy by classifying it as holding an important place in Tibetan Buddhism in the West. He also regards the tetralogy as pioneering work, not only due to the chosen texts, but also due to the mode of their creation. He points out that Evans-Wentz consulted with Tibetan scholars as regards the translations, something that only became common after the Tibetan diaspora which began in 1957.[46]

Regarding Evans-Wentz's attitude towards the creation of his books, Lopez calls him audacious. Lopez says that "Evans-Wentz thought that he understood what he read, and reading, as he did, through his bifocals of Theosophy and Hindu Yoga."[47] As a consequence, Lopez accuses Evans-Wentz of departing on interpretative flights, which were influenced not only by his lifelong allegiance to Theosophy, but

also from his understanding of yoga, which he gained from his tutelage under various Hindu neo-Vedantin teachers between the two world wars. These factors caused Evans-Wentz to take unjustified liberties with the texts, such as his continued references to the need to break through the illusion of *Maya*, a concept widely known in Hinduism, but a rhetoric which is largely absent in the Tibetan texts that form the subject of his books.[48]

Another important point that Lopez brings to the reader's attention as regards *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is the issue of karma and reincarnation. He points out the controversial views that are held, on the one hand, by Theosophy and, on the other hand, by Tibetan Buddhism and how Evans-Wentz attempts to explain the reason for this controversy. According to the Theosophical view, which Evans-Wentz also regarded as intended for the initiated few, he believed that just as "it is impossible for an animal or plant to devolve into one of its previous forms, so it is impossible for 'a human life-flux to flow into the physical form of a dog, or a fowl, or insect, or worm.'"[49] In contradistinction the Buddhist view is that "sentient beings wander up and down through the six realms of rebirth, blown helplessly by the winds of karma," a view that Evans-Wentz considered nothing more than the popular view intended for the masses.[50] Defending the Theosophical view, Evans-Wentz went so far as to claim "that it is a view that Kazi Dawa Samdup also endorsed, 'The late Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup was of the opinion that, despite the adverse criticisms directed against H. P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author's intimate acquaintance with the higher *lamastic* teachings, into which she claimed to have been initiated.'"[51]

Regarding the issue of bad karma and reincarnation, one can well imagine that retribution may be exacted by having to undergo several incarnations of an unfavourable nature, but most, if not all, esotericists would agree that reincarnation in such cases into a lower life form, such as, a lowly animal would not only be ridiculous, but pointless. Compared to the consciousness of a human being, a lowly animal's consciousness is by far more limited and restrictive, thereby rendering any retributive aims of an adjustment orientated karma absolutely futile.

Despite his criticism of Evans-Wentz's approach and working methods, Lopez ends his foreword on the following positive note: "Whatever Evans-Wentz's motivations may have been in creating *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, he produced a work of vast cultural influence. For contained within Evans-Wentz's book is Kazi Dawa Samdup's translation of the *Bar do thos grol*, a translation that has continued, over the years and across the continents, to provide both insight and inspiration."[52]

Dr. C. G. Jung's Psychological Commentary

Before commencing with a discussion of Jung's commentary of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, it is necessary to describe briefly the three distinct phases of the *bardo*, which in context of the Tibetan Buddhist belief in reincarnation is understood as the intermediate state between death and rebirth. Once this is done, attention will be paid to how Jung points out some important parallels between Eastern and Western concepts as they relate to the spiritual aspects of their respective metaphysics. There are three major parallels in Jung's commentary, namely those between Jung's concept of the Collective Unconscious and the Chikhai Bardo; Jung's archetypes and the Chönyid Bardo; and Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Sidpa Bardo. Lastly, Jung's own unique view of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* will be discussed, and how it can be put to use by Westerners as an initiatory rather than a funerary text. This can be achieved by reversing the sequence, and starting with the third phase of the *bardo* and ending with the first, and thereby arriving at the recognition of that most elevated state of consciousness, which is symbolized by the clear light, and known as the Dharma-Kaya.

In broad outlines, the three phases of the bardo can be defined as follows:

The first phase of the bardo, the Chikhai Bardo, is the recognition of that state of consciousness which transcends all other states of

consciousness, and its successful attainment makes any association with lesser types of consciousness unnecessary and redundant. It is symbolized by the image of the clear light, in itself an image of untarnished purity, and can confidently be identified with the Dharma-Kaya, the state of consciousness which is also characteristic of a Buddha.[53]

The second phase of the bardo, the Chönyid Bardo, is also called the bardo of the experiencing of reality.[54] In this bardo the deceased person is confronted, firstly by a group of peaceful deities and, secondly a group of wrathful deities, in the form of visual and auditory projections. These projections are symbolic of the person's karma, and when rightfully meditated upon by the deceased, still allow for the regaining of the clear light, and thus liberation from rebirth. If, however, the concentration, and consequent insights gained by meditation upon these deities is unsuccessful, the deceased looses yet another opportunity, and is drawn into the third phase, the Sidpa Bardo.[55]

The third phase, or Sidpa Bardo, is known as a hallucinatory state, where the dead person, who was unable to avail himself of the opportunities in the Chikhai Bardo and the Chönyid Bardo, now becomes a victim of sexual fantasies and "is attracted by the vision of mating couples. Eventually he is caught by a womb and born into the earthly world again."[56]

Now that the three distinct phases of the bardo have been defined, they can serve as a basis for some comparisons that can be drawn between them and those Western concepts with which they appear to be in agreement.

The first comparison to be made is that between Jung's understanding of the soul and the Dharma-Kaya of the Chikhai Bardo. According to Jung's Germanic background, the soul (*Seele*) is not to be confused with its English meaning, which is very different, but needs to be equated with his concept of the Collective Psyche, or Collective Unconscious. The first footnote of Jung's commentary describes '*Seele'* as an ancient word, "sanctioned by Germanic tradition and used, by outstanding German mystics like Eckhart and great German poets like Goethe, to signify the Ultimate Reality, symbolized in the feminine, or *shakti* aspect." It goes on, to state rather boldly, that "(i)n psychological language it represents the Collective Unconscious, as being the matrix of everything. It is the womb of everything, even of the *Dharma-Kaya*; it is the *Dharma-Kaya* itself."[57]

A comparison such as the above is always risky, and can, at best, only partially be true. Admittedly, the Collective Unconscious is equated with the "Ultimate Reality" and the "matrix of everything," but it is also understood as being rich in psychic contents and the product of ancestral experience that contains such concepts as science, religion and morality.[58] The Dharma-Kaya, on the other hand, can only find its parallels with the Collective Unconscious to a point. It is true that it is equated with the Absolute, and considered as "the essence of the universe" and "the unity of all things and beings," but it is "unmanifested." "The dharmakaya is beyond existence or non-existence, and beyond (all) concepts. . ."[59]

Perhaps the fundamental difference between the Western and Eastern understanding of the Ultimate Reality can be ascribed to the fact that Westerners are by nature suspicious of any type of consciousness that is devoid of contents. Easterners, on the other hand, don't equate the Absolute with consciousness at all, but rather consider it in terms of pure being, which transcends any type of consciousness that might limit or distort its reality by distinct qualities or concepts.

The essence of the Chikhai Bardo, as it is recited by the presiding lama to the dead person, is contained in the following words:

> O nobly-born (so and so), listen. Now thou art experiencing the Radiance of the Clear Light of Pure Reality. Recognise it. O nobly-born, thy present intellect, in real nature void, not formed into anything as regards characteristics or colour, naturally void, is the very Reality, the All-Good.
>
> Thine own intellect, which is now voidness, yet not to be regarded as the voidness of nothingness, but as being the intellect itself, unobstructed, shining, thrilling, and bliss-

> ful, is the very consciousness, the All-good Buddha.[60]

Apart from its sheer exuberance and poetic beauty, the above quotation is almost an unequivocal guarantee to the deceased of the true nature, the Buddha-nature, of his or her being, provided that he or she can remain single-minded, and without wavering, identify with the Clear Light, and thereby gain liberation. Life, when stripped of all its entanglements and ramifications, becomes nothing more and nothing less than the bliss of pure being. Jung, however, who obviously was able to appreciate the implications of the above passage, foresees problems as regards the mentality of the conventional Westerner, and remarks upon it as follows:

> The soul [or as here, one's own consciousness] is assuredly not small, but the radiant Godhead itself. The West finds this statement either very dangerous, if not downright blasphemous, or else accepts it unthinkingly and then suffers from a theosophical inflation. But if we can master ourselves far enough to refrain from our chief error of always wanting to *do* something with things and put them to practical use, we may perhaps succeed in learning an important lesson from these teachings, or at least in appreciating the greatness of the *Bardo Thodol*, which vouchsafes to the dead man the ultimate and highest truth, that even the gods are the radiance and reflection of our own souls.[61]

The next item under consideration is the comparison between Jung's archetypes and the two groups of deities, the first peaceful, the second wrathful, which the deceased encounters in the second, or Chönyid Bardo.

An archetype, as Jung understands it, is defined as "a collectively inherited unconscious idea, pattern of thought, image, etc., universally present in individual psyches."[62] Jung expands on this basic concept in his own words as follows:

> These (the archetypes) are the universal dispositions of the mind, and they are to be understood as analogous to Plato's forms (*eidola*), in accordance with which the mind organizes its contents. One could also describe these forms as *categories* analogous to the logical categories which are always and everywhere present as the basic postulates of reason. Only, in the case of our 'forms,' we are not dealing with categories of reason but with categories of the *imagination*.[63]

In the above context the Chönyid Bardo and the deceased's confrontation with the peaceful and wrathful deities, (the success or failure of this confrontation being determined by the deceased person's individual karma), is a process whereby the deities or archetypes help to determine where exactly the deceased stands as regards his own status in terms of his or her psychic reality. Jung elaborates on this as follows:

> Here (in the Chönyid Bardo) we seek and find our difficulties, here we seek and find our enemy, here we seek and find what is dear and precious to us; and it is comforting to know that all evil and all good is to be found out there, in the visible object, where it can be conquered, punished, destroyed or enjoyed. But nature herself does not allow this paradisal state of innocence to continue forever. There are, and always have been, those who cannot help but see that the world and its experiences are in the nature of a symbol, and that it really reflects something that lies hidden in the subject himself, in his own transubjective reality. It is from this profound intuition, according to *lamaist* doctrine, that the *Chönyid* state derives its true meaning, which is why the *Chönyid Bardo* is entitled 'The *Bardo* of the Experiencing of Reality.'[64]

Lastly, the comparison between Freudian Psychoanalysis and the Sidpa Bardo, as understood by Jung, needs to be discussed. If Freudian psychoanalysis is understood as simply dealing with problems that are related to basic drives and urges of a physical nature, with particular emphasis on the sexual, its relevance to the Sidpa Bardo becomes clearer and more obvious. Jung elucidates on this as follows:

> Freudian psychoanalysis, in all essential aspects, never went beyond the experiences

> of the *Sidpa Bardo*; that is, it was unable to extricate itself from sexual fantasies and similar "incompatible" tendencies which cause anxiety and other affective states. Nevertheless, Freud's theory is the first attempt made by the West to investigate, as if from below, from the animal sphere of instinct, the psychic territory that corresponds in Tantric Lamaism to the *Sidpa Bardo.*[65]

In contradistinction to his own theory of the collective unconscious, which clearly makes allowance for all types of psychic contents, including the spiritual, Jung considers Freud's unconscious to be limited to biological needs and urges, thus unable to advance beyond the instinctual sphere. "It is therefore not possible for Freudian theory to reach anything except an essentially negative valuation of the unconscious. It is a 'nothing but.'"[66] Jung elaborates on this as follows:

> I think, then, we can state it as a fact that with the aid of psychoanalysis the rationalizing mind of the West has pushed forward into what one might call the neuroticism of the *Sidpa Bardo* state, and has there been brought to an inevitable standstill by the uncritical assumption that everything psychological is subjective and personal. Even so, this advance has been a great gain, inasmuch as it has enabled us to take one more step behind our conscious lives.[67]

Having summarized Jung's views of the three distinct phases of the bardo in terms of his own system of psychology, one can now examine and appreciate his most innovative suggestion why the *Bardo Thödol* should be read backwards. Jung justifies this suggestion with the following:

> The book describes a way of initiation in reverse, which unlike the eschatological expectations of Christianity, prepares the soul for a descent into physical being. The thoroughly intellectualistic and rationalistic worldly-mindedness of the European makes it advisable for us to reverse the sequence of the *Bardo Thödol* and to regard it as an account of Eastern initiation experiences, though one is perfectly free, if one chooses, to substitute Christian symbols for the gods of the *Chönyid Bardo*.[68]

Lama Anagarika Govinda's Introductory Foreword

The author of the Introductory Foreword to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Lama Anagarika Govinda, was a Tibetologist and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. Of German origin, he was born in Waldheim, Germany in 1898. He was known to be one of the most revered Western interpreters of Buddhism and the traditional Tibetan way of life. He died in 1985.[69]

Lama Govinda begins his discussion of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* with the general assumption that nobody is able to talk about death with authority unless they have died, and that since nobody, apparently, has returned from the dead, we cannot know what death is, or what happens after it.[70] However, Lama Govinda also gives an alternate view held by the Tibetans, who will respond to the above assumption as follows:

> There is not *one* person, indeed, not *one* living being, that has *not* returned from death. In fact, we have all died many deaths, before we came into this incarnation. And what we call birth is merely the reverse side of death, like one of the two sides of a coin, or like a door which we call "entrance" from outside and "exit" from inside a room.[71]

Lama Govinda reconciles these opposing views by stating that not everybody remembers his or her previous death, and due to this lack of remembering, most people do not believe that there was a previous death. He points out that "they forget that active memory only forms a small part of our consciousness, and that our subconscious memory registers and preserves every past impression and experience which our waking mind fails to recall."[72] Govinda elaborates on this by referring to people who by means of concentration and other yogic practices are able to access the subconscious and bring it into the realm of the discriminative consciousness. Such people can consequently access the unrestricted treasury of subconscious memory, which contains the

records not only of our past lives, but also the records of the history of our race. Taken to its extreme, subconscious memory can potentially access not only our human past, but "all pre-human forms of life, if not the very consciousness that makes life possible in the universe."[73]

Lama Govinda argues that there is a good reason why the subconscious cannot readily be made conscious:

> If, through some trick of nature, the gates of an individual's subconsciousness were suddenly to spring open, the unprepared mind would be overwhelmed and crushed. Therefore, the gates of the subconscious are guarded, by all initiates, and hidden behind the veil of mysteries and symbols.[74]

From this point onwards Lama Govinda discusses the significance of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and how it relates to his foregoing argument. He explains that the reason why the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is couched in symbolic language is due to the fact that it was written for initiates, and thus "sealed with the seven seals of silence, - not because its knowledge should be withheld from the uninitiated, but because its knowledge would be misunderstood," and thus possibly mislead and even harm those who are not intended to receive it. However, he thinks that the time has come to break the seals of silence, because humanity has reached the point where it needs to decide whether to be satisfied by merely subjugating the material world, or whether it should strive after the conquest of the spiritual world, by subjugating its selfish desires and transcending its self-imposed limitations.[75]

Lama Govinda emphatically states that it is the spiritual point of view that makes the *Bardo Thodol* important for the majority of readers. If it were merely based upon folklore, or religious speculation about death and a hypothetical after-death state, it would only be of interest to anthropologists and students of religion. Lama Govinda explains that it is far more than that: "It is a key to the innermost recesses of the human mind, and a guide for initiates, and for those who are seeking the spiritual path of liberation."[76] Although the *Bardo Thodol* is generally used in Tibet as a breviary, to be read or recited on the occasion of death, it was originally written as a guide not only for the dying or dead, but also for the living. It is precisely this that justifies its accessibility to a wider public.[77]

Lama Govinda stresses that despite its apparent purpose as a funerary text, the *Bardo Thodol* only has value for those who practice its teaching during their life-time. Once this is realised the element of death in this sacred text takes on a new meaning, namely "that it is one of the oldest and most universal practices for the initiate to go through the experience of death before he can be spiritually reborn." The initiates need to die symbolically both as regards their past, as well as their old ego, before they can take their place in the new spiritual life into which they have been initiated.[78]

The correct application of the bardo teachings depends upon remembering the right thing at the right moment, and to achieve this, it is necessary to prepare oneself during one's life-time. Lama Govinda points out that "one must create, build up, and cultivate those faculties which one desires to be of deciding influence at death and in the after-death —in order never to be taken unawares, and to be able to react, spontaneously, in the right way, when the critical moment of death has come."[79]

Lama Govinda reminds the reader that all who are familiar with Buddhist philosophy recognize that birth and death succeed each other repeatedly and uninterruptedly, and that every moment of our lives something within us dies and something is reborn.[80] He elaborates on this as follows:

> The different *bardos*, therefore, represent different states of consciousness of our life: the state of waking consciousness, the normal consciousness of a being born into our human world, known in Tibetan as the *skyes-nas bar-do*; the state of dream-consciousness (*rmi-lam bar-do*); the state of *dhyana*, or trance-consciousness, in profound meditation (*bsam-gtan bar-do*); the state of experiencing of death (*huchhi-kha bar-do*); the state of experiencing of Reality (*chhos-nyid bar-do*); the state of rebirth-consciousness (*srid-pa bar-do*).[81]

Referring to the teachings of the Buddha, Lama Govinda points out that it is a privilege to be born as a human being, because it allows for the rare opportunity of liberating oneself through one's decisive effort "through a 'turning-about in the deepest seat of consciousness', as the *Lankavatara Sutra* puts it."[82]Lama Govinda specifies that "(a)ccordingly, *The Root Verses of the Six Bardos* open with the words:

> 'O that now, when the *Bardo of Life* is dawning upon me,
> - After having given up indolence, since there is no time to waste in life -
> May I undistractedly enter the path of listening, reflecting, and meditating,
> So that, . . . once having attained human embodiment,
> No time may be squandered through useless distractions.'[83]

Returning to the subject of death, Lama Govinda points out that its illusoriness can be ascribed to the fact that the individual identifies with his or her temporal, transitory form, whether physical, emotional, or mental, which is the reason for the mistaken notion that there exists a personal, separate egohood of one's own, and the fear of losing it.[84] The remedy for this Lama Govinda explains as follows:

> If, however, the disciple has learned, as the *Bardo Thodol* directs, to identify himself with the Eternal . . . then the fears of death are dissipated like a cloud before the rising sun. Then he knows that whatever he may see, hear, or feel, in the hour of his departure from this life, is but a reflection of his own conscious and subconscious mental content; and no mind-created illusion can then have power over him if he knows its origin and is able to recognize it.[85]

Lama Govinda concludes his discussion of the *Bardo Thodol* by pointing out that the illusory bardo visions vary according to the religious or cultural tradition in which the percipient has grown up, but that their underlying motive-power is shared by all human beings.[86] His final words regarding the nature of the *Bardo* and its significance read as follows:

> Thus it is that the profound psychology set forth by the *Bardo Thodol* constitutes an important contribution to our knowledge of the human mind and the path that leads beyond it. Under the guise of a science of death, the *Bardo Thodol* reveals the secret of life; and therein lies its spiritual value and its universal appeal.[87]

Sir John Woodroffe's Foreword

Sir John Woodroffe introduces his foreword with two salient questions regarding the concept of death. His first question is how one may avoid death, except when death is desired; and the second, how to accept death and die.[88] He answers the first question by pointing out that "the avoidance of death is the aim when *Hathayoga* is used to prolong present life in the flesh."[89] He explains that this is not, in the Western sense, an affirmation of life, but, for the time being, to a particular form of life. He points out that in context of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, death comes to all, and that humans are not to cling to life on earth with its ceaseless wandering in the worlds of birth and death. They should rather "implore the aid of the Divine Mother for a safe passage through the fearful state following the body's dissolution, and that they may at length attain all-perfect Buddhahood."[90]

Regarding the second question, "How to accept death and die," Woodroffe answers as follows: "Here (i.e. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*) the technique of dying makes Death the entrance to good future lives, at first out of, and then again in, the flesh, unless and until liberation (*Nirvana*) from the wandering (*Sangsara*) is attained."[91]

Woodroffe identifies both the original text and Evans-Wentz's introduction as valuable contributions to the Science of Death from the standpoint of the Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism of the Tantric type,[92] (Tantra being understood as a technique which transforms desire into enlightenment).[93] He welcomes the book not only in virtue of its particular subject matter, but also because he considers the ritual works of any religion to enable us more fully to understand the philosophy and psychology of the system to which we belong.[94]

More specifically, Woodroffe defines *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* in terms of three characteristics, namely as a work on the Art of Dying; "for Death, as well as Life, is an Art, though both are often enough muddled through."[95] Secondly, he considers the book as a manual of religious therapeutic for the last moments; and thirdly as a description of the experiences of the deceased during the intermediate period between death and rebirth, and thus as a guide whereby the deceased can relate thereto.[96]

As regards the parallels that can be drawn between the various funerary texts, Evans-Wentz concludes that they tend to strengthen the opinion that the greater part of the symbolism which is nowadays regarded as peculiarly Christian or Jewish seems to be due to adaptations from Egyptian and Eastern religions. …they also suggest a close resemblance between the thought-forms and thought-processes of the Orient and the Occident, and that despite differences…the various nations of mankind are, and have been since time immemorial, mentally and spiritually one.

Woodroffe points out that the chief difference between the four leading religions, i.e. Brahmanism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, is the doctrine of reincarnation and resurrection. He writes that Christianity recognizes one universe only, and two lives, one here in the natural body, and one hereafter, the resurrection body. Just as metempsychosis makes the same soul, so resurrection uses the same body for more than one life, but Christianity limits man's lives to two in number, of which the first forever determines the nature of the second.[97]

Woodroffe explains that for "each of the four religions . . . there is a subtle and death-surviving element," and "to none of these Faiths is death an absolute ending, but to all it is only the separation of the *Psyche* from the gross body . . . In other words, Death is itself only an initiation into another form of life than that of which it is the ending."[98]

Regarding the moment of death, Woodroffe comments as follows:

At the moment of death the empiric consciousness, or consciousness of objects, is lost. There is what is popularly called a "swoon," which is, however, the corollary of super-consciousness itself, or the Clear Light of the Void; for the swoon is in, and of, the Consciousness as knower of objects (*Vijnana Skandha*). This empiric consciousness disappears, unveiling Pure Consciousness, which is ever ready to be discovered by those who have the will to seek and the power to find It.[99]

Defining the Clear Light of the Void, Woodroffe writes that it is not "nothingness," but "the Alogical (sic), to which no categories drawn from the world of name and form apply."[100] He states that a Vedantist would affirm that "Being," or "Is-ness," is still applicable as regards the Void, and would be experienced as "is" (*asti*). According to this view, the Void is the negation of all determinations, but not of "Is-ness," as has been supposed in accounts that are given of Buddhist "Nihilism," but it is not anything known to finite experience in form, and thus, for those who have had no other experience, it is nothing.[101]

In context of the Buddhist Mayayana teachings, and more specifically in the Tibetan work, *The Path of Good Wishes of Samanta Bhadra*, [102] Woodroffe identifies the All as either Sangsara or Nirvana, Sangsara being the world of finite experience, and Nirvana being the release from such experience, and thus

consciousness freed of all limitation. From an emotional aspect, this is experienced as pure bliss that is unaffected by sorrow, and from a volitional aspect it is freedom of action and almighty power. The realization of Nirvana, or the Void, is synonymous with the consciousness of a Buddha, or a "Knower;" the absence of such realisation is to be an "ignorant being" in the Sangsara.[103]

Taking his examples from *The Path of Good Wishes of Samanta Bhadra*, and obviously intending to draw parallels with those to be found in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Woodroffe continues his discussion by pointing out that ignorance in the individual is in its cosmic aspect *Maya*, which in Tibetan (*sGyuma*) means a magical show. More specifically "(i)n its most generic form, the former is that which produces the pragmatic, but, in a transcendental sense, the 'unreal' notion of self and otherness."[104] Woodroffe identifies this as the root cause of error, which becomes manifest as the "Six Poisons" of Sangsara – pride, jealousy, sloth, anger, greed, and lust. At this point Woodroffe points out that the Text (i.e. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and more specifically the section dealing with the *Chönyid Bardo*) constantly urges upon the dying person to recognize in the apparitions, which he is about to see, the creatures of his own maya-governed mind, which obstructs him or her from recognizing the Clear Light of the Void. If, however, this recognition is successful, the person can be liberated at any stage.[105]

As regards the third and final stage of the intermediate state between death and rebirth, the passage into the *Sidpa Bardo*, Woodroffe explains that the past life of the deceased becomes dim, and "(t)hat of the future is indicated by certain premonitory signs which represent the first movements of desire towards fulfilment." In accordance with the deceased's karma, his or her "soul-complex" now takes on the color of the *Loka* (i.e. world) in which it is destined to be born. More specifically this is explained by Woodroffe as follows:

> If the deceased's *Karma* leads him to Hell, thither he goes after the Judgement, in a subtle body which cannot be injured or destroyed, but in which he may suffer atrocious pain. Or he may go to the Heaven-world or other *Loka*, to return at length and in all cases (for neither punishment nor reward are eternal) to earth, whereon only can new *Karma* be made. Such return takes place after expiation of his sins in Hell, expiration of the term of enjoyment in Heaven which his *Karma* has gained for him.[106]

Woodroffe points out that in some cases the deceased's lot is immediate rebirth on earth, in which case he or she will see visions of mating men and women, and at this final stage of awakening to earth-life, is now aware of the fact that he or she does not have a physical body, and urgently desires to have one, so that he or she may again enjoy physical life on the earth-world.[107]

Woodroffe's conclusive remarks leave his discussion open ended. Instead of a definitive statement, he hypothesizes with some pertinent questions. He proposes that if the series of conscious states are determined by the past *Karma*, it may well be asked how that liberty of choice exists which the whole text of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* assumes by its injunctions to the deceased to do this or to avoid that.[108] He points out that even in one individual there are diverse tendencies, but the question still remains, and "if the *Karma* ready to ripen determines the action, then advice to the accused is useless. If the 'soul' is free to choose, there is no determination by *Karma*."[109] Woodroffe proposes that the answer to these questions appears to be twofold. On the one hand, the instructions given may, by their suggestions, call up that one of several tendencies which tends towards the action counselled. On the other hand, this system allows that one "soul" can help another. In this regard, there are prayers for, and application of merits to, the deceased, just as one finds in Hinduism the *Pretashraddha*, in Catholicism the *Requiem Mass*, and in Islam the Moslem's *Fatiha.* Woodroffe concludes that "(i)n this and other matters one mind can, it is alleged, influence another otherwise than through the ordinary sense channels whether before or after death."[110]

Walter Evans-Wentz's comment on the *Judgment* in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*

Instead of a lengthy summary, and the unnecessary repetition of much that has been discussed under the forewords, commentaries and introductions in the above summaries, this particular summary will deal with only one of several aspects of Evans-Wentz's Introduction, namely the one which is subtitled *The Judgement*.[111] Its importance needs to be pointed out for the reason that the knowledge of the after death state, or *bardo*, appears to have its parallels not only between the two funerary texts such as *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, but also a Medieval Christian treatise entitled *The Lamentation of the Dying Creature*, the dating of which is uncertain, but probably falls within the period of the 14th and 15th centuries.[112]Furthermore, Evans-Wentz also makes brief mention of Plato's tenth book of the *Republic*, in which a strikingly similar judgement of the human soul is described as in the Egyptian, Tibetan and Christian examples. His first comparison is that between the Tibetan and Egyptian texts, and begins as follows:

> The Judgement Scene as described in our text and that described in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* seem so much alike in essentials as to suggest that common origin, at present unknown, to which we have already made reference. In the Tibetan version, Dharma-Raja (Tib. *Shinje-chho-gyal*) King of the Dead (commonly known to Theravadists as Yama-Raja), the Buddhist and Hindu Pluto, as a Judge of the Dead, correspond to Osiris in the Egyptian version.[113]

Even in this brief quotation one cannot help noticing the reference to Pluto, whom every person with a basic knowledge of mythology will identify as the god of the underworld both in Greek and Roman mythology. In fact, a king, or god of death and the underworld is so universal, that one encounters him in mythologies as far afield as the Incas and the Aztecs, as well as the Pacific Islands, where, among the Maori, this deity is female rather than male, and known as Hine-nui-te-po,[114] the goddess of night and death, and ruler of the underworld.[115] Parallels such as these can only be explained when we accept the reality of Jung's Collective Unconscious and its dominant archetypes, as it was discussed under Jung's Psychological Commentary.

Evans-Wentz continues his comparison as follows:

> In both versions alike there is a symbolical weighing: before Dharma-Raja there are placed on one side of the balance black pebbles and on the other side white pebbles, symbolizing evil and good deeds; and similarly, before Osiris, the heart and the feather (or else in the place of the feather an image of the Goddess of Truth which it symbolizes) are weighed one against the other, the heart representing the conduct of conscience of the deceased and the feather righteousness or truth.

Regarding the above quotation, the symbol of the balance or scales, is not unique to Egypt and Tibet, but acknowledged universally as an emblem of harmony and justice, and thus an ideal instrument in the judgement of a human being at the termination of his or her earthly life. The heart is, likewise, a universal symbol of a human being's conscience, and brings to mind the words from the Old Testament in the book of Proverbs, (Chapter 23, verse 7), which read as follows: "For as (a man) thinketh in his heart, so is he . . ."[116] A light heart, counterbalanced by a feather, suggests the nature of a person who holds back nothing, and thus characterized by the virtue of compassion and generosity, while a heavy heart, often referred to as a "heart of stone," is descriptive of someone who is cold and devoid of true neighborly feelings.

The Egyptian Judgement Scene is presided over by the ape-headed, and sometimes more rarely, by the ibis-headed Thoth, who is the god of wisdom.[117] As the weighing process of the deceased's heart is about to proceed, the deceased addresses his own heart as follows: 'Raise not thyself in evidence against me. Be not mine adversary before the Divine Circle; let there be no fall of the scale against me in the presence of the great god, Lord of Amen-

ta.'[118] The Tibetan Judgment Scene also has a presiding god, the monkey-headed Shinje; and in both the Egyptian and Tibetan scenes, the jury is made up of animal-headed and human-headed gods. The Egyptian version has a monstrous creature awaiting the deceased if he or she should be condemned, while the Tibetan version has devils awaiting the evil-doer ready to conduct him or her to the hell-world of purgation. The record-board of the deceased's deeds, which the god Thoth is sometimes depicted as holding, parallels the Mirror of Karma held by the Dharma-Raja.[119]As regards the "Mirror of Karma," Evans-Wentz makes the following observation: "(T)his seems to be distinctly an Indian and Buddhist addition to the hypothetical pre-historic version, whence arose the Egyptian and the Tibetan versions, the Egyptian being the less affected."[120]

Evans-Wentz's reference to Plato's tenth book of the *Republic* describes a similar judgement as in the Egyptian and Tibetan funerary texts, which also employs judges and makes use of karmic record boards that are affixed to the souls being judged, and two paths, one for the good which leads to heaven, and one for the evil that leads to hell. Like in the Tibetan version, the condemned souls are carried off by demons to the place of punishment.[121]

For a more detailed comparison between the texts dealing with the after-death state already treated so far and the Medieval Christian treatise, *The Lamentation of the Dying Creature*, one needs to turn to Evans-Wentz's Addenda VII entitled *The Medieval Christian Judgement*, in which the deceased is recorded to say:

> "Alas that ever I sinned in my life. To me is come this day the dreadfullest tidings that ever I had. Here hath been with me a sergeant of arms whose name is Cruelty, from the King of Kings, Lord of all Lords, and Judge of all Judges, laying on me the mace of His office, saying unto me: 'I arrest thee and warn thee to make ready . . . The Judge that shall sit upon thee, He shall not be partial, nor He will not be corrupt with goods, but He will minister to thee justice and equity . . ."[122]

The above quotation paints a vivid picture of the state of mind of a deceased person who suddenly realizes the gravity and inevitability of having to face up to his evil deeds which he or she has committed while still alive. Dreading the consequences to be visited upon him, the deceased desperately appeals to his Good Angel:

> "O my good Angel, to whom our Lord took me to keep, where be thee now? Me thinketh ye should be here, and answer for me; for the dread of death distroubleth me, so that I cannot answer for myself. Here is my bad angel ready, and is one of my chief accusers, with legions of fiends with him. I have no creature to answer for me. Alas it is an heavy case!"[123]

The Good Angel, an obvious personification of the voice of conscience, makes it clear to the deceased that his intercession at this stage would be unjust and useless: ". . . (I) counselled thee to flee the place of peril, and the company that should stir or move you thereto. Can ye say nay thereto? How can you think that I should answer for you?"[124] In desperation the deceased now "appeals for assistance to Reason, to Dread, to Conscience, and to the Five Wits – (but) none can succour him."[125] His final appeal is to the Virgin, whose intercession to Jesus, her son, now introduces the uniquely Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, which clearly differs from the doctrine of karma as it is expounded in the Buddhist teachings of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.[126]

Evans-Wentz's own comment on the above is as follows:

> Such introduction suggests that this curious Christian version of the Judgment may have had a pre-Christian and non-Jewish Oriental source, wherein the doctrine of *karma* (and the correlated doctrine of rebirth) remained unmodified by the European medievalism which shaped *The Lamentation of the Dying Creature*. The ancient doctrine of *karma* (to which the primitive, or Gnostic, Christians adhered, were Church-council Christianity took shape), being taught in the following answer to the Dying Creature,

gives some plausibility, even from internal evidence, to this purely tentative view:

Conscience: 'Ye must sorrowfully and meekly suffer the judgements that ye have deserved.'

The Five Wits: 'Therefore of your necessity your defaults must be laid upon you . . . Wherefore of right the peril must be yours.[127]

In his final remarks as regards the parallels that can be drawn between the various funerary texts, Evans-Wentz concludes that they tend to strengthen the opinion that the greater part of the symbolism which is nowadays regarded as peculiarly Christian or Jewish seems to be due to adaptations from Egyptian and Eastern religions. He observes that they also suggest a close resemblance between the thought-forms and thought-processes of the Orient and the Occident, and that despite differences of race and creed, and of physical and social environment, the various nations of mankind are, and have been since time immemorial, mentally and spiritually one.[128]

Conclusion

From the above discussion and summaries, the reader must, at this stage, have formed a fairly comprehensive view of what *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is about. One can now come to the conclusion that *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* is much more than a funerary text, and is, in fact, also a means to an initiation that opens the treasury to various types of consciousness. These types of consciousness are accessible to those who, like the higher lamas, are able to open the portals to such a treasury, and thereby experience the entire range of consciousness, from the lowest to the highest, or from the most basic and instinctual all the way to that sublime state which is known as the Ultimate Reality or the Absolute. It is recommended that the reader considers all the above summaries merely as a pointer to Evans-Wentz's book, and that he or she has been sufficiently persuaded to take the trouble to read and study the original.

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Journeys of the Soul in the Afterlife: Egyptian Books of the Afterlife and Greek Orphic Mysteries

Aaron J. French

Abstract

Although studies in the ancient Greek and Egyptian conception of the afterlife may be extensive, the two systems of belief are rarely set against each other using the comparative method. To that end, this paper will focus on the afterlife conceptions of *both* of these ancient cultures, exclusively comparing their ideas, images, and practices pertaining to life after death. Additionally, the extent to which these cultures promoted postmortem *gnosis* and/or wisdom, as opposed to moral scrutiny of individual life-choices, will be explored. The paper seeks to investigate motivations behind this emphasis on afterlife behavior, recitation, and right-ritual, which both ancient Egypt and Greece share. The works of two early 20th century scholars of religion, W. Brede Kristensen and G. R. S. Mead, will form the academic basis, as well as the Egyptian Book of the Dead and the more recent archeological discoveries known as the Orphic Gold Tablets.

Introduction

In ancient times, the human being's fate after death occupied a significant amount of focus and attention. The journey of a soul through the afterlife was not merely some imaginative flight of fancy or speculative conjecture, but a living part of the cultural milieu. For ancient peoples, the afterlife and their place in it offered a possible scenario for their future, and without the aid of modern science to temper that view, they were less disposed to balancing their ideas against the hard data of material reality. In Egypt, especially, cults of the afterlife flourished and were a prominent aspect of the community. Their beliefs dominated architecture and religious philosophy, and culminated in ritual burials. Similarly, in Greece we find the same obsession with the afterlife, particularly in mystery religions such as the Orphic cults. However, the Greeks were more secretive concerning their practices. Orphic and Egyptian death cults offered spells, rituals, and passwords for successfully traversing the afterlife, and both propounded penalties for failing to perform these actions at the proper time. Although these civilizations are seldom dealt with in the same forum, striking similarities emerge when the two are compared. Parallels exist between Egyptian and Greek beliefs in the afterlife, in periods far earlier than the Hellenization of Egypt by Alexander the Great. While these two civilizations never fully merged with respect to their religious and philosophical views pertaining to the afterlife, ancient Egypt and Greece did cross-pollinate in the years leading up to Alexander's takeover around 333 BCE. This induces the conclusion that the ancient peoples emphasized their conduct and behavior *after death*, as opposed to the moral scrutiny placed upon our corporeal lives in modern-day society.

A principal text that will be utilized is *Life out of Death: Studies in the Religions of Egypt and of Ancient Greece* by W. Brede Kristensen (1867-1953), first published in 1925. The reason for relying on this somewhat dated text is best described by Jean Jacques Waardenburg:

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> Kristensen made the attempt to come to an understanding of the religious documents on the basis of religious values which, in his view, were proper to the religion studied. He was attentive to the symbolism of the studied religions, in particular to what related to the problem of life and death. Kristensen was opposed to evolutionary views on the development of religion, preferred to study the texts apart from their time sequence, and to concentrate on their ideational content.[1]

Kristensen appropriately analyzed the material relevant to this study in such a context that it is suitable to utilize his work as a handbook. The decision is based in part on the general way in which he handled the symbolism and primary texts, framing his thoughts around the question of life after death, and not subscribing too dogmatically to the overtly materialistic methodology of his time. Instead, he retained a portion of the original esotericism of religion. Like minded scholars such as G. R. S. Mead (1863-1933) have been selected for this article under the same pretense.

On the other hand, contemporaneous scholars like E. A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934) who employed similar academic processes were omitted, owing to Kristensen's ability to consistently compare afterlife themes in both ancient Egypt and Greece in a single volume. While subsequent related studies have been carried out more recently, the goal here is to extend back in scholarship before a rigid, materialistic methodology took over.

However, to show the author is no mere spokesperson for Kristensen, the following criticism is offered:

> The skepticism towards the ruling paradigms of his time could have made Kristensen into a scholar with a lasting influence. Unfortunately, this has not been the case…. Whichever god he approached, whichever ritual he analyzed, he always found 'absolute life' and/or 'absolute wisdom,' without ever supplying a detailed argument for this leading principle. Even in the first, introductory chapter of his *Life out of Death* the curious reader is left in the cold as to what 'absolute life,' which appears in the subtitle of that chapter, really means. As Waardenburg has well noted: Kristensen 'could not express himself well abstractly and what he wrote about his method appears rather opaque.'[2]

Now on to Kristensen: "The relationship between the Greek religion and eastern religions [can] no longer be denied. Recent archeological discoveries have shown this in the case of many Greek gods. On Crete, in Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, and Babylonia—not to mention Thrace—one finds sources of what used to be called Greek cults."[3]

In other words, a common thread exists between the two cultures, which justifies their pairing together. When surveyed according to Kristensen's method, a number of similarities crop up, particularly among afterlife images, exclusive religious cults, and burial rites. Iconography such as the snake, bird, and boat recur among the vast array of images utilized by both groups.

In his book, Kristensen strongly asserts that Egypt and Greece share a similar attitude concerning the afterlife and what awaits human beings there. This attitude exerted a "penetrating influence on … the spiritual life of these people."[4] Kristensen believes that although the two religions are not without their immediate differences, those differences do not "necessarily exclude an equally real similarity."[5] For Kristensen, various aspects such as the construction of sacred temples and sites, the iconography, and the correlation between myths connects the two cultures in a special way; and then there are the Orphic gold leaves and Egyptian funerary texts, which will be discussed later.

It is safe to assume that a common current of special knowledge about the afterlife flows into both the ancient Egyptian and Greek religions; though veiled at first glance, this relationship manifests itself in the myths of Osiris and the myths of Orpheus in the underworld, both of which impart a kind of hidden mystery code intended to transmit instructions about entering the afterlife properly.

In addition to these myths, certain texts were prepared to help facilitate the deceased's passage through the afterlife. In both cases ritual burial and preparation of the dead body played a key role, including the mummification process and the placing of engraved golden "leaves" in the tombs of dead Orphic initiates. We see an emphasis placed on the conduct of the deceased's burial, instead of a concern for how they lived their life, morally speaking, which is the dominant paradigm of today.

Judging from the similarities between Egypt and Greece, we may presume the afterlife journey was of significant importance to these ancient peoples, exerting a greater command over everyday conduct and suggesting a superiority of death over one's life experiences. However, as Kristensen states:

> … many will think it strange that ethic considerations manifestly were not determinative in forming man's image of eternal life … [and yet] it will be seen that according to Egyptian and also Greek beliefs ethical law was contained in the cosmic order of life.[6]

Ancient Egypt

No study of ancient Egypt can begin without briefly mentioning Egyptian living conditions along the Nile banks as so much of their religion and cosmology was derived therefrom. Being situated along the mighty river, Egyptian society regularly awaited the annual overflowing of its banks for the purposes of agriculture and farming. For the Egyptians, this was seen as an act of fertility, the upsurge of water saturating the parched, receptive earth and generating new life for the crops and plant life. Thus, for the Egyptians, "the sky, Nut, was a woman, while Earth, Geb, was a man, since the earth carried the Nile flood."[5]

Above all, one thing is certain of this ancient society, which is that they possessed more thoughts about death than thoughts about life.[7] And they upheld a belief in the divine nature of deceased human beings. Thus death had a double meaning for them. It was their enemy in some respects, but it was, likewise, the source of their eternal life. The reasoning for their preoccupation with the subject is clear. Even the annual flooding of the Nile had a double meaning for them, bringing both life with the crops and death from the dangerous floods.[8]

Osiris, ruler of the underworld, was one of the main deities associated with the afterlife and the dead. He had already undergone death and resurrection owing to the well-known myth where his brother Set conspired to have him killed, cut him apart, and dispersed him.[9] But he was then put back together via the mummification process and brought to life by his wife Isis, at which point he assumed rule over the underworld.

> "Look: I have found you lying on your side, O completely inert one! My sister, said Isis to Nepthys, it is our brother, this. Come that we may lift up his head! Come that we may reassemble his bones! … Let this not remain inert in our hands! … Osiris, live, Osiris! May the completely inert one who is on his side rise. I am Isis."[10]

Many cults were formed around this crucial figure, and thus when the deceased was faced with his journey in the underworld it was necessary for him to identify himself as Osiris, which we find in the Egyptian Book of the Dead. The aspect of the being which embarked upon this journey was even known as the Osiris-Soul. Therefore, identification with the king Osiris was critical for the deceased to survive the underworld.[11] And such identification, or spells, needed vociferation because for the Egyptians the spoken word was seen as magical; it was the ordering component out of which chaos was forced into logical order—i.e. the word is what causes the divine act of creation, of giving life.[12] This concept is highly related to the ancient Greek idea of the logos of reasoning capabilities. For example, "… stoics based their notion of the material cosmos on a divine fire called logos. This material suffused the universe with a reasoning power."[13] Thus, the logos was seen as ordering creation out of formlessness and chaos.

With this type of magical protection, especially as laid down in funerary texts such as The Book of the Dead (New Kingdom 1540-1075 B.C.E.), recently deceased souls could reach

the fields of Aaru, or the Field of Reeds, an Egyptian version of Heaven or Paradise. This also parallels directly with Elysium or the Elysian Fields, which was the ancient Greek variation of the same place.

Other predominant Egyptian deities included Ra, the sun god, and then his opposite, the symbol of evil incarnate known as the Apep snake. Like Osiris, this snake was viewed as the sign of death and renewal[14] due to its annual skin shedding; however, it did not contain the quality of resurrection as did the king of the underworld, whose very existence offered the living a possibility of transcending death. Moreover, the Apep snake was specifically identified as the enemy of Ra. When the sun god traveled from west to east after nightfall, he traveled through the Kingdom of the Dead and symbolically battled and defeated Apep. This battle was considered inspiration for the recently deceased and was depicted on tomb walls and within funerary texts. The image of the snake turns up again when we explore ancient Greece, and it will also be recognizable from the Genesis story. Apep was the source of chaos and together with Ra the typical enemy of the deceased.

> In the hereafter the deceased (like the gods and usually together with them) carries on his victorious battle against the powers of death. Numerous texts deal with the dangers and the enemies which there threatening him with total annihilation so that he 'dies the second death,' thus dying in the absolute sense of the word never to rise up again … The dead man like Ra travels during the night across the back of Apep and defeats the snake be it in the depth of the Kingdom of Death or at the eastern horizon.[15]

Thus, another prescribed formula for the deceased to emerge victorious from their afterlife journey was to utter the words "I am the sun god Ra, Atum, Khepera" time and time again to the many foes of the underworld, including Apep, as cited in funerary texts.[16] Both Osiris and Ra were seen as separate and yet interconnected, as Egyptian cosmology and myth are far from being cohesive.[17] One reason for this may be attributed to the fact that Ra and Osiris were in the underworld at night, when Ra was riding his solar disk from west to east, preparing to arise again with the dawn.

The type of divine self-identification mentioned here also appears in the Orphic "gold leaves" found in ancient Greece, where proclaiming oneself as an equal to the gods has the effect of granting certain allowances in the afterlife. Moreover, these "leaves" were discovered along with the remains of the deceased, meaning they were placed in the coffins or burial plots at the time of interment. As such, they function as a symbolic reminder, notes taken for a post-mortem exam, which will assist the deceased to pass the challenges they encounter while traveling in the underworld.

Burial rituals and symbolically cartographic hieroglyphs were very important for ancient Egyptians when burying their deceased. This began with the act of mummification, in which the dead body was bound up with cloth. Symbolically, the bandages or cloth represented the magical knot, seen in some images as looking like the mathematical infinity symbol, also called a lemniscate in algebraic geometry, and recognizable as the numerical figure 8 laying on its side. This symbol was often placed inside the hand of the deceased, which was to indicate the resurrection of both man and gods in universal life.[18] By binding the entire body in this symbolic cloth, it is possible the priests were hoping to wrap up the deceased within the folds of eternity. Important spell books such as The Book of the Dead and the New Kingdom Books of the Netherworld were inscribed on scrolls and illustrated on the walls of tombs and coffins, replete with instructions and magical pronouncements meant to facilitate safe passage to the Field of Reeds. Other items of importance included the Canopic Jars which held the deceased's organs, humanoid coffins, geometrically aligned tombs, the burial masks, and some of the deceased's personal effects.

Once the deceased was prepared and placed into his elaborate death chamber, the journey of the afterlife began in earnest. His soul exited the tomb in the form of an anthropomorphized bird known as the Ba-bird, of which there are

countless hieroglyphic representations. According to the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the goal was to accompany Ra in his solar barque and enter into the cyclic circle of the sun, thus transcending death and then, presumably, entering the Field of Reeds. But numerous trials and obstacles were situated in the way. Most notably, the 125th chapter of the Book of the Dead, where the deceased comes before Osiris and is "judged" before the 42 judges. His heart is placed upon a giant scale, with the symbol of justice or *ma'at* as a counterweight. He must then utter the prescribed dialogue lines both to Osiris and the 42 judges. He is questioned and must recite a litany of proclamations to prove his purity to the judges (which include other gods, such as Thoth). The goal of this line of questioning is to give the deceased a chance to reveal his righteousness and assume the title of "Osiris," which is conferred upon those who go forward into immortality, as Osiris did before them. This is why the dead soul is always referred to as Osiris throughout the Book of the Dead.

Thus speaks the famous litany of the 125th chapter:

> O Wide-strider who came forth from Heliopolis, I have not done wrong … O Fire-embracer who came forth from Kheraha, I have not robbed … O Nosey who came forth from Hermopolis, I have not stolen … O Swallower of Shades who came forth from Kernet, I have not slain people … O Burning One who came forth from backwards, I have not told lies … O Doubly Evil One who came forth from Busirite Nome, I have not had intercourse with a married woman … [etc.] … [etc.] …[19]

If the deceased performs all this correctly, and if his heart is judged as "pure," then he is allowed to proceed. While this imagery will sound familiar to modern religious views of the afterlife, and is even known in some circles as the Ten Commandments of the Book of the Dead, Kristensen adjures us to be cautious:

> … ma'at has little or nothing to do with ethical standards. Its life is the mystery of spontaneous life, i.e. the mystery of resurrection … We consider cosmic law (the law of nature) and ethical law as totally different ideas … The judgment of the deceased before Osiris, after his heart has been weighed on Ma'at's scale, was not an ethical judgment in our sense of the word.[20]

Thus, the Egyptian view of the afterlife did not depend on moral actions performed during this life, but rather on the "purity" or harmonious orderliness of the soul of the deceased, which determined whether or not he was fit to enter into the fields of immortality. This worthiness was largely determined by proper burial practices having been performed, as well as the proper spells and magical words uttered at the prescribed times.

Those not found "pure" ran the risk of being devoured by crocodiles, snakes, and other wild beasts, and certain spells in the Book of the Dead, such as spells 31-35, are directed against these adversaries. If the deceased is determined to be worthy, passage may be possible, but his or her journey is still not over, as there are many more gateways through which to pass, and each one is guarded by still more fearsome beasts that can only be overcome by knowing and uttering their names and reciting the correct spells.[21] Other penalties for "impurity" or not being duly prepared include a lake of fire, another "second death" (this one total obliteration), and being devoured by Apep, the enemy of the sun god.

Here we find a crucial distinction between the way these ancient peoples viewed the afterlife and our own, current views. Our modern conception, more or less, is that the afterlife is a portal into heaven (or hell), into which the deceased passes, and then time and activity just cease—the story ends. Your fate is thus determined by the life that you lived: you were good, you go to heaven; bad, you go to hell. With the ancient Egyptians, as well as with the ancient Greeks, as we shall see, it was not that simple.

Although the moral life of the deceased was not entirely dismissed, it was not the be-all and end-all of the story. Instead, a complex journey awaited, rife with dangers and challenges, to which the deceased was subjected. This, then, became the most important aspect of the after-

life, which these people expressed in every nuance of their society and culture.

Ultimately, for the ancient Egyptians the destination of their journey through the afterlife was resurrection and eternal life in the Field of Reeds where once and for all they entered the realm of the gods, not merely as faithful subjects but truly as one of them, one of the immortal creative divinities who could never die. As we shall see, this concept is strikingly similar to the one held by the Orphic Mystery cults of ancient Greece—as both religious systems emphasized what to do in the afterlife, rather than how to act in this life.

Ancient Greece

With Greece, we are primarily interested in the mystery religions, particularly with the Orphic cults. Admittedly Zeus and his pantheon of Greek gods, and their respective mythologies, would seem to parallel Egyptian mythologies, though these Greek myths were more of an exoteric form of religion—exoteric taken from the Greek *exōterikos* literally meaning external and according to Merriam-Webster: "suitable to be imparted to the public [only]."

On the other hand, the mystery religions concerned themselves with mystic experience, i.e. direct contact with the divine, offered only to the exclusive, initiated members. Kristensen defines the mystery religions as "initiation into eternal life, which is to say the mystery of death."[22] The experience of initiation into one of these religions conferred what Greeks called *gnosis*, special knowledge of the divine, and wiped out fears of death. For initiates, the ritual experience of being admitted into these cults took them bodily into the underworld, so that afterward their conviction about the possibility of an afterlife became unshakable, and the rest of their life was devoted to pursuing immortality and godhood in the afterlife. In the words of Plutarch, "… the initiate, perfect by now, set free and loose from all bondage, walks about, crowned with a wreath, celebrating the festival together with the other pure people, and he looks down on the uninitiated, unpurified crowd in this world in mud and fog beneath his feet."[23]

Beliefs like these, couched in highly symbolic language and iconography, are what link the ancient Greeks with the ancient Egyptians, more so than any exoteric pantheon. While the mystery religions were practiced only by initiated members, their existence and their beliefs occupied much of the cultural imagination. Myths were the most important part of ancient Greek religion—indeed, of all religions—and these mystery myths interwove in and out of the exoteric polytheism. Many of the dramatic works of that time also mentioned mystery religions or dealt with them directly, and some of the individualities surrounding these esoteric religions were very popular, such as Dionysus, Orpheus, and Persephone. Though much of ancient Greek life championed material expressiveness within the sensible, the mystery religions took up the other end, concerning themselves with death, the afterlife, and the underworld.

Principal among these were the Dionysian Mysteries, which exalted the death and rebirth of Dionysus, similar to the Cult of Osiris in ancient Egypt. Within this mystery were still more esoteric practices such as the Orphic. Orpheus, while related to Dionysus, offered his own unique example for the safe journey in the afterlife, and it was very common to have both Dionysus and Orpheus present in the same mystery system.[24] Herodotus, the historian, uses them synonymously, and asserts that the rites for both were virtually identical. Worshipers of the Dionysian mysteries claimed their ritual came from Orpheus, owing to the fact that he was the god of poetry and a song-writing lyricist, and so they based their beliefs on the poetic writings of Orpheus.[24] The following is a brief summary of the Orpheus legend sketched by G.R.S. Mead in his 1896 book *Orpheus*:

Son of Calliope (one of the muses) and Eagrus, King of Thrace, Orpheus was the first singer, poet, and divine singer. With his seven-stringed lyre, he played the songs of harmony, and all manner of men flocked to hear him play, and wild beasts lay down at his feet, so beautiful was his music, of which Apollo had been his instructor. But great tragedy was in store for Orpheus. His beloved, Eurydice, was

bitten by a serpent lurking in the high grass. Orpheus desperately tries to relieve the pain of his beloved, and his music was said to resound through the hills, yet in vain. Eurydice eventually dies and goes to Hades in the underworld. Compelled, Orpheus follows after her and persuades the king of death to release Eurydice. So impressed is Hades with Orpheus's lyre music that she is permitted once again to return to the earth—but on one condition: Orpheus must not look back as together they travel out of the underworld. But when they almost reach the boundary of death, his anxiety becomes so great that he turns to see if his beloved is still following him. At that moment, she is instantly taken from his sight. Orpheus dies thereafter from grief, possibly torn into bits by the Bacchanals (a popular death in Greece), and the muses collect his remains and bury them, yet his head continues to sing on the island of Lesbos.[25]

Thus with the ancient Greeks, as with the Egyptians, death was viewed as both the great enemy and the sublime liberator, conferring upon the deceased eternal life, as well as admission into the paradisiacal fields of the afterlife. For them, the idea of cosmic immortality was no mere metaphor, but a true destination to be reached via an arduous route of distractions, penalties, and gateways.

What this myth has to tell us about ancient Greece and its mystery religions is that Orpheus journeyed to the underworld and returned with special knowledge about how to pass successfully through it. This information was then revealed to members of the Orphic mystery cults and, as we shall see, inscribed upon "golden leaves" known also as the "golden tablets" and interred within the tombs of dead initiates.

In Egypt, only a fraction of the population was literate, few could access the Book of the Dead reproduced on tomb walls, and still fewer had access to the papyrus manuscript. The elite of Egyptian society, the pharaohs, had strong beliefs regarding the afterlife, but possession of a soul and expectation of immortality depended on social status. The majority were forgotten after their deaths. So it would seem that we are looking at two elitist funerary religions, since in Egypt the elite was based on social class, while in Greece it stemmed from initiation into the mysteries.

However, there did occur in Egypt what J. Edward Wright refers to in his book *The Early History of Heaven* as the democratization of heaven, where this private knowledge of the afterlife gradually passed down from pharaoh exclusivity with the Pyramid Texts, to monarch exclusivity with the Coffin Texts, and finally to larger accessibility with the economical Book of the Dead.[26] Similarly, there are accounts of Orpheus being engaged in a similar dissemination of knowledge, and in one myth he is said to have been killed by a lightning bolt from Zeus for just this reason.[27] Thus we find a parallel stream running through both cultures, one that confines itself primarily to life after death and knowledge thereof.

One of the greatest discoveries in recent archeology and epigraphy is just these golden leaves which were buried with the initiates of the Orphic-Bacchic mystery religions. The research and scholarship surrounding these artifacts is similar to that which has been done on ancient Egypt—that of characterizing beliefs and an approach to the afterlife of the ancient Greeks. The first of the leaves was found in the early 1800s, slightly damaged in what is now called Stongoli, Italy, but which used to be known as Petelia. Since nothing of these tablets was ever mentioned in ancient Greek texts, they were something of a curiosity. Over the course of the late 1800s and early 1900s, more of them were discovered, both in Greece and Italy (what was ancient Rome). However, due to their oddity and specialty, not much was known about them outside of certain academic

circles, and it is only recently, after a long challenge of handling the translation, that the materials and scholarship have been made available in English.[28] The insights into the afterlife these amazing artifacts offer us are strikingly similar to some of the beliefs held by ancient Egyptians.

These leaves or tablets were usually made of gold, small and very thin, often folded into a tiny envelope-like shape, and sometimes worn as necklaces or amulets. Inscribed in Greek letters, they offered a summary or a reminder of what the deceased must say in order to pass through the afterlife safely and reach the Elysium (or the Elysian Fields), which is the Greek version of the Field of Reeds. And just as in Egypt, there were numerous hazards facing the deceased, obstacles that strove to prevent the unworthy from entering that divine destination. The following passage is taken from a golden tablet found in the cist-grave of a woman in 400 B.C.E. in Calabria. The tablet was rectangular, folded, and placed upon the upper chest of the deceased, suggesting the possibility of a necklace. Notice the similarities between the proclamations here and those that we encountered in the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

> This is the work of memory, when you are about to die … down to the well-built house of Hades. There is a spring to the right side, and standing by it a white cypress … Do not even go near this spring! Ahead you will find from the Lake of Memory, cold water pouring forth; there are guardians before it. They will ask you … what you are seeking in the darkness of murky Hades. Say, "I am a son of Earth and starry Sky, I am parched with thirst and am dying; but quickly grant me cold water from the Lake of Memory to drink" … and they will grant you to drink, and you, too, having drunk will go along the sacred road on which other glorious initiates and bachoi travel.[29]

Many of the other golden tablets reveal similar instructions, specifically what to do and what to say, and when. So again we find in ancient Greece, as in Egypt, not a judgment of moral deeds done in life, but rather a specific litany to be recited, which grants the deceased admission into paradise. We also have a central figure or a guide: Osiris in Egypt, and Orpheus-Bacchius in Greece. Consider the following from a tablet found inside a sarcophagus in Macedonia:

> I am parched with thirst and am dying … I am a son of Earth and starry Sky …
> But my race is heavenly … Pure and sacred to Dionysus … Bacchius am I …[30]

Still other tablets are even more elaborate and announce the attainment of immortality of godhood for the deceased: "Happy and blessed, you will be a god instead of a mortal," and, "…accept this gift of Memory, sung of among mortals … come, by law grown to be divine." And the litanies often end thus: "A kid I fell into milk."[30] This latter is perhaps a reference to the milk and honey of heaven, and the kid being the soul returned to its infant, original state, that of purity and innocence. We might conjecture about the Lake of Memory, and to drink therefrom is to recall one's own divinity, which is forgotten while being incarnated on the physical plane, this inner divinity being an important principle of all mystery religions.

After being properly buried and bestowed with a golden leaf, the deceased initiate entered into the underworld and there encountered the same imagery as we encountered in ancient Egypt. They travel over water in a cosmic boat: the Nile in Egypt and the River Styx in Greece (also the forbidden spring and the Lake of Memory, as mentioned in the Orphic Gold Tablets). The snake makes an appearance, symbolized in Orphic iconography as the serpent crawling out from under the half-open lid of the Dionysian mystery casket. The snake represented the demon of the earth, Dionysus, and the chest his dwelling place, the symbol of the grave and the land of the dead. The owl of Athena, goddess of wisdom, is also depicted on pottery and on burial mound steles, along with the snake and boat, these three images coalescing into something that would seem Egyptian. The presence of her owl suggests that somehow wisdom dwelled in the land of the dead, dwelled in death.

Thus with the ancient Greeks, as with the Egyptians, death was viewed as both the great enemy and the sublime liberator, conferring upon the deceased eternal life, as well as admission into the paradisiacal fields of the afterlife. For them, the idea of cosmic immortality was no mere metaphor, but a true destination to be reached via an arduous route of distractions, penalties, and gateways. Immortality was not granted to the deceased because he or she lived a moral life while here on earth. The deceased were required to *know* certain information, even to memorize it; also to be prepared accordingly before death—all this resulting in the means by which to successfully enter the paradisiacal fields of immortality. Unlike today the afterlife was an active event, instead of passive ideology.

Conclusion

For ancient peoples such as the Egyptians and the Greeks, the afterlife occupied a central focus in their thoughts and beliefs. Not only that, it played a key role in their daily lives, as every moment was a preparatory movement toward that final journey. According to Kristensen, "[these] people were possessed more by thoughts about death than thoughts about life…. Clearly the Egyptian kings like all Egyptians were more concerned about their dwellings in the afterlife than those in this life."[31]

For these people, the afterlife journey was not some imaginative vision, serving more as a didactic allegory or instructive narrative, but a serious reality. Dedication, knowledge, focus, and study for that important moment demanded the utmost solemnity. As is clearly present in the iconography, ritual texts, and burial structures of the two cultures, the afterlife played a prominent role within their societies. Judging from the text of the Egyptian Book of the Dead and the Orphic Gold Tablets, it can be concluded that these ancient peoples emphasized their conduct and postmortem behavior, as opposed to the moral scrutiny placed on corporeal deeds in modern culture.

Based on the abundance of archeological evidence these cultures left behind, one could wonder why they placed such importance on the afterlife, and why it was more important than life itself, and to be taken literally. These were by no means unintelligent people, and their level of insight into the workings of nature, life, and death, though represented symbolically, is more literal than our present interpretation. It would seem dismissive to label them as merely ignorant because they lacked the scientific knowledge we today possess. This is clear from the level of mathematical, architectural, astronomical, philosophical and linguistical prowess they displayed, all of which are still being studied today. There would seem to be some other reason, some deeper truth, which they had tapped into, but which is now lost. The persistence and universality of heaven and the afterlife in humanity's worldview reminds us that this concept is not going away, that humanity is unlikely to give up its belief in the idea that there is a meaningful existence succeeding physical death.

Therefore, it is of benefit to look at these ancient practices with a fresh eye as to their validity, instead of placing all of our emphasis on the present moment-by-moment living. Losing our belief in the reality of the afterlife might have global consequences, for which we are not prepared. It is possible to envision a world that is totally and compulsively obsessed with material existence and material goods, having done away with postmortem ideals. Yet with these material goods becoming more and more depleted, a war over resources would result. Thus, there must be something held aloft that will inspire us away from complete materialism. There would be nothing more unfortunate than to wrap up this life, only to find that those innumerable gates, tests, dangers, and practiced recitals awaited us on the other side. Sadly, we have no scientific methodology available to determine whether or not this is the case, and so visionary speculation, unfortunately, is one of the few means we currently have at our disposal. However, possibilities might exist for today's students and spiritual seekers in studying some of these ancient texts, which could lead to a greater spiritual understanding.

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[20] Kristensen, *Life out of Death*, 61.

[21] Hornung, *The Ancient Egyptian Books of the Afterlife*, *Book of the Dead*, 21.

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The Apocalypse of St. John

Dorje Jinpa

In the New Testament, John, the beloved disciple, was privileged to gain a cosmic picture and a true prophetic vision which he embodied in the Apocalypse...[1]

Abstract

This article provides an esoteric interpretation of *The Apocalypse of St. John*. Drawing upon the works of Master Djwhal Khul, the new Terra Lucida teachings,[2] and the writings of Rudolf Steiner it attempts to unveil the hidden archetypal symbolism used by St. John to express a portion of the incoming currents of evolution as they apply to the spiritualization, initiation and alchemical transformation of the Earth into a "Body of Light."

Introduction

The Master Djwhal Khul, whose writings appear under the name of his amanuensis, Alice A. Bailey, and Rudolf Steiner, a seer of remarkable abilities, both state that St. John, the author of *The Book of Revelation*, was an initiate of the Mysteries. This is confirmed from the symbolism he uses throughout this work to veil higher truth, and from the name "Revelation," which in the mystery traditions was used to represent a divine pronouncement or disclosure.

Like many great initiates, the death of St. John at Ephesus is shrouded in mystery. According to Calmet, the 17th century monk and professor of Biblical exegesis, St. John in his old age, "after bidding farewell to his disciples, entered alive into his own open tomb, and disappeared to someplace unknown to mortals."[3] This belief is shared by the Masons, an offspring of the ancient mystery schools, who hold that both St. Johns—St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist[4]—whose festivals they celebrate at the two solstices, are alive and active in the Great Work of spiritual evolution.

In the *Book of Revelation*, St. John tells us that while he was on the island of Patmos he was visited by a great angel who took him up in spirit where, under the direction of the Christ, he was able to read clairvoyantly the archetypal images concerning a major world event soon to take place. These archetypal images express pictorially a portion of the incoming currents of evolution, symbolized in the text as a "river of living water" that flows out from the Throne of God, carrying the fiery impulse of the divine Plan, the will of the Father, to the Earth. Because the images of the divine Plan appear in the spiritual worlds long before they manifest in the physical world, St. John was able to read the future simply by reading these symbolic images.

To read these archetypal symbols accurately more than the intellect is required. They must be approached through a refined esoteric sense, a spiritual intuition that stems from the heart essence of wisdom. Master Djwhal Khul informs us that one of the best ways to develop this spiritual intuition is through the study and accurate interpretation of symbols.[5]

Rudolf Steiner maintained that the images of the Apocalypse were given by John in much the same form as he saw them. They were given without much interpretation to prevent them from being distorted and misused by those who are not yet ready spiritually to receive them. The deeper arcane teachings of the great

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Mysteries are not yet ready spiritually to receive them. The deeper arcane teachings of the great Mystery Schools have always been veiled to ensure that only those who had attained a certain degree of spiritual consciousness would understand the hidden meaning. Such a veiling also prevents, to some degree, the destructive tendency to crystallize and dogmatize the sacred teachings, a tendency which results in arrested growth, decline and retrogression.

According to Steiner, the *Book of Revelation* concerns both the initiation and spiritualization of the Earth, but because these two activities pertain to the secrets of initiation, he states that he cannot reveal their deeper significance to the public. However, in a series of lectures on the *Apocalypse of St. John*, he gives this hint: "The Earth together with all its beings will be changed into a heavenly body and physical substance as such will disappear."[6] With the support of the esoteric writings of Djwhal Khul and the new *Terra Lucida Revelation*, it would seem that this great coming event pertains to the alchemical transformation of the Earth into a spiritualized "Body of Light." The cause of the event, we are told, is the cosmic initiation of our Planetary Logos, the Lord of the World. The *Apocalypse of St. John*, therefore, can be seen as a highly veiled prophecy revealing to "those with eyes to see," the effects we can expect as the direct result of this cosmic initiation. This then, might well be the meaning of the prophesy in the *Book of Revelation* concerning the descent of a "New Heaven and a New Earth."

From the writings of Djwhal Khul we learn that the Earth is fast becoming a "sacred planet." The reason for this, we are told, is because our Planetary Logos is in the process of taking a cosmic initiation. He also states that when a Planetary Logos reaches the status of a sacred planet transfiguration occurs.[7] Transfiguration is a technical term meaning the transformation of the consciousness *and its vehicles of expression, including the body,* into their higher counterparts. He goes on to say that this transfiguration process, which takes place at the third initiation, becomes complete, for either a disciple or a Planetary Logos, at the fourth initiation,[8] though of course the latter occurs on a much higher turn of the spiral. Our Planetary Logos, he tells us, is in the process of taking the fourth cosmic initiation and is therefore in the process of transforming His body of manifestation, the Earth, into a highly purified ethereal form.[9] The statement made by St. John that "the Earth was made bright," probably refers to this process.[10]

In a veiled manner, Master Djwhal Khul states in at least two places in his writings that a sacred planet is an etheric planet, one without a lower dense counterpart. "The etheric planetary body is fundamentally *the* body in the case of the sacred planets…"[11]

He indicates some of the effects that this initiation of the Logos will have upon the world:

> The Logos of our scheme is preparing for initiation [the fourth] and hence the terrific tests and trials incident to life on our planet."[12] "This [cosmic] initiation requires the reorganization of the energies through and composing that 'center which we call the race of man…. As our planetary Logos nears the climaxing point of the initiation He is now undergoing… [it] will bring about great, necessary and unexpected changes.[13]

This cosmic initiation is having a profound effect upon the evolution of all the life-forms on the planet. We are told that when a human being takes the fourth initiation the dense physical body as well as the soul body is consumed in the united three fires of the body, mind, and spirit, leaving behind a spiritualized etheric body of light from which a new physical body can be created, or not, as needed. If we apply the law of analogy, "as above so below," we see that in the process of the Planetary Logos taking the fourth cosmic initiation and becoming a sacred planet, the dense physical body of the Earth would also be transformed in the Sacred Fire into its spiritualized etheric counterpart.

In February 1949, Alice Bailey asked the Master Djwhal Khul what he considered to be "the most important and significant events from the spiritual angle at the present time."[14] He answered by giving the following veiled hint:

> This question highlights a theme which I have just given anent the Great Renunciation [the fourth initiation] and its consequent Revelation or (as the Christian churches call them) the Crucifixion and Resurrection….[15]

The fact that Djwhal Khul is applying the fourth initiation to the most important world events of the present time would certainly seem to suggest that he is referring to the planetary initiation of the Logos. The Tibetan Master continues:

> There are five great spiritual events in which all humanity is today sharing, and two which will take place later, when the first five have established their lasting effects. These events are based upon a forced and not upon a spontaneous renunciation (as is the case in the true experience of the Renunciation Initiation); they will lead nevertheless to a revelation which is imminent in its dawning and which will confront humanity before so very long.[16]

The fact that these events are forced may be due to the present extremely unhealthy state of the earth and to the preponderance of negative human karma.

A New Heaven on a New Earth

At the conclusion of the fourth initiation, whether human or planetary, the etheric body that remains is refined and spiritualized through the descent of spiritual energies from above and from the ascent of the subterranean fires from below. For a human being this process has been referred to as the "descent of the Holy Spirit" and the "rising of the kundalini." In the *Book of Revelation* the spiritualization of the ethereal body of the Earth, the future home of the faithful, is symbolically depicted in the following words:

> *I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth; for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea [the water element] was no more. And I saw the Holy City and the New Jerusalem, descending from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband.[17] The marriage of the Lamb has come and his Bride has made Herself ready. It is granted Her to be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure. The fine linen is due to the righteous deeds of the saints.*[18]

The "Bride" can be interpreted as the "New Earth." The "husband" and "Lamb" as the Christ and His Church, the spiritual Hierarchy, who will descend to and unite with the New Earth on etheric levels making of it a heaven on earth. According to Rudolf Steiner and the *Terra Lucida Revelation,* this externalization of the spiritual Hierarchy will take place primarily upon etheric levels. "The Holy One will come," says Enoch, "and the Earth shall be rent asunder! He cometh with ten thousand of his holy ones!"[19]

In the Mysteries this level of spiritual initiation is called the "alchemical wedding," for through the close union of the down-flowing spiritual energies with the essential energies of the human being on the physical plane; the vehicles involved are quickened and intensified to a point where transmutation occurs.

The Bride

> *Then came one of the seven angels… saying 'Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.' And the spirit carried me away to a great high mountain and showed me the Holy City and Jerusalem coming down from heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel…clear as crystal.*[20]
>
> *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*[21]

The Bride is the New World of Ethereal Light into which will descend the heavenly Bridegroom, Christ and His Church, the spiritual Hierarchy. That She will "have the glory of God like the radiance of a rare jewel clear as crystal," that "the Earth was made bright," and "it is granted Her to be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure," can be taken as symbolic references to the fact that the "New Earth" will be ethereal, radiant with light. The words of St. John concerning "the rainbow around the throne," and the "Sea of Glass" would also refer to the radiant light of the ethereal plane. The fact that those who will someday live in these cities will be "clad in white

garments," can be taken to mean that they will be living in their etheric bodies.

This new ethereal world, we are told, will have three primary cities or centers, which in the *Book of Revelation* are called the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, and the City Foursquare. According to Djwhal Khul, the "Holy City" represents the head center of the planetary etheric body and is also called Shamballa. The "New Jerusalem," he says, is the planetary heart center, the future home of the Christ and His Church (the spiritual Hierarchy and the seven ashrams). The "City Foursquare," he tells us, refers to the planetary throat center.[22]

The River of Living Water and the Tree of Life

> *Then he showed me the River of the Living Water, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the [Holy] City, on either side of the river the Tree of Life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree for the healing of nations*.[23]

The River of Living Water can be said to symbolize the incoming flow of spiritual energies as a mighty evolutionary current streaming forth from the Throne of God, Shamballa, and from the Lamb, the Christ, into manifestation on the earth. The living water contains the "fiery impulse" to evolve according to the divine Plan. The river of life carries the Plan, the will of the Logos, into manifestation on the earth.

The Tree of Life, which has its roots in heaven and its fruit on the etheric levels, is the pathway along which the River of Living Water descends. It represents the planetary correspondences to the sutratma and sushumna of a human being, the subtle life thread that connects the etheric body with its higher self in the higher worlds. The twelve pieces of fruit may represent twelve planetary etheric centers.

During initiation, whether human or planetary, the water of life, the Fire of the Holy Spirit, descends along the trunk of the tree, through the crown center (the Holy City) to the centers and the etheric body as a whole. For a human being the River of Life is the Antahkarana, the connecting link between the pilgrim in the body and the three-fold Spirit. Master Djwhal Khul informs us that:

> Upon the Path of Initiation, the monadic will (of which the Egoic will is the reflection and the individual self-will is the distortion) is gradually transmitted, via the antahkarana, direct to the man upon the physical plane. This produces the higher correspondence of… transmutation and transformation…. This is the 'burning bush' or the burning Tree of Life of Biblical symbolism.[24]

During planetary initiation the spiritual Fire descends to the Holy City, the planetary Crown Chakra, and from there continues down through the Tree of Life to all the centers, where cyclically, once a month at the time of the full moon, it flows out to humanity and the nations of the world.

The Inner Government of the World

The invisible government of the world, the spiritual Hierarchy, is represented in the *Book of the Revelation* as:

> 1) He who sits upon the throne of God, elsewhere known as the Lord of the World.
>
> 2) The Lamb of God, the Christ, the head of the spiritual Hierarchy.
>
> 3) The seven Spirits before the throne, refer to the seven Planetary Logoi, the seven Heavenly Men, the Lords of the Seven Rays, the seven Chohans and seven churches or ashrams.
>
> 4) The twenty-four Elders around the throne of God.
>
> 5) The four angels who dispense divine justice also called the "four creatures," the "four horsemen," the "four Maharajas," and the four Lords of Karma.

Lord of the World

> *At once I was in the spirit and lo, a throne stood in heaven… and He who sat upon it appeared like jasper and carnelian, and*

round the throne was a rainbow that shone like an emerald…. And the twenty-four Elders and the four creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated upon the throne.[25]

According to Djwhal Khul the term "God" here pertains to Sanat Kumara, the Lord of the World, the Eternal Youth and the Creator. His throne is the Holy City, Shamballa, the crown center of the etheric body of the Earth. He goes on to say that Sanat Kumara is manifesting on the etheric Earth through a very high level etheric vehicle in Shamballa.

The Seven Spirits before the Throne

I saw a Lamb standing as though it has been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out to the earth.[26]

The Lamb of God is the Christ. The seven horns are the seven powers, one for each of the seven rays. The seven eyes symbolize the seven watchful Chohans, the lords of the seven rays who are also the heads of the seven churches or ashrams. These seven spirits of God, as the seven powers and the seven eyes of the Christ, are to be "sent out to the earth." In the writings of Alice A. Bailey, this event is called the "externalization of the Hierarchy."

The Four Angels of the Four Directions

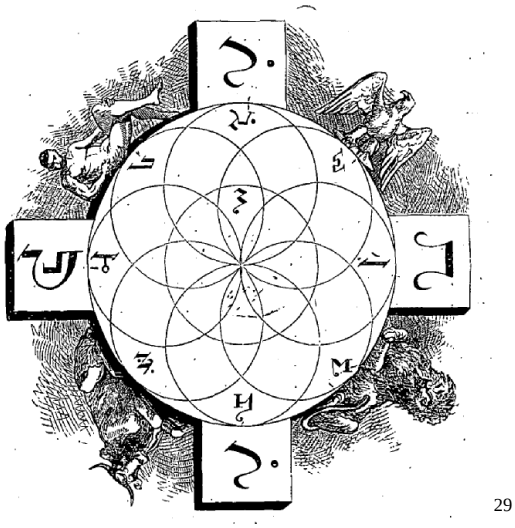
And around the Throne on each side are four living creatures, full of eyes, in front and back: the first like a lion [♌], *the second like an ox* [♉], *the third with the face of a man* [♒], *and the fourth flying like an eagle* [♏]. *Each of the four living creatures had six wings….*"[27]

The four creatures (elsewhere in the *Book of Revelation* they are called "the four angels") symbolically represent the four Lipikas, the four Lords of Karma, who are responsible for enforcing spiritual law, administering justice according to the divine Plan, and keeping a certain level of equilibrium for the Earth. In their capacity as dispensers of divine Justice they are also called the "four horsemen" who fly out on the four winds (energy currents) from the four directions to "square" things with the divine Plan. They have eyes in front and back as they see both the future and the past. Their 24 wings (6 x 4), sometime called the "wings of time," may pertain to the cycles of time from which we derive the 24-hour day. The symbolism of wings becomes apparent through the clairvoyant perception of the lower correspondence of these light rays as issuing from the shoulder centers of initiates and devas (angels) of a certain degree.

 [28]

Figure 1. A depiction of a winged Deva by Godfrey Hodson

In the Mysteries these four creatures, which are under the rule of four zodiacal signs, Leo, Aquarius, Scorpio, and Taurus, represent the Fixed Cross upon which the disciple is karmically tested before he or she can take initiation. The Fixed Cross has been described as a transition in consciousness and an initiation of the soul by the fires of God. It is called the Fixed Cross because the man is stretched upon it by the directed choice and immovable intent of his soul.



29

Figure 2. The Fixed Cross

In the Egyptian Mysteries the mystical four is symbolized by the Sphinx, who guards the entrance to the house of initiation, the Great Pyramid.

The Master Djwhal Khul gives us the following information concerning these four spiritual agents or dispensers of the law.

> Besides these main presiding Personalities in the Council Chamber at Shamballa, there is a group of four Beings Who are the representatives upon the planet of the four Maharajas, or the four Lords of Karma in the solar system, who are specifically concerned with the evolution of the human kingdom at the present time. These four are connected with:
>
> 1. The distribution of karma, or human destiny, as it affects individuals, and through the individuals, the groups.
>
> 2. The care and tabulation of the akashic records. They are concerned with the Halls of Records, or with the "keeping of the book," as it is called in the Christian Bible; they are known in the Christian world as the recording angels.
>
> 3. The participation in solar councils. They alone have the right during the world cycle to pass beyond the periphery of the planetary scheme, and participate in the councils of the Solar Logos. Thus they are literally planetary mediators, representing our Planetary Logos and all that concerns Him in the greater scheme of which He is but a part. Co-operating with these karmic Lords are the large groups of initiates and devas who occupy themselves with the right adjustment of, a) World karma, b) Racial karma, c) National karma, d) Group karma, e) Individual karma, and who are responsible to the Planetary Logos for the correct manipulation of those forces and building agencies which bring in the right Egos on the different rays at the correct times and seasons.[30]

The Seven Churches

I heard a great voice saying, "What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia."[31]

The "seven churches," though veiled behind the names of the seven towns that formed

a circle near Patmos, symbolically represent what Djwhal Khul calls the "seven ashrams of the spiritual Hierarchy." In the ancient mysteries, they were called the seven Mystery Schools and the seven Lodges of the Great White Brotherhood. They represent the outer expressions of the seven evolutionary currents or rays, each ruled by a sacred planet and each governed by an angel and a Chohan or Ray Lord. In St. John's time the religion in the area around the island of Patmos was a Phrygian sect of the Greek Mysteries. Christian churches had not yet been established to any degree in the seven towns that carry the names of the seven churches.

The letters to the seven churches or ashrams show the strengths and weaknesses of the brethren of these seven schools or ashrams according to the ray qualities that govern them. The term "Asia" is a blind for the "East," a directional symbol meaning the source of the rising sun, the source of wisdom.

Everything that is seen and heard in St. John's vision is thought to pertain to the future. This includes the seven Ashrams of the Hierarchy, which according to Master Djwhal Khul are only accessible to initiates of the third degree, but which will in the future appear on the New Earth with the return of the Christ. These secret Lodges will, we are told, provide the training ground for disciples of the Great Brotherhood, to prepare them for initiation. Therefore, "What thou seest, write in a book for the seven churches," refers to that which was written specifically for disciples of these seven ashrams.

A deeper understanding of the seven churches can be gained by comparing them with the seven ashrams and the corresponding seven rays, which define them, as explained by Master Djwhal Khul.[32]

Opening the Seven Seals

> *And I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back. It was sealed with seven seals. And I saw a powerful angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"*[33]
>
> *"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain [the Christ]."*[34]

The "seven seals" express the seven stages of the application of the divine Plan as it pertains to the transformation of the world. To open a seal is to reveal that stage of the process. While we don't know the time frame for this event, the stages may correspond somewhat as follows:

1. Opening the first seal reveals that due to negative karma the bodies of approximately one-fourth of the people will be destroyed from famine, poverty, wars, and natural disasters.

2. The opening of the second seal reveals that the elect of those who pass on will be given white robes (pure, spiritualized etheric bodies) to await their comrades who are still living in dense physical bodies, who will also receive white garments, etheric bodies, when their turn comes.

3. A great earthquake will occur. It will seem like all the stars are falling from the sky, the sun will turn black, the moon red, and all the mountains, land, and sky will disappear from view. The elect will then be given white (etheric) garments to stand before the throne of God.

4. All 144,000 will stand together in white robes (bodies of light) before the throne of the Logos. They will experience no more hunger or thirst but will be given nourishment as living waters (prana) directly from the sun.

5. Those that remain on the dying dense physical earth will experience the fire of karmic retribution.

> *The New Jerusalem which cometh down from heaven, first in the hearts and lives of the followers of the Christ and latter for humanity and the world.*[35]

Conclusion

We might conclude from this article that *The Book of Revelation* and the *Scroll with Seven Seals*, which it contains, gives in symbols the blueprints for the divine Plan concerning the initiation of the Planetary Logos as well as the effects that this profound event will

have upon humanity and the world. And while the intensity and frequency of world upheavals and natural cataclysms seems to indicate that we are approaching close to this event the timetable is not given. There is some indication in the *Terra Lucida teachings* that this event will coincide with the beginning of the new age. This probably refers to the Age of Aquarius, which according to my best calculations begins sometime in the first half of the twenty-first century. Master Djwhal Khul mentions the year 2025 several times throughout his writing as a time of *major* importance in the history of humanity. He also states that the externalization of the Hierarchy, the coming Avatar of Synthesis,[36] the reappearance of Christ, and the 'restoration of the Mysteries are all a part of the one great event for which all men wait. He adds further: "It will be obvious, if you have considered my words carefully, that a great spiritual movement is under way—*perhaps the greatest of all time*!" [37]

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1 Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A Word Problem* (1950: reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1978) 173.

2 Terra Lucida (World of Light) is the name given to a series of texts about the ascension of the Earth into a subtler realm for the coming cycle of evolution. Based on transmissions from the inner world, these texts address some of the effects of the Initiation now being taken by Sanat Kumara, including a shift into the etheric plane for the continued unfoldment of human and planetary consciousness. (For more information contact Nancy Seifer: nfseifer@verizon.net)

3 See *Mankind: Their Origin and Destiny*, by Arthur Dyot Thomson (1872; reprint; Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2010), 310.

4 See for example, *The Two St. John's* at: http://www.themasonictrowel.com/Articles/Symbolism/st_johns_files/two_st_johns.htm (accessed November 18, 2014).

5 Alice A. Bailey, *Glamour: A World Problem* (1950: reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1978), 9.

6 Rudolf Steiner, *Apocalypse of Saint John* (1943; reprint; London: Anthroposophic Press, 1961), 145.

7 Alice A. Bailey, *Esoteric Astrology* (1951, reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1979), 207.

8 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and Initiations* (1961; reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1989), 354.

9 Alice A Bailey, *A Treatise on White Magic* (1961; reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1989), 331.

10 Revelation 18:1, (NOAB).

11 Alice A. Bailey, *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (1951; reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1979), 104-105. (Emphasis in the original).

12 Ibid., 374

13 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and the Initiations*, 238-239

14 Ibid., 741

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid. 741

17 Revelation 21:1, (NOAB).

18 Revelation 19:7, (NOAB).

19 The Book of Enoch, XC 18, Joseph Lumpkin (Blountsville, AL: Fifth Estate, Inc., 2011).

20 Revelation 9:1-1, (NOAB).

21 Revelation 19:10, (NOAB).

22 Alice A. Bailey, *The Externalisation of The Hierarchy* (1961; reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1989), 107.

23 Revelation 22:1, (NOAB).

24 Alice A. Bailey, *The Rays and Initiations*, 31.

25 Revelation 6:16, (NOAB).

26 Revelation 5:6, (NOAB).

27 Revelation 4: 6, (NOAB).

28 "A Deva or "Mountain God," as perceived by Geoffrey Hodson, in *The Kingdom of the Gods* (1952: reprint; Adyar India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1987), 220. This image is in the public domain.

29 P. Christian, *Histoire de la magie et du monde surnaturel* 1890 page 170. The letters depicted on this 'Rose-Cross' are taken from 'Alphabet of the Magi' where each letter represents a principle. The letters on the four arms of the cross find a correspondence in the letters IN-RI.

30 Alice A. Bailey, *Initiation Human and Solar* (1961; reprint; New York: Lucis Trust, 1989), 40-41.

31 Revelation 1:1, (NOAB).

32 See *Esoteric Psychology*, vol. I & II, by Alice A. Bailey.

33 Revelation 5:1-2, (NOAB).

34 Revelation 5:12, (NOAB).

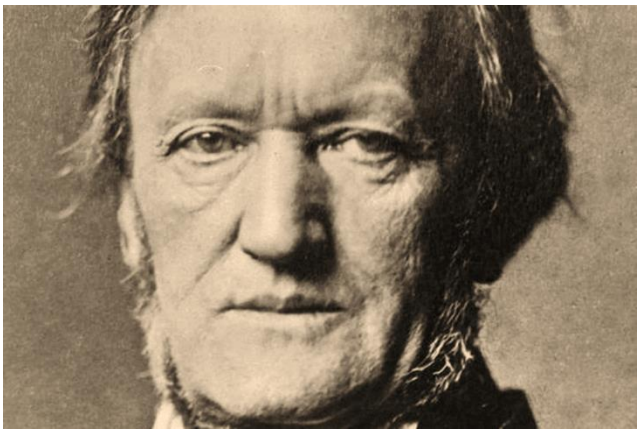
35 Harriette Augusta Curtiss, *The Key to the Universe* (1917; reprint; Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011), 142

[36] See my article, the *Coming Avatar of Synthesis* at: http://www.souledout.org/newworldreligion/avatars/avatarofsynthesis.pdf.

[37] Alice Bailey, *Externalization of the Hierarchy*, 649.

Richard Wagner: An Esoteric Perspective

Donna M. Brown



(Figure 1. Portrait of Richard Wagner)[1]

I have found true Art to be at one with true Religion.[2]

I believe that this Art proceeds from God, and lives within the hearts of all illumined men; - I believe that he who once has bathed in the sublime delights of this high Art, is consecrate to Her forever, and never can deny Her; - I believe that through Art all men are saved.[3] (Richard Wagner)

Abstract

This article seeks to familiarize the reader with the multi-leveled complex of ideas underlying the artistic works of Richard Wagner, one of the most influential, but hotly-debated composers who ever lived. The article touches upon Wagner's early life and the psychological types that qualified his psycho-spiritual field. The political, philosophical and religious underpinnings of his creative genius as expressed in his various operas and written works are also discussed. In view of the controversy over the composer's anti-Semitism, a brief section on Wagner's attitude toward the Jews is included as well as a section on his anarchist activities. The main thrust of the article explores Wagner's involvement with Greek and Teutonic myth, with metahistorical processes and his ever-evolving interest in a wide-range of spiritual and esoteric ideas, which both inform and emanate from his transcendent music dramas. To this end, the article seeks to show that one of Wagner's foremost concerns was the "innermost Soul" and his desire to shed an initiating light on "the dark night that envelops men's Souls."[4]

Introduction

Richard Wagner has been described by both his admirers and his critics as one of the most revolutionary figures in the history of music. At one end of the spectrum, he is viewed as being "a New Age Messenger of Music, whose operas play upon the inner vehicles of man, awakening and stimulating certain latent centers."[5] On the other, he is seen as a repugnant musical genius whose writings provided the framework for Hitler's ideology and

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one of the darkest periods in human history. No other composer is so adored or reviled; likewise, no other music induces such intense emotional reactions of either love or hate. Putting all questions about Wagner the man aside, listeners are either enraptured by the expressive beauty of his musical creations and their immense spiritual depth, or they tend to view his artistic works as flamboyant and tediously drawn-out displays of self-indulgence.

While aspects of Wagner's legacy remain in question to this day, his titanic profligacy and unequaled influence over the development of classical music are indisputable. Indeed, Wagner's influence on music was enormous. As a composer, he altered the rules for opera, introducing new ideas in harmony, melodic process (leitmotif) and operatic structure. These achievements resulted in what has been described as "dazzling and unforgettable tapestries that melded orchestral magnificence with the soaring beauty of the human voice."[6] Furthermore, he envisioned a bold new conception of opera that synthesized the many different forms into one all-embracing art form which some of his earliest detractors sarcastically yet aptly termed "the art work of the future."

The timelessness and universality of his music dramas and their ability to be understood through such a variety of perspectives is remarkable. There are a myriad of books interpreting Wagner's work, so many in fact that only Shakespeare and Jesus Christ are thought to have had more books penned about them. One finds, for example, countless treatises on Wagner's work based on the philosophy of Kant, Hegel, Sartre, Schopenhauer and Rousseau, to name a few. Others provide interpretations based on the works of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and feminist psychology. Still others examine the composer's works from the angle of their anti-Semitism or from a mythological, sociological and/or political point of view. All this is to say nothing of the many volumes that have been written about Wagner's fascinating and scandal-laden life or those dedicated solely to a musical analysis of his operatic works.

The composer, who considered himself to be the most German of all men and the very embodiment of the German Spirit,[7] was not only one of the most consequential and innovative figures of nineteenth-century music, he was also an important figure in nineteenth-century cultural history for both his criticism and polemical writing. He penned over 230 books, articles and essays, in addition to over 10,000 letters on a diverse range of topics. His writings have been associated with everything from racism, anti-clericalism, anti-capitalism, and even with nationalist and proto-fascist currents of thought. Moreover, he has tended to serve as something of a scapegoat or lightning rod for all that went wrong with the German system at the turn of the twentieth century.

In addition to the political, philosophical, sociological and psychological dimensions to Wagner's written work and his music dramas, one of the other enthralling elements that one encounters when entering the complex world of his musical creations is the intricate level of allegory and the archetypal symbolism they contain. These elements can be depicted in ways that range from the commonplace to the deeply esoteric, although the esoteric elements are seldom discussed. While this article will touch upon the vast world of allegory and symbolism that is embedded in the operas of Richard Wagner, its primary focus will center on the surprising range of esoteric and spiritual ideas that informed the life of the man and the temple of his music. In so doing, it is hoped that the reader will gain some insight into the composer's life purpose and will begin to understand why Wagner has been called the "Apostle of Music" whose operas should be studied by every serious student of the Mysteries.[8]

Wagner's Personality Typology

In an effort to provide the reader with some insight into the personality and character of Richard Wagner, this article provides an outline of the psychological attitudes that qualified or conditioned his makeup. The outline is based on the application of *the seven archetypal currents* hypothesis that was originally given by Helena Blavatsky, but which was subsequently and significantly expanded by Alice A. Bailey. These seven types provide an integral

psychological approach to understanding what animates an individual and makes him/her what s/he is. The seven psychological types represent the seven predominant characteristics or modifications which condition a human being. As such, they are the primary psychological archetypes. But rather than offer a detailed analysis, this article will be limited to a few examples, leaving it to the readers who have some understanding of this psychological typology to ferret out further examples for themselves.

The seven psychological types as redefined by the Canadian psychologist and psychosynthesis practitioner, René Fugère, are as follows:

1. Willful/Determined
2. Sensitive and Humanist
3. Strategic/Active/Adaptable
4. Creative/Harmonizer
5. Analytical/Practical
6. Idealistic/Committed
7. Organizer/Ordering

The following types are thought to have played a distinct role in Richard Wagner's adaption and orientation toward life.

Type Four - The Creative/Harmonizer. Both the *Essential Self or Soul* and the *Mental Faculties* of Richard Wagner were governed by the *Fourth Psychological Type*. This type can be described as having a strong artistic and aesthetic sense and the ability to create beauty, harmony and equilibrium. A person qualified by this type tends to be dramatic, expressive, especially musical, imaginative and intuitive. The *Type Four* individual tends toward a fighting spirit which eventually results in reconciliation as well as strength and poise. Some of the weaknesses of the *Fourth Type* are constant conflict, ambivalence, worry, agitation, excessive moodiness, a tendency to exaggerate as well as instability and improvidence.

Type One - Will/Power/Determination. Wagner's *Personality* was conditioned by the will and power type. This type is characterized by qualities of leadership, the power to liberate, courage, determination, audacity, self-confidence, synthesis, one-pointed focus and clarity of purpose. Some of the weaknesses of this type are arrogance, self-centeredness, pride, impatience, irritability, destructiveness and a controlling nature.

Type Six - Idealistic/Committed. The Sixth Psychological Type had primary influence over Wagner's *Emotional Field.* This type can be distinguished by idealism, persistence, self-abnegation, intense focus and commitment. Individuals qualified by *Type Six* tend to be passionately motivated by an inspiring vision or strong belief. The negative attributes of this type can express as emotional intensity, a lack of sensitivity, tunnel vision, intolerance, extremism and militancy.

Type Seven - Organizing/Ordering. Wagner's physical body was most likely qualified by the Organizing/Ordering type. A *Type Seven* physical body places an emphasis on formality, is attentive to rhythmic cycles and physical order and detail in his or her environment. The physical body is often extremely sensitive and prone to illness, but is easily trained and capable of great stamina or endurance.

Formative Years

One supreme fact which I have discovered is that it is not willpower, but fantasy-imagination that creates. Imagination is the creative force. Imagination creates reality.
(Richard Wagner)

Wilhelm Richard Wagner—born in Leipzig, Germany on May 22, 1813, into a middle-class, theatrical family—was a quick-witted, mischievous child. He resisted all authority and was so self-assertive, rebellious and unruly that his stepfather, Ludwig Geyer, a painter and playwright, called him "the Cossack."[9] In speaking of his childhood, Wagner says: "I grew up in the wildest of anarchy; it had to be, for then as later no known method ever fitted me, but how much should I have been spared if I had been accustomed to obeying!"[10]

In addition to being a strong-willed and lonely non-conformist—life-long qualities indicative of his *Type One* personality—the young Wagner was a sickly and extremely emotional child who was plagued by acute shyness, a host of

fears, ghostly dreams and ruminations.[11] From his youth onward, Wagner seemed to live in two worlds: an ordinary human world and a numinous world. His experiences of "the other world" are evidenced in some of his many childhood fears, such as his fear that mundane, inanimate objects contained "spirits" and could become living things.[12] Such fear and sensitivity must surely have been engendered, at least in part, by the loss of his father Carl, shortly after his birth, and then by the traumatizing death of his beloved stepfather, Ludwig Geyer, just seven years later. Added to this was a cold, overwhelmed mother, who grossly neglected the troublesome child and is said to have "almost wished him dead."[13] Wagner's strong imagination, excessive inner and outer agitation, along with his acute sense of abandonment, life-long illnesses and frequent desire to kill himself, would also seem to be indicative of the *Fourth Psychological Type*, which is thought to have conditioned both his essential Self and mental faculties. The *Seventh Psychological Type* governing his physical body would have contributed to some of the problems just described.

Despite a number of pronounced weaknesses in character, such as his many indiscretions,[14] moodiness, fierce self-assertiveness, pomposity and his need to be the center of attention, there are quite a few examples of Wagner's compassionate heart— compassion or sympathy born of suffering and pain (which continued into his final days) being one of the virtues or strengths of the *Fourth Type*. This quality or attribute was evidenced in the young Wagner's sensitivity to the suffering of people and animals. His compassion for the suffering of animals was especially pronounced and developed later in life into a strong support for animal rights and a vegetarian diet. An example of Wagner's mature views on the subject can be seen in the following excerpt from his 1880 essay titled *Art and Religion.*

> This teaching [of the sinfulness of murdering and living upon our fellow beings] was the result of a deep metaphysical recognition of a truth; and, if the Brahman has brought to us the consciousness of the most manifold phenomenon of the living world, with it is awakened the consciousness that the sacrifice of one of our near kin is, in a manner, the slaughter of one of ourselves; that the non-human animal is separated from man only by the degree of mental endowment, that it has the faculties of pleasure and pain, has the same desire for life as the most reason-endowed portion of mankind.[15]

The attribute of compassion born out of the throes of suffering and pain that we see in Wagner (along with his ability to create and express beauty) are a few of the impulses that eventually prompted him to try to change the world through a combination of revolutionary (*First Type*) and artistic and harmonizing (*Fourth Type*) means. As he wrote in a letter to his friend, Franz Liszt: "In all my relations to the suffering world I feel led and guided by one thing alone — Compassion." No doubt Wagner also understood the value of voluntary suffering and renunciation as it affects man's ego when he goes on to say, "If only I could give myself thereto without reserve, then all my private woes would be overcome."

There are other instances of Wagner's compassionate nature. Maurice Kufferath, one of the most ardent admirers of Wagner, speaks first hand of how, despite his own poverty and suffering, "the young man was continually sharing his last shilling with a more-needy brother."[16] Kufferath goes on to say that it was Wagner who said: "No individual can be happy until we are all happy; for no individual can be free until all are free."[17] Other examples from Wagner's early childhood show how the very young boy tried to cheer up his stepfather as he lay dying, and how he gave away one of the boots he was wearing to his sister whose feet were cold, so they could each hop on one foot and keep the other one warm and dry.

Because Wagner was such a sensitive child, with extreme moods and a number of other temperamentally bothersome traits, he was repeatedly "exiled" (a pattern that would continue throughout his life) and sent away from his family.[18] At the age of seven, he was sent away yet again, this time to attend Pastor Wetzel's Kreuzschule near Dresden.

During his early years at the school Wagner received piano instruction. His interests, however, lay elsewhere, and according to Wagner in *Mein Leben*,[19] his mythologized autobiography, filled with after-the fact edits, he "never learned to play the piano properly." He goes on to allege that his piano teacher thought "nothing would come of him." Despite being an undisciplined student, Wagner developed a deep and abiding interest in Greek and Latin as well as Mythology and Ancient History. He claims to have translated the first 12 books of the *Odyssey* into German at the age of thirteen, although only three translations are on record. Wagner's devotion to the Greek mystery plays was to significantly influence his conception of opera as a reinvigorated "mystic play" or "initiating ritual." His avidity to read Shakespeare prompted him to learn English[20] and helped him to become a dramatist.

With his stepfather's encouragement, the young Wagner also developed a fascination with the theatre. He wrote his first play at the age of fifteen and has been described as being a "theatre brat." But by the time Wagner left the Kreuzschule in 1827, he resolved to become a poet. Although the aforementioned studies and interests persisted, Wagner became more and more drawn to music.[21] The determining factor in his decision to make a career of music came as a result of a performance he attended. Wagner says: "I only remember that one evening I heard a symphony of Beethoven's for the first time; that I fell ill of a fever; and that when I recovered I had become a musician."[22]

As John Runciman, an early and rather fanciful chronicler of the composer explains:

> His purpose was set. … Beethoven's music touched his young being and fermentation began which drove him forthwith to make himself a perfectly equipped musician. Almost like … St, Paul, he was "converted" in a twinkling of an eye.[23]

In actuality, "it was not one particular concert," as Klaus Kropfinger and others have discovered, but several experiences with the music of Beethoven "that fired the young man's enthusiasm."[24] Wagner's poetical description of this and other events in his life, point to a pattern typical of the *Fourth Psychological Type*, which seeks to dramatize and even fictionalize events in order to craft or burnish an image.

Nevertheless, given Wagner's *Type One* personality and his *Type Four* Soul and mental field, it is perhaps not at all surprising that Wagner's soul destiny was revealed to him through the music of Beethoven, whose Soul and personality types were identical to his own (and to those of the German nation), and whose musical contributions were also to have a spiritual and psychological impact for centuries to come. As his sense of purpose matured, Wagner's passionate interests were united in a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or a "total work of art:" a conception of music drama or opera that was to be the German equivalent of the Eleusinian mysteries, but which integrated a wide range of metaphysical, political, philosophical, and psychological elements.

Mythic Influences

Wagner's appropriation of myth is not merely a matter of one person's moral and artistic credo. It is also one of the great intellectual advances of modern times: the ancestor and inspiration of comparative anthropology, symbolist poetry, psychoanalysis and many aesthetic and theological doctrines that are now common currency.[25] (Roger Scruton)

In order to understand the man and his music dramas, it's necessary to take a closer look at the layered complex of ideas that informed his work. It is well-known that Richard Wagner was an intellectual who took a serious interest in a wide range of ideas that lay outside of the usual purview of his work as a composer. Ernest Newman, one of the most celebrated musicologists and critics in the first half of the 20th century, said that no other composer possessed such a combination of musical genius and intellectual gravitas.[26] However, rather than detail Wagner's diverse and considerable intellectual interests, the focus of this article will be limited to those interests that contributed to the esoteric or metaphysical dimensions of Wagner's thought process and his artistic

works, although none of Wagner's large-minded interests, so characteristic of the *First Psychological Type*, lay outside of his creative endeavors.

As previously noted, Wagner developed an early and profound involvement in mythology. He was drawn to myth, especially Greek and Norse mythologies, for a number of reasons. There seems to be little doubt, as Robert Donington reveals in *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols*,[27] that myth reinforced the numinous aspect of Wagner's personality and gave him access to unconscious parts of his own psyche. As such, it provided the more mature Wagner with a vehicle by which he could come to terms with the long-standing conflict between his own rationally formed ideas and the more intuitive elements that fueled his artistic creations.[28] Wagner also held a passionate belief about myth's capacity to embody deep and hidden archetypal truths that needed to be cloaked or veiled in riddles or symbols so that they could gradually bring the unconscious part of human nature into consciousness. He maintained that myth represented "the poem of a life-view" that "was true for all time and its content inexhaustible throughout the ages." "The poet's task," he claimed, "was simply to interpret it."[29] More importantly, Wagner understood that saga and myth could purposefully reflect the universal and metahistorical concerns of humanity,[30] concerns which were to figure prominently in the composer's worldview and music dramas.

Wagner and the Greeks

For Wagner, the only time and place that art was able to wholly embody profound Universal truths was in Athens, during the golden age of ancient Greece;[31] an age, it might be noted here, which was given expression under the impulse of the *Fourth archetypal current*. Greek myth, like all myth, provides a cosmological and historical framework by which civilizations summarized their beliefs and knowledge of the past, and offered guidance to humanity about its own nature and its relationship to the larger whole of which it is a part. Wagner saw the experience of mythic theatre as a kind of spiritual activity that dealt with *metahistory*— the "transcendental framework within which history unfolds."[32] Additionally, he believed that mythic drama was able to communicate the intuitive wisdom of the past, the evolutionary stages in humanity's development along with the insight needed for its future growth.

Greek drama and the mystery plays employed all of the arts—instrumental music, verse, narration, singing, dance and mime—in a single composite form which Wagner believed brought the entire community into a conscious relationship with itself and its own essence. Financed and sustained entirely by the state and accorded the utmost importance, these ancient plays overshadowed and informed the civilizations of the time, introducing them to the beauty of philosophical concepts, high standards of morality and Nature's most precious secrets. As such, the ancient rites and plays stood in stark contrast to the commercialized art, anti-communal trends and degenerate bourgeois society in which Wagner lived.[33]

As the classics and music scholar Father Owen Lee reveals throughout his *Athena Sings: Wagner and the Greeks*,[34] the composer's operas "make extensive use of Greek elements to give dramatic credibility and structural unity to his Nordic and German Myths."[35] Father Lee also demonstrates how countless details in Wagner's operas, especially in his *Der Ring des Nibelungen* or *Ring of the Nibelung*, provide Germanic characterizations of Greek mythical figures. For example, Wotan (the chief God, associated with inspiration, order and law) and Fricka (guardian of marriage and women) are shown to be German versions of Zeus and Hera. Brünnhilde (the noble heroine), one of Wotan's daughters, becomes an Icelandic Athena, "the warlike daughter of Wotan the father god and the feminine embodiment of his masculine will"[36] who seeks to solicit the aid of the heroic Siegfried or Achilles. Lee goes on to describe how Wagner's various operas correspond to Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, as well as Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and *Prometheus*.

Michael Besack also explores a great many of these influences and symbols in his perceptive

and highly informative book—*The Esoteric Wagner: An Introduction to Der Ring Des Nibelungen.*[37] For example, Loge's authority as a negotiator with mortals on behalf of Wotan, as Besack states, "mirrors the Greek classical arrangement between Zeus and Prometheus."[38] The Tarnhelm, the magic helmet used by the subterranean villain Alberich in *Das Rheingold,* the first opera in *The Ring*, and later by the hero Siegfried, in the third opera that takes the hero's name, can be likened to the cap of invisibility given to Hades by Cyclops.[39] Wagner no doubt drew upon the Old Norse legend of Wayland the Smith in drawing up the story lines for both *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried,* two operas in which the forge and the smith figure prominently. However, he was undoubtedly aware of Hephaestus, the Greek god of the forge and the artist/blacksmith, as well as his sons, the chthonic Kabiri or Cabrie. The Kabiri, were masters of volcanic energies and the keepers of the Mysteries. According to Helena Blavatsky, "they are beneficent Entities who, symbolized in Prometheus, brought light to the world."[40]

The influence of ancient Greek drama on Wagner was, in fact, so pervasive that Fredrick Nietzsche (a once great friend) thought that he was "Aeschylus come alive again." Father Lee describes how, on several occasions, "Wagner imagined a performance of Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* in his mind, reading it aloud to his friends, providing his own commentary, and relating the Greek classic drama to his own worldview."[41] Wagner's deep interest in classical Greek drama, such as *The Oresteia* and *Prometheus*— which he thought was the most profound work of art dealing as it does with the "Lighting up of Manas" or mind—were rooted, at least in part, by his understanding of their emphasis on the seemingly endless cycle of karma, the idea of divine or heroic intervention, which alchemicalizes the old pattern and humanity's need to recognize and abide by universal laws.[42] Such tragic masterpieces, he maintained, spoke to man's inner consciousness and through them he was in communion with his God; he was in the universe and the universe was in him.

The following quote from Wagner's *Art and Revolution*—one of his many prose works—provides some insight into the composer's thoughts about the great Festival Plays in Ancient Greece, specifically *Prometheus*:

> To see the most pregnant of all tragedies, the Prometheus, came they; in this Titanic masterpiece to see the image of themselves, to read the riddle of their own actions, to fuse their own being and their own communion with that of their god . . . For in the Tragedy the Greek found himself again, — nay found the noblest parts of his own nature united with the noblest characteristics of the whole nation; and from his inmost soul, as it there unfolded itself to him, proclaimed the Pythian oracle.[43]

Besack provides additional insight about the composer's ideas on Greek drama and his metahistorical worldview in the following passage from *The Esoteric Wagner*:

> Dramatic art, for Wagner, was an exceptional communal medium through which the ground of being was given a voice. The ancient Greeks had worked this out in their dealing with Tragedy, and Wagner was reasonably clear on the objective to be achieved. The ground of being represented the foundation on which cultures were built in the past. The universal recognition this foundation pointed to the existence of an underlying unity that had to be preserved at all cost.[44]

For Wagner then, Greek myth and drama, with its metahistorical basis, was a means by which the archetypal patterns that ensure lucidity and stability for human society over the long term could be revealed. These same myths and ritual dramas were also the primary means by which interaction with the ground of being or the underlying unity could be maintained.[45] Importantly, for Wagner, this interaction could be maintained without the aid of a formalized religious structure or corporate hierarchy.

Teutonic Mythological Influences

Norse or Teutonic mythology, most notably, the *Poetic* and *Prose Eddas*, the *Volsung Saga*

and the *Nibelungenlied*, were among the other formative influences on Wagner's worldview and his music dramas. Germanic and Norse myth served as a vehicle by which Wagner could move away from the Italian and French operas that were dominating the operatic stage. These legends and myths also allowed him to give expression to the most ardent political and social sentiments; sentiments that are indicative of the zealous idealism of the *Sixth Psychological Type*—the qualifier of Wagner's emotional field. In appropriating Viking and Norse myth, Wagner was able to create a more *volkish* or home-grown operatic form that served as a medium through which he could comment upon what he perceived as humanity's perilous social, religious and political state. Many of the symbolic, allegorical and archetypal elements of these myths, which have strong metapolitical, metahistorical and metaphysical parallels with the mystery rites of antiquity, were consciously employed by Wagner to create a new mythology that would provide the much needed insight into the unconscious or subconscious part of the human psyche.

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Norse sagas depicted the interplay and conflict between spirit and matter, i.e., between the Gods and Giants of the Hyperborean and/or Lemurian race. These ancient sagas focused on the role of courage, will and sacrifice, as well as cycles of creation and destruction and other cosmological and evolutionary themes. Like the ancient mystery rites, the Norse and Teutonic hero myths were thought to contain a complete "system of initiation," but one based on the descent of the World hero,[46] and his or her death and spiritual rebirth. This world hero or heroine, as Michael Besack explains, has always been an exemplary individual who serves as a bridge or pontifex between the temporal world in which humanity lives and the higher world of guiding influences.[47]

Of particular interest to Wagner were the Old Norse ideas concerning evolutionary growth via the World hero or heroine, the Ur-Kinghood and the maintenance of sacral-political power.[48] The Ur-Kinghood represented the ancestral seat of all religions and the union of royal and priestly power sprung from the formless Val-Father (or All-Father) and passed on, after the great flood, via various avatars and/or heroes from the Asiatic-Ur and kings of pre-Greek history.[49] Reaching westward into Europe, the stem-branch and seat of divine power, ur-conscience and wisdom were thought to manifest most clearly in the ancient royal lineage of the German confederation of the Franks under the name Wibelingen or Gibelingen[50] from which the pure of blood *Volk* or Folk had sprung.

The Ur-Kinghood was the means by which the world was able to positively interact with the Val-Father or the ground of being. Such an interaction was not only responsible for establishing a correspondence or higher unity between the macrocosmic and microcosmic spheres; it was necessary for the correct development and initiation of cyclic processes of creation and destruction.[51] The higher unity remained "as long as the earthly king acknowledged the ruling house in the heavens and timed his actions to coincide with celestial harmonies."[52] However, as Besack points out, the ancient cosmologists knew the association between the Ur-Kinghood and the heavens was

never completely persistent. As the poles shifted, due to the precessional pattern, the world axis or pillar (symbolized by the king as the sacred principle of world organization) would break down, creating a world crisis and the need for a catharsis.[53] A new world order would follow in which the earth would be inhabited by a new generation of aesirs or gods[54] who would take up the task of world repair and renewal. This new world order, born of necessity and built upon the ashes of the old cycle, preoccupied Wagner's thoughts and found its way into a number of his operas. His fascination with the Ur-Kinghood found its initial expression in 1842, in *Rienze* (The Last of the Tribunes), his tragic opera about a heroic leader of veiled and kingly descent, who, as Besack explains, "raises his people from their deep existential sleep."[55] The opera was based on a book by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, whose recurrent esoteric works influenced the likes of Annie Besant and Helena Blavatsky. But the operas which focus most forcefully on the Ur-Kinghood, the interplay of polarities or forces of being and non-being, the rule of law, the major steps in human evolution, as well as the great epoch or cycles of time after "the fall" when the present Aryan race was just beginning, is Wagner's apocalyptic, four-part magnum opus— *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

Wagner as Anarchist

Whence [will come] *the manly strength against the crushing pressure of a civilisation which disowns all mankind, against the arrogance of a culture which employs the human mind as naught but steam power for its machinery? Whence the light to illumine the gruesome human heresy that this civilisation and this culture are of more value in themselves than the true living man?*[56] (Richard Wagner)

Richard Wagner was born into a world that was undergoing dramatic change. His world was churning with deep disruptions and power struggles between the upper and middle class, liberals, socialists, conservatives and communists. In Germany and the rest of Europe, barriers were breaking down and the public was rising up against oppression, insisting upon greater freedom, political unification, independence and other democratic rights. It was in this atmosphere of war and insurrection, and in the years which followed, that Wagner developed his utopian-socialistic vision and his hopes that the repressive German rulers, the old gods, and the anti-communal values that were beginning to dominate Germany and much of Europe, would be re-organized along more democratic and aesthetic lines.

Wagner's political and social attitudes were also influenced by various philosophers, such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Ludwig Feuerbach. Proudhoun was a libertarian socialist and one of the so-called fathers of anarchism. Feuerbach could be described as a secular humanist who believed that the concept of God was a human projection, and advocated that humanity take charge of its own destiny and the fate of the world,[57] ideas that Wagner incorporated into the *Ring* as well as his three-part pose poem, *Jesus of Nazareth*, which this article will discuss below. Feuerbach's critique of Christianity and his belief that "assertions we make about God are, in fact, assertions about ourselves," were adopted by Wagner, who came to believe that no religion was "true," but had immense value as a tool for what it revealed about its practitioners.

The composer's views were influenced further by his various political activist friends, most notably the Russian Prince Mikhail Bakunin and August Röckel. Bakunin formulated a theory of freedom based on the destruction of the state and the creation of a new society built by federations of free workers. Bakunin was a key figure in the emerging socialist movement, along with Karl Marx. Although the two men had common aims and enemies, their philosophies eventually came into conflict. Wagner rejected Marx's theories in favor of Bakunin's anarcho-collectivism, due in part to his belief that Marxism was just another form of totalitarianism. Marx's rejection of aesthetics and his contempt for aristocrats, landowners and artists were also contributing factors.[58] Bakunin's utopian ideals, his antagonism for accepted ideas and laws along with his belief that "established society served only to oppress and extort from the people it claimed to serve,"[59] had tremendous appeal for Wagner. So too did

the revolutionary theories of Röckel, the German conductor and composer, whom the twenty-year old Wagner met in Dresden in 1843, when he was conducting the *Flying Dutchman,* his opera on redemptive love. According to Wagner, Röckel's views were based "on the socialist theories of Proudhon and others pertaining to the annihilation of the power of capital by direct productive labour." He goes on to say that Röckel's ideas represented the "construction of a whole new moral order,"[60] which in turn inspired him to develop conceptions of a possible form of human society that reflected his own high artistic ideas.[61]

Wagner's concerns for what he saw as Germany's Faustian bargain, which surrendered aesthetic values and communal rituals for money, status and power,[62] along with his belief in the absolute necessity for a complete regeneration of society, were the prime factors fueling both his artistic expression and left-wing revolutionary activities. The combination of his *Type Four* essential Self and mind, and his *Type One* personality, which provided him with an uncompromising sense of values, his fighting spirit, strength of will and purpose, his keen interest in political activity and social reform along with his large-minded approach toward humanity's problems, expressed as a powerful mix of creative genius and destructive energy. This culminated in the creation of some of the greatest musical creations of the human spirit, and the desire to liberate humanity from the bondage of ignorance and materiality regardless of the cost. To this end, Wagner, along with Bakunin and Röckel, became part of an inner group of leaders who were actively engaged in the Dresden insurrection in May of 1849.

Their efforts to "set all men free" and produce a much-needed catharsis were unsuccessful. Wagner had to escape from Dresden to Switzerland in order to avoid arrest, where he lived in exile for the next twelve years. His co-conspirators were sentenced to death, sentences that were later commuted to long prison terms.

Wagner and the Jews

Jewish Emancipation had been one of the primary reasons for the revolution in 1848, along with the calls for greater freedom among the middle class. Wagner, as we know, enthusiastically supported the cause. He was, as previously shown, deeply concerned with the plight of the working class and the degradation of society, especially the growing corruption of poetry and music. His belief that revolution would bring about a much-needed change never materialized, and he quickly came to see that it had been a mistake—indeed one that caused even greater damage to art and artists. In *Art and Revolution,* he lamented:

> It is not the battles of the "barricades," not the sudden mighty shattering of the pillars of the State, not the hasty change of Governments,—that is bewailed; for the impression left behind by such capital events as these, is for the most part disproportionately fleeting, and short-lived in its violence. But it is the protracted character of the latest convulsions that is so mortally affecting the artistic efforts of the day.[63]

In Wagner's mind, one of the groups responsible for the alarming degradation of society and art, were the Jewish elites (along with the Jesuits), who had aligned themselves with the Enlightenment and its materialistic ideals.[64] Despite this obsessive belief, Wagner made it clear in a letter to his wife Cosima that: "not just the Jews, but every creature seeks to further their own interest. It is us, we of the state, who condone such things."[65]

Before 1850, when Wagner penned his offensive *Judaism in Music*, there is no record of his espousing anti-Semitic sentiments. But it would be an understatement to say that anti-Semitism was anything but the order of the day in Germany and most of Europe. Indeed, such sentiments were rampant and deep-seated. Wagner's views on the Jews coincided with those of the masses, with the utopian, anti-clerical thinking held by the likes of Karl Marx and Bruno Bauer as well as the evolutionist and race theories that were prevalent at the time. While there is no denying his compulsive and odious criticism of the Jews, there are, as Michael Besack points out, various ways of

regarding Wagner. A more balanced approach has shown that Wagner was not a "hidebound hater of Jews, driven by notions of German racial superiority."[66] On the one hand, Wagner perceived the Jews to be a foreign and corrosive force, a fiendish enemy that threatened Germany's highest cultural goals. On the other hand, many of his best friends were Jews. He was, in fact, surrounded by so many Jews that rumors spread throughout Germany and elsewhere that the composer was of Jewish descent. Stereotypical cartoon characterizations mocking Wagner and his network of Jewish friends with their crowning adulation and support were published in the press.

(Figure 2. A cartoon appearing in the German press mocking Wagner's many Jewish friends, and close associates.)[67]

Although a good deal of the prevailing scholarship still tends to portray Wagner's anti-Semitism as having its roots in "Jew-hatred," German racial superiority, or as some critics believe, in his feeling that he could not succeed in the business of music because it was under the control of Jews who conspired against him; "what Wagner really objected to," as Besack explains, "were certain aspects of Jewish emancipation, which he felt had a strong negative impact on the communal foundation of German culture."[68] The worst of the negative influences in what Wagner called "Jewish nature" were the "promotion of individualistic ideals"[69] which threatened the faint vestiges of German communal unity. For Wagner and many others in the first third of the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism was coupled with criticism of modernism, and with the idea that Jews were one of the principal agents of a new, industrial-capitalist era. When viewed from this perspective, as Besack maintains, Wagner's complex and controversial attitudes toward Judaism and Germanism "can be tied to complex metahistorical developments that he followed very closely."[70]

These ideas are substantiated in the following passage from Dr. Irad Atir, a young Israeli musician and scholar who states that Wagner's

> ... opposition to Jewishness was part of his opposition to the sociopolitical and cultural reality of the period in general, including the non-Jewish German reality… He criticized certain aspects of Germanism; for example, the conservatism, religiosity, pride in aristocratic origins, and militarism. He also criticized Jewish separatism and lust for money. For him, there were good Germans and bad Germans, good Jews and bad Jews.[71]

Like Besack, Atir goes on to say that "the only way to understand Wagner's art, which expresses political, sociological and musicological ideology, is to approach it neutrally"[72] and to realize that Wagner held inconsistent or ambivalent views of both Jews and Judaism.

Besack and Atir, along with a growing chorus of other scholars[73] maintain that Wagner's art must be divorced from the will to power of Nazi Germany and Adolph Hitler, since Wagner died fifty years before Hitler's regime and had condemned racist worldviews as "totally immoral." Therefore, Wagner cannot be held responsible for the fact his music was eventually appropriated by the Nazis with the aid of several heirs and other racist thinkers.[74] Although the psychologically dwarfed Hitler cherished Wagner's music and identified with the morally ambiguous God Wotan or "Wolfe," as he was sometimes called; he missed *The Ring of the Nibelung's* central message about the destruction that inevitably ensues when the love of power replaces the power of love as ruling principle. Any rational individual who is familiar with the composer's *Ring Cycle* can clearly see that it represents a complete repudiation of the will to power and the abuses to which the selfish use of the will must inevitably lead.

Additionally, it is important to note that Wagner believed that assimilation and intermixing would make everyone equal and lead to a harmonious and aesthetically ordered world.[75] The idea of Jewish and Christian reconciliation and assimilation, along with his rejection of German imperialism, were reflected in the composer's comedic opera—*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which ends with "a utopian vision of love and a community united by holy German art."[76]

Wagner's Spiritual Philosophy

Religion lives, but only in its primal source and sole-true dwelling place, within the inner chamber of the individual… for this is the essence of true religion…it shines in the night of man's inner most heart, with a light quite other than the world's sunlight, and visible nowhere save from out of that depth.[77]
(Richard Wagner)

Wagner's deep absorption with philosophical and spiritual questions began at an early age. In *My Life,* he describes being a young boy who "gazed and agonized with sympathy on the altarpiece in the Kreuzkirche (Church of the Holy Cross), and yearned, with ecstatic fervor, to hang upon the Cross in the place of the Saviour."[78] But by the time he was ready to be confirmed in 1827, Wagner had begun to turn away from his conservative Lutheran upbringing, disallowing its puritanical attitudes and finding it intellectually and temperamentally inadequate.

Nevertheless, his interest in religion and the numinous continued, engendered, in large part, by nineteenth century Romantic ideals that rejected the social and political norms of the Enlightenment, and which treasured instead: heroic striving, the imagination, the mystical over the mundane, and spiritual transcendence. No artist expressed Romanticism (an expression of the *Sixth archetypal current*) more intensely than Wagner, whose emotional field, as previously stated, was qualified by the *Sixth Psychological Type*.

Yet, Wagner seems not to have taken religion and the spiritual world seriously until he encountered the music of Beethoven. The first experience, in Leipzig in 1827, where the young Wagner saw "mystical constellations and weird shapes without meaning," prompted him to become a musician. Another, in Paris, in 1839, might be categorized as the first of several mystical experiences that would occur during his lifetime. Of this experience, Wagner says: "I now found flowing from innumerable sources, streams of the most touching and heavenly melodies which delighted my heart." He goes on to describe how it resulted in an "inner change" or "upheaval" and a renewed dedication to music. More importantly, Wagner came away with a new belief in himself—a belief that "God dwelled within his own breast," and was both transcendent and immanent. It also resulted in an "intense spiritual questioning that became a part of every subsequent work."[79]

As Alan David Aberbach explains in *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, during each of these

spiritual or mystical experiences Wagner "seemed to intuit some element of knowledge transcending direct sense perception, although not one necessarily connected or associated with any specific religion."[80]

In fact, over the course of the years, Wagner's views on traditional religion had become highly idiosyncratic. They were sometimes accompanied by harsh denouncements of traditional religion, especially Christianity and Judaism, whose "dogmas and rituals interpose themselves between man and his creation."[81] "Religion," he thought—especially Christianity—"had become crystalized and artificial. It had to keep heaping on incredible saints, fetishes, and idols instead of fulfilling its true vocation to disclose the inner kernel of its origins in an allegorical presentation of the truth."[82] It was reserved for art, he claimed, to save the spirit of religion by recognizing the figurative or metaphorical value of mythic symbols in order to reveal their deep and hidden truths.[83]

The Jewish God, Wagner believed, was a petty tribal god who promised the Jewish nation supreme mastery over other races and the peoples of the world. He deplored the wrathful and punitive God of the Old Testament who seemed more concerned with maintaining power than helping the poor. Christianity, he opined, "is derived from the Jewish religion and that is its dilemma… the Jewish religion has been grafted on to Christianity and has completely spoiled it."[84] "It's connection to Judaism," he maintained, "transformed original Christianity into a creed of aggressive greed and domination which does not reflect the loving and humble teachings of Jesus the Christ, the Redeemer, as much as Jehovah who wished the other Gods to be subjugated by his faithful people."[85]

In the same vein, Wagner claimed that Christianity "denied the world, seeing it as a fleeting and dreamlike illusion where one must prepare for renunciation by Faith."[86] Christianity, he claimed, "sets man's goals entirely outside his earthly being." "Religion (like art)," he decried, "should not lead us out of life, but lift us up within it."[87] The Judeo-Christian religion, he also believed, had grievously erred in condemning sexual desire and the body as sinful and shameful; for the meaningful uniting of a man and woman was to him a loving and life-creating act.

Roman Catholicism came in for special criticism, especially the institution of the Papacy and the *Society of Jesus*. Wagner saw the papacy, which acted as if it were infallible and the exclusive representative of God, as psychologically controlling. He viewed the Jesuits as the distrustful corrupters of Christianity and European culture who degraded man and life by viewing them as inherently sinful, and who spent their lives manipulating for position and riches. Eventually, Wagner came to be even more contemptuous of the Jesuits than the Jews and went so far as to claim that "wherever society tried to accommodate this group… the result had been disastrous for humanity and the state."[88]

Since both Judaism and Christianity advocated for their own spiritual interests, and neither embraced the idea of the brotherhood of humankind as part of a living practice, Wagner appealed for a revolt against the Judeo-Christian inheritance,[89] calling instead for "The Religion of the Future, the Religion of Universal Brotherhood," based on Love, the fellowship of man and the life-need for man to give of himself to other men.[90]

Wagner cannot be viewed as a religious man in the traditional sense of the word. He was, for all practical purposes an atheist or, at the very least, an anti-clerical agnostic. Nevertheless, as the aforementioned comments reveal, he was a highly intuitive, intensely introspective, spiritual man who supported the need for a direct relationship with God. He did not, however, specifically embrace the idea of "God," but said that the traditional terminology was a useful symbol for the general public. Despite his punitive invectives against organized religion, the composer's interest in religious and spiritual matters persisted with great force.

As Alan Aberbach describes:

> Wagner would spend more time working out answers to questions about God, religion, and the nature and meaning of spiritu-

> ality, than any other subject. Even musical theory and composition did not appear to consume so much of his time, energy and attention. From his earliest days in Paris, until the end of his life, he talked, wrote and conversed about religion.[91]

Kabbalistic Currents of Thought

In keeping with the self-contradictory and ambivalent nature of the *Fourth Psychological Type*, Wagner seems to have been both repelled and attracted by the Jewish Faith. He disdained the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments; Judaism, he thought, was flawed because it stressed the idea that the Jews were the chosen people of God and denied the idea of a universal spirituality or religion. Nevertheless, Wagner had many genuine Jewish friends and close associates who influenced his attitudes in paradoxical and conflicting ways. Many of his most ardent devotees were Jews who gave him crucial fiscal and artistic support. Although there were a number of Jews who, at least in Wagner's mind, were responsible for his early lack of success, and also for the degradation and commercialization of society and his beloved art, there were many others he admired and some who had a profound impact on his worldview and his creative endeavors.

According to both Besack and Aberbach[92] an early and important source of spiritual inspiration seems to have come from one of Wagner's three closest friends, the struggling Jewish philologist and philosopher, Samuel Lehrs, who Wagner first met in Paris in the early 1840's, and whose friendship the composer described as "the most beautiful friendship of my life." Lehrs is known to have helped deepen the twenty-year-old Wagner's intense absorption in philosophy and medieval poetry with its heroic legends and German Hohenstaufen emperors who were seen as the last representatives of the Ur-Kinghood. And it was Lehrs, as Besack and others claim, who discoursed with Wagner about death, life after death, and the innermost soul,[93] and who "furnished him the source material for two of his early operas"[94]—*Tannhäuser*, which depicts, among other things, the conflict between the animal and divine souls, and *Lohengrin*, an opera that deals with the concept of higher justice, the idea of world repair and invisible aid.

Various scholars have acknowledged that Wagner seems to have been acquainted with the Talmud and had knowledge of Safed Kabbalistic thought.[95] Some, like Dieter Borchmeyer, claim that Wagner gained familiarity with Kabbalistic teachings from August Friedrick Gfrörer's writings on the influence of Judaism in early Christianity.[96] Others, like Besack, say that while confusion over this issue abounds, Wagner's knowledge of the Kabbalistic notions relating to the duality of the soul—the divine soul and the animal soul—and to ideas about the evolving and devolving nature of universal harmony[97] seems to have come from Lehrs. However, Wagner certainly came across the concept of cyclic existence from previously mentioned Nordic sources, such as the *Ragnarok*, as well as Vedic and Buddhist notions of Samsara, at various periods in his long and sustained spiritual journey.

Wagner's concerns about the inner most soul and humanity's loose connection to the ground of being were co-mingled with his revolutionary zeal and his belief that art could salvage or "repair" a broken and crumbling world. The idea of world repair that so consumed Wagner, as Besack maintains, corresponds to other elements in esoteric Judaism, specifically Isaac Luria's postulations on the Tsimtsum or primordial retraction of the light in the creation, as well as his ideas about the need for a Tikkun or healing of the world. He notes further that "Lurianic ideas of repair are dependent on messianic or heroic action" a concept Wagner was drawn to early on from his exposure to Greek and Norse myth. These ideas and those pertaining to the need for a cosmic repair or Tikkun were to be realized in one way or another in Wagner's anarchist zeal and in a number of Wagner's operas, such as the previously mentioned *Tannhäuser*, *Lohengrin*, *Der Ring Des Nibuelungen* as well as *Parsifal*. However, it should be noted here that Wagner abandoned the idea of repair in favor of destruction in the *Ring* cycle, particularly *Götterdämmer-*

ung (Twilight of the Gods), the final opera in the four-part series, only to take it up again with sublime force in *Parsifal*, the very last opera he completed.

Wagner and *Jesus von Nazareth*

Give your Savior my greetings, even if from the beginning he has caused a lot of confusion.
(Richard Wagner to his wife Cosima before she left for church.)[98]

Despite Wagner's lifelong hostility toward Christianity, he was intrigued by its underlying message concerning the power of infinite love and was drawn by the mystical and intuitive approach to God and Jesus.[99] After reading the Gospels and the New Testament in late 1848, the thirty-five-year-old Wagner, who was becoming progressively enmeshed in the revolutionary movements in Europe, began to inquire into the ideas and character of the historical Jesus. This resulted in a three part prose poem—*Jesus von Nazareth*.[100]

According to Aberbach, Wagner's attraction to Jesus was due in part to the fact that Jesus lived in a corrupt and degenerate world that was much like the mid-nineteenth-century Europe of Wagner's time. Although Wagner thought Jesus's mission had failed, he wondered if there might be something more to be learned from Jesus's life and teachings that could result in a fundamental world repair, and prevent a catastrophic upheaval in Germany and the rest of Europe.[101] As the scholar Mathew Giessel explains, *Jesus of Nazareth* also served as a means by which Wagner's own "ideology of social revolution could be reflected."[102] Giessel goes on to say that Wagner conceived of his prose poem as a vehicle through which he could "question religious dogma and create a kind of art-religion that bridged the religious-dramatic aesthetic gap."[103] *Jesus of Nazareth*, therefore, provides further evidence of the *Fourth Psychological Type's* desire to harmonize and create at-one-ment between seemingly irreconcilable elements. Additionally, it reflects the *First Type's* craving, as Wagner said in a letter to Theodor Uhlig in 1849, "to create a revolution wherever I go." In Wagner's case, the interplay between these two psychological types resulted in a desire to bring about a *Menscheitsrevolution*, or "a revolution of mankind, particularly in the sphere of art." [104] Therefore, Wagner came to believe that, like Jesus, he too had a redemptive purpose, albeit one that functioned through the medium of salvific art.

In writing *Jesus of Nazareth*, Wagner intended to write an anti-Catholic drama, where, according to Giessel, Jesus engaged in kind of creative destruction.[105] Wagner depicts "Jesus the man," who is distinguished from the cosmic Christ, as the embodiment of Love and wisdom. However, Wagner thought that Jesus' mission, as Giessel explains, had earthly rather than transcendental applications.[106]

Wagner has his Jesus of Nazareth say:

> I bring man back unto himself, in that he apprehendeth God as he is in himself, and not outside himself... for God is knowledge of self.[107]

From these remarks, it is clear that Wagner took Jesus' words in Luke 17:21 to heart: "The Kingdom of God is within you," and used them in support of the idea that it was possible for humanity to build a better world where it was neither shackled nor degraded by institutionalized religion. In Wagner's sketch, Jesus' mission is the redemption of all the Volk or peoples of the earth through the practice of Love and receptivity to Knowledge. Wagner's Jesus also takes up the decidedly Feuerbachian theme when he states that: "From man must come the force to help himself."[108] Such a force, Jesus claims, is based on the knowledge of one's own innate Godliness or divinity, his direct connection to Spirit and his free will.

Not only did Wagner's Jesus claim, like Feuerbach, that man is God unto himself, he also proclaimed that there is one Universal Soul and that each individual is a corporate part of the whole—of the All-Soul.[109] The path to freedom— Jesus of Nazareth says in a quote from Corinthians — is not the body, but the innermost soul. For "Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you since you received him from God."[110]

In keeping with his antagonism toward religion and the state, and his desire to do away with theistic dogmas, Wagner's Jesus goes on to say that "the Law," as it was given hitherto, is to be replaced by the Law of Love and the Law of the Spirit, which are "eternally generative, fluent and mobile." Love is Eternal, unlike tribal codes or societal and religious Law, which are at variance with man's true nature and limited by time and the whims of men.[111] Jesus states further, that he comes to abrogate the law which restricts human nature and makes humankind believe it is inherently sinful. Drawing again upon a quote from the Gospel of John, Wagner has his Jesus exclaim:

> I bring you not a new commandment, but the old commandment which ye had from the beginning, whosoever is born of God committeth no sin, for his seed remains in him for he is born of God.[112]

Man's suffering, as Wagner's Jesus states, is his clash against the law which has turned against God himself and the Ur-law of Motion. "It is the suffering of God himself, who has not come as yet to consciousness in men"[113]—a consciousness that can only be attained when humanity realizes that it and God are One, and "the selfsame creative force."

Not surprisingly, Wagner's Jesus does not believe that a connection to God is the result of prayer, ceremony or ritual performance. God must be searched for within, and "seen through the inner eye," for the "temple of God is Mankind."[114] Furthermore, we must be prepared to die, after the heroic model of Jesus and other saviors of humankind, to release the innermost Soul from egotism, the world of the senses and the mind. These must be left behind. Only through "the perfect riddance of Death, the giving up of the body, of the hearth and home of egotism,"[115] can the last obstacle to a person's ascent into the generality of the One be overcome.

These passages show that Wagner thought of Jesus as a hero-soul, a remarkable individual—a divine/human incarnation on earth—whose sphere of influence was far-reaching, but whose purpose was not brought to fruition. He was unable to comprehend why Jesus, the great avatar of Love and ethics, the one who was connected to the Ur-Kinghood and the ground of being, could not prompt humanity to examine the hollowness of materialism and build a new world based on spiritual values and his Soul's high desire.[116] Wagner's sketch of *Jesus of Nazareth*, as Aberbach contends, was an attempt to work out some of these questions in his own mind. The prose poem also provided Wagner with a means to express his own spiritual and revolutionary ideals—ideals that he believed were commensurate with those of the true Jesus, who struggled against tyranny and crystalized traditions, and who came to reinstate the "ur-old notions" that had been lost when the Germanic peoples, who represented the stem-branch of the Ur-royal lineage, were forced to convert to Christian faith.

Jesus of Nazareth was never completed or published. Aberbach thinks that Wagner may have abandoned the work because he came to conclude that Christianity's doctrines had become so exclusive and restrictive that it might never become a truly universal religion.[117] Although Wagner knew that it was not just the church, with its false hierarchy and the faults of the Law, but also the human element, its lack of love, self-interest, and egotistic desires that were responsible for the dark night enveloping men's souls. Nevertheless, *Jesus of Nazareth*, as Giessel demonstrates, "served as an important lens in which Wagner's ideas of redemption and spirituality were developed and eventually subtly refracted in his later thought and works, particularly in Wagner's growing transformation and conception of himself into a redemptive force."[118]

The Influence of Freemasonry and other Secret Society Models

Although Wagner's knowledge of occultism is rarely discussed, it is known that he was acquainted—through both family and friends— with the Freemasons and a number of other secret societies such as the Rosicrucians, the Schiller Society and the Tunnel über der Spree.[119] Given Wagner's early experienc-

es as a child of war, his more mature desires to liberate and remake what he saw as a crystalized and decaying world and his belief about a spiritual aristocracy that maintained a ritual connection to the Ur-ground of being, it is not surprising that he was inspired by certain secret society models.

Inspiration along these lines is thought to have begun very early in life. Wagner's father, Carl, had been a Freemason, and after his death, the Masons attended to the grief-stricken family. His stepfather, Ludwig Geyer, was also a member of the lodge *Ferdinand zur Glückseligkeit* in Madgeburg, and one of his brothers was educated at the *Institute of Freemasons* in Dresden through a scholarship obtained by the Masons.[120] Further influence is thought to have come from his brother-in-law, Professor Oswald Marbach, who was the Grand Master of the chapter *Baiduin, Zur Linde* in Leipzig for more than 30 years.[121] Marbach was the honorary member of 50 lodges and authored many articles on Freemasonry. Jacques Chailley, in what is considered by some academic scholars to be a controversial book on the Masonic and initiatory elements of Wagner's work, maintains that Marbach was Wagner's principal source on Freemasonry.[122] It is of further interest to note that Wagner's sister Rosalie and his piano teacher Christian Theodore Weinlig were involved with the radical para-Masonic "Tunnel."[123] Rosalie, with whom Wagner was quite close, was married to Professor Marbach. However, whether either Rosalie or Weinlig actually exerted any Masonic influence on Wagner is not known.

Several of Wagner's anarchist friends, the previously mentioned Pierre-Joseph Proudhoun and Mikhail Bakunin, were also members of Masonic lodges in Paris and elsewhere. Bakunin founded a secret society called the *Program of the Revolutionary Brotherhood* that was conceived on the Masonic model. However, he thought that the world was largely beyond repair and wanted to make men free by establishing a community of uninhibited and independent beings. Bakunin's world, as Besack notes, is not unlike the apocalyptic world of Wagner's *Ring*.[124]

Proudhoun, Bakunin and Wagner, were all captivated by the philosophical ideas of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), who was a Warden in the *Lodge Pythagoras of the Blazing Star* and the author of *Discourses in Freemasonry*. Besack, in *The Esoteric Wagner* lists seven main points that have been abstracted from Fichte's lectures. Several points relevant to this discussion are included here:

> 1) Greek philosophy must be acknowledged as the essential channel for the transmission of western thought.
>
> 2) Humanism is to be achieved through a confrontation of the different types of humanity.
>
> 3) The "secret" tradition leading up to Freemasonry is universal in scope.
>
> 4) Man can access humanist philosophy without the help of any religion.

A comparison between Fichte's ideas and those ideas reflected in Richard Wagner's own philosophy are clearly evident.

Another close friend and Freemason whose spiritual ideas might have influenced Wagner's worldview, was the composer and pianist, Franz Liszt, whose daughter, Cosima, was married to Richard Wagner. Liszt was a member of the *Loge zur Einigkei*t or "Unity" lodge, in Frankfurt, where he was promoted to the second degree. He was eventually elected master of the same lodge in Berlin and held honorable memberships in Zurich and Pest (Budapest-Hungary).[125] Although Liszt and Wagner exchanged numerous letters, no explicit reference to Freemasonry has surfaced of which this author is aware.

Yet another intimate friend was the civic leader and banker, Frederick von Feustel. Feustel was Grand Master of the lodge *Zur Sonne* in Bayreuth from 1863–1869, and a key figure in proposing that the restrictions on admitting non-Christian members to the lodge be abolished.[126] Inspired by his friend and the ideas Freemasonry espoused; Wagner communicated his desire to become a member of the lodge *Eleusis zur Verschwiegenheit* in Bayreuth. However, his admission was blocked by some

members of the lodge who were concerned about the composer's troubled and unsavory personal life. Wagner's revolutionary past, many outstanding debts, sexual indiscretions and harsh invectives against various individuals and groups, would have been some of the contributing factors.

Although Wagner was not a Freemason and did not belong to any known esoteric order, there are numerous hints and associations to be found in his prose works and operas that contain Masonic and other esoteric symbols. For example, his *Die Meistersinger* deals with the "Mastersingers" or troubadours who inherited the Bardic Mysteries. Among its many esoteric themes are the various degrees, steps and grades within the Guild of Mastersingers. *Tannhäuser,* an opera about a Knight-Troubadour and "Love-Singer" is thought by various scholars[127] to represent the Hermetic and Masonic first degree of purification. These themes are also prevalent in *Lohengrin,* Wagner's opera about the "Swan Knight" or emissary of the White Brotherhood who seeks to bring in a new civilization. The figure of Lohengrin, represents the second degree of service.

The rituals observed in Wagner's *Parsifal* are also filled with Masonic and other esoteric symbolism. The American author, Christian mystic and occultist Corinne Heline, divides this opera into the three Masonic degrees of Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master, or the Student, Probationer, and Disciple of the more modern esoteric schools.[128] Parsifal is the "Widow's Son" and a type of Redeemer. He can be seen as the hero-representative who "magically rejuvenates the Hyperborean order from its immortal roots"[129] through the control of instinctual passion and its transmutation into the healing power of great compassion, the highest aspect of Love. Other figures in the opera, such as Titurel and Amfortas, serve as Grand Masters of the Grail.

The figures of Lohengrin and Parsifal—both guardians of the Grail—were early role models for the Rosicrucians, as Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon point out. Indeed, there are numerous ideas shared by the Rose+Croix and Wagnerian philosophy. Many of Wagner's philosophical ideas—the concept of a union of the arts, notions of ancient racial pride, social and intellectual reform, and most importantly glorification of the artist in society and the belief that the most direct route to the soul was through symbol—"read like paraphrases of the Rosicrucian Manifesto."[130] Wagner would have come across these ideas from various sources. One source of note would have likely been Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whom he read widely. Goethe was greatly interested in the Rosicrucians and expressed a good deal of Hermetic and Rosicrucian wisdom in various works such as "The Mysteries," "Fairy Tale of the Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily" and "Faust." So taken was Wagner with Goethe's most famous occult drama—"Faust"— that he intended to compose a Faust symphony. He abandoned the symphony, but managed to complete a beautifully expressive overture that portrays the soul's aspirations and labors to perfect itself.

Wagner espoused many of these same ideas throughout his prose works and operas. His belief in the knowledge and wisdom of ancient Greece, his utopian views of the world, his alternative views on politics and religion, his universalism, anti-clericalism and his ideas about a spiritual aristocracy mesh easily with the notions and aims of secret societies like the Freemasons, which are qualified by the *First archetypal current.* Key Masonic phrases such as the "Temple of Humanity," "Building of the Temple," and the "Brotherhood of Man," are used throughout his written works. In speaking of "universal currents of Divine Thought that vibrate through the ether," the "great cosmic law" and the idea that "Imagination creates reality," he embraced ideas that are similar to those found in the Theosophical works of Helena Blavatsky and the Ageless Wisdom philosophy.[131] But as will be seen even more clearly as this article progresses, it would be a mistake to claim that Wagner's prose works or operas can be interpreted in terms of one particular set of ideas. The composer drew upon a broad range of religious, spiritual, mythic and esoteric influences and sought to combine and reconcile them into a unique but concordant

whole. And in this can be seen the harmonizing influence of the *Fourth Psychological Type* as well as the synthesizing aspects of the *First*.

The Inspiration of Hafiz[132]

In addition to the influences discussed thus far, Wagner's interest in religion, spirituality and mysticism extended to Eastern and Middle Eastern sources. With regard to Middle Eastern inspiration, it is possible that Wagner was aware of the parallels between the Parsifal myth and the earlier Persian *Fal Parsi* (Pure Fool), as well as Persian Shia chivalry and its associations with the Knights Templar. Given his interest in myth and metahistory, he may also have had some understanding of Mazdean doctrines and beliefs and their innumerable connections to Norse tradition. One early source may have been Goethe who considered Persian literature to be one of the four main bodies of world literature. Another likely source was his brother- in-law, Herman Brockhaus who specialized in Persian and Sanskrit literature at Leipzig University. Fredrick Nietzsche, whose relationship with Wagner was quasi-familial and intense, could have been a later influence.[133] It is also quite possible that Wagner intuited the equivalences between the Norse and Mazdean traditions that appear in his various music dramas. Nevertheless, in various letters, Wagner unambiguously connects elements of the *Ring*, especially *Das Rheingold*, to the writings of the Persian mystical poet, Hafiz. Wagner probably came across the work of Hafiz by way of Goethe, who has been described as a disciple of the great Persian poet.

The first mention by Wagner of the great fourteenth-century Sufi Master is contained in a letter to August Röckel, dated September 12, 1852, who was still in prison for his role in the 1849 Dresden revolution:

> I would like to introduce you to a poet whom I have recently recognized to be the greatest of them all; it is the Persian Hafis… Familiarity with this poet has filled me with a real sense of terror: we with our pompous European intellectual culture must stand abashed in the presence of this product of the Orient, with its self-assured and sublime tranquility of the mind.[134]

In a letter to another friend, Theodore Uhlig, Wagner says that "Hafis is the greatest poet that ever lived and sang."[135] He goes on to tell his friend that he must instantly procure a copy of the poet's work and should:

> Study Hafis properly, he is the greatest and the most sublime philosopher. No one else has gone to the root of the matter so surely and incontestably as he. There is only one thing he lauds: and all the rest is worth not a farthing, however high and loft it may dub itself. —Something similar will also become clear in my Nibelungen.[136]

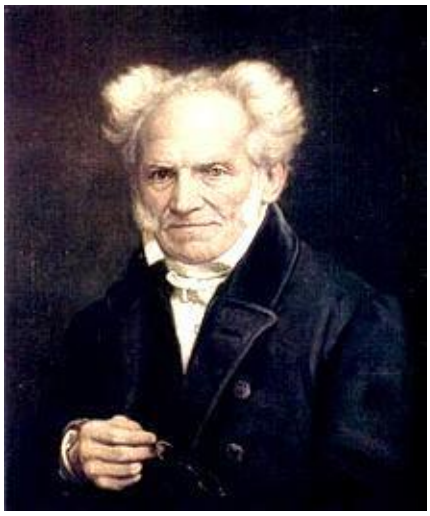
One of the few scholars to explore the link between Hafiz and Wagner's music dramas in depth, is the previously mentioned, Alan Aberbach. According to Alberbach, what Wagner found in the works of Hafiz were concepts that built upon and expanded some of the ideas he had earlier explored in his *Jesus of Nazareth* and elsewhere. These ideas concerned such themes as the philosophy of love and aesthetics, the nature of the soul and the unfathomable nature of free will and destiny.

Wagner believed that neither the mind nor the intellect could explain the mysteries of the universe. Hafiz reiterates this idea in saying, "Love has a wisdom, wisdom cannot prove— Reason knows nothing of things divine."[137] Like Hafiz, the composer thought that all creation was an expression of God, that man was essentially one with the Universe or God, and that the kingdom of God existed within.[138] Each believed in the universality of the Soul and decried the narrowness of dogmatic Law as well as the formal aspects of religion; and each held that Love, the eternal Law of Love, was the universal key to God realization. Love, especially redemptive love, is one of the primary themes in Wagner's *Jesus of Nazareth* and in a number of his operas. The ghazals of Hafiz, which by definition, are verses that deal with the great theme of Love and the need for Love to take precedence over Law and Power. Other similarities between Hafiz and Wagner abound. The Sufi poet's belief that "Where love is, there is no need for covenant hell"[139]

corresponds to Wagner's ideas in *Jesus of Nazareth* about the Law of Love abrogating religious or Mosaic Law. Hafiz, also like Wagner, commented at length upon the hypocrisy, perfidy and deceit that existed in society and within certain religious circles.

These same themes also make their appearance in Wagner's *Ring*. For example, the conflict between Love (self-giving) and Power (self-seeking), which coincides with the development of the human ego, are some of the dominant themes in *Das Rheingold* (Rhinegold), the first opera in the composer's four-part cycle. Love (as embodied in the divine feminine), versus the Law, is one of the overarching themes of the second music drama—*Die Walküre* (The Valkyrie). The heroic struggle for Love and for Freedom from the ego, nature and the rule of the old Gods continues with *Siegfried*, the third opera in the series. This struggle culminates in *Götterdämmerung* (The Twilight of the Gods) which depicts the destruction of the Old Order as well as the possibility of an entirely new cycle brought about through the keynote of Sacrificial or Redemptive Love. This last theme is also one of the primary themes in Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, which, like the poems of Hafiz and other Sufi mystical poets, draws upon the metaphors of erotic imagery to express sacrificial love leading to union, as well as oneness with the divine.

Schopenhauer and Buddhist Doctrine



(Figure 4. Arthur Schopenhauer, 1788–1860)[140]

Will power is to the mind like a strong blind man who carries on his shoulders a lame man who can see.[141] (Arthur Schopenhauer)

Not long after the failed uprising in Dresden in 1849, Wagner had fallen prey to a profound loss of faith and disillusionment with the underlying principles of anarchist politics.[142] In *The Tristan Chord*, Bryan Magee says that this was a traumatic experience for the composer because he believed if there was no hope for German renewal via political or revolutionary means, there was no hope for the future of art or Richard Wagner.[143] This resulted in what Magee perceptively describes as a "decisive detachment from the world outside himself," brought on by the recognition that he had been submerged in a "veritable bonfire of illusions."[144] But in 1854, at the age of forty-one, the composer underwent a pivotal experience when he discovered the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's book, *The World as Will and Representation*, altered Wagner's understanding of himself and the universe by helping him to shift his focus away from the socio-political and historical view of the world to an understanding that was more in keeping with his unconscious and intuitive in-

stincts.[145] In a letter written to the conductor Hans Von Bülow, Wagner reveals that he was so taken with Schopenhauer's philosophy that he read the book four times in the same year, in addition to reading it again and again (along with his other works) over a period of many years.

One of the central concepts articulated in *The World as Will and Representation*, was the theory that the only essential reality in the world is *the will*, and that it was the key to human existence and the ground of all life and being. This theory, which built upon but altered the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant, goes on to state that the world of phenomena is nothing more than the subjective representation of the will or the Kantian "thing-in-itself." To state this idea another way: the empirical or phenomenal world is a relative reality or an illusory perceived existence, in contrast to the essential reality which exists outside of space and time. Unlike Kant, who held that this essential reality or thing-in-itself was unknowable, Schopenhauer claimed that we can and must penetrate this deeper reality. But to do so inevitably invites suffering and unrelenting dissatisfaction since the will almost always manifests as desire or selfish will.

While Schopenhauer believed that suffering was a permanent feature of existence, he thought that art, and especially music, could provide a temporary release or escape from the endless promptings of desire/will and the veil of illusion it creates. The will, he believed, cannot be known by concepts or representations; however, music, which is non-conceptual and exists in the noumenal realm, can acquaint us with the will since it is a direct expression of the world's essence or impulsive will. He went so far as to claim that "music is the voice of the metaphysical will."[146] Given Wagner's own theories about how selfish desire corrupted civilization, his unrelenting questions about free will and predestination (themes that reoccur throughout *The Ring*), and his wish to redeem humanity by way of a reinvigorated form of music drama that stimulated the free heroic impulse, many of these ideas had immense appeal. Indeed, "it was Schopenhauer," says Thomas Mann—the Nobel-prize winning German novelist—"that freed Wagner from bondage and gave his music the courage to be fully itself."[147]

Wagner's concerns about the inner most soul and humanity's loose connection to the ground of being were co-mingled with his revolutionary zeal and his belief that art could salvage or "repair" a broken and crumbling world. The idea of world repair that so consumed Wagner . . . corresponds to other elements in esoteric Judaism, specifically Isaac Luria's postulations on the Tsimtsum or primordial retraction of the light in the creation, as well as his ideas about the need for a *Tikkun* or healing of the world.

Among the other aspects of Schopenhauer's metaphysical philosophy that resonated with Richard Wagner and which were in keeping with the views he espoused in *Jesus of Nazareth*, was the belief that it was compassion or love, and not reason, as Kant argued, that serves as the moral bond uniting human beings. The plurality and differences which separate human beings from each other belong to the world of phenomenon or appearances. These differences, he thought, were an illusion or mirage based on the ego and the inability to recognize the ultimate essence or ground of being that manifests in all living things.[148] Since "All is One," the only actions that have moral value are those which have sprung from compassion and the desire to eradicate suffering. And only to the extent that we have identified ourselves with another can the ego or the little self be momentarily abolished.[149]

Schopenhauer's thoughts on erotic love also had immense appeal for Wagner. His essay, "The Metaphysics of Sexual Love"—one of the chapters in the aforementioned *World as Will and Representation*— contains the idea that erotic love, which is related to the will to survive or the will to life (*Wille zum Leben*), takes precedence over reason. For this reason, erotic love and the will to survive is the cause of much suffering and pain. Yet, paradoxically, Schopenhauer believed that a loving sexual relationship was a means by which the impediments to selfhood could be temporarily transcended, and the individual could "lose his sense of self and experience oneness with another person in the sexual act."[150]

As the reader can no doubt discern from the few examples offered here, Schopenhauer's ideas have an affinity with Hindu and Buddhist teachings. However, it should be noted that the main ideas in Schopenhauer's philosophy were worked out before he discovered that they echoed Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. Unfortunately, he misunderstood key aspects of these teachings, such as the concept of Maya or world as illusion, which resulted in his decidedly pessimistic outlook on life. Schopenhauer also failed to grasp the concept of Nirvana or Non-Being, which he wrongly associated with the death-wish. Wagner's first introduction to Buddhism came through Schopenhauer's books, and some of these misunderstandings were passed on. Later, however, Wagner read Eugène Burnouf's influential and highly informative *Introduction to the History of Indian Buddhism*, as well as the Upanishads and other oriental literature and these no doubt strengthened his grasp of both Vedic and Buddhist thought.

In addition to the ideas touched on above, Wagner's interest in Buddhism, like Schopenhauer's, was surely encouraged by the atheistic, or more accurately, non-theistic concepts contained therein, as well as Buddhist ideas about the elimination of ego, the nature of suffering, the idea of enlightenment, the doctrine of metempsychosis, karma and the heroic acts of the Buddha. He might also have been drawn to Buddhist and Brahmin philosophy because its doctrine was more ancient and therefore more authentic than the corrupted religions of the Jews and Christians.[151]

In letters to Franz Liszt, Mathilde Wesendonck and August Röckel, Wagner wrote with great excitement and understanding about the sublimity of Buddhist doctrine, with its concepts of reincarnation and metempsychosis, saying that the Buddha's teaching on these matters "must certainly express the truth." Wagner was so drawn to Buddhist teachings that he planned an opera—*Die Sieger* (The Victors)—based on an *avadana* (a series of heroic tales and miraculous acts as told by the Buddha or performed by him in his various incarnations). He drafted a sketch for the opera between 1856 -1858, and thought about it over a span of 12 years, but the opera was never brought to fruition.

Nevertheless, various features of Schopenhauerian and Buddhist doctrine undoubtedly found their way into Wagner's ensuing music dramas and libretti. With respect to Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, which was written over a period of twenty-six years, it must be said that a preoccupation with the evolution of consciousness, the will in its various facets as well as the concept of cyclic existence, i.e., the Buddhist wheel of life, death and rebirth, were present in the libretti in advance of his having come under the influence of Indian thought. However, Indologist and Sanskrit scholar, Professor Carl Suneson has suggested that Buddhist and Brahmin ideas caused Wagner to alter the ending of *Götterdämmerung* by giving Brünnhilde a role akin to a bodhisattva.[152]

One of the most Kantian/Schopenhaureian of all Wagner's operas is his allegorical tragedy, *Tristan and Isolde* (1859). Though in some circles, the opera still tends to be thought of as a sublimation of the composer's love for another woman to whom he was not married, more perceptive analyses understand the opera to be a profoundly moving meditation on death, erotic love and the sacred.[153] The two lovers are redeemed, not by other-worldly means, but through an erotically transcendent love based on the renunciation of selfish desire and a shift from the Schopenhauerian Phenomenal "world of day" or Maya, to the unifying Noumenal "world of night" or Nirvana. Their

shared death is means of self-sacralization, which in turn sacralizes their world.[154] The erotic love between Tristan (Tantris)[155] and Isolde can also be likened to a tantric practice based not on the sexual act, but on complete identification with the other, i.e., the renunciation of the flesh and the soul's dying to all but divine love. From this perspective, *Tristan and Isolde* represents the inner life of man who brings together the polarities of male and female or spirit and matter into a balance that finds its ultimate consummation in the Mystic Marriage or conscious union with the World Soul.[156]

Parsifal: A Great Synthesis

Parsifal, written in the last years of Wagner's life when he was suffering from exhaustion and worsening health, is often viewed as the most Christian of Wagner's operas. The opera utilizes quite a bit of Christian imagery, such as the Knights of Grail, the Grail cup and the spear that wounded Jesus's side, as well as a Eucharistic reenactment or communion. At the time of its completion in 1882, the opera was seen as a capitulation to traditional Christian doctrine by a composer who had previously seen himself as something of a pagan spiritual hero for the new age. Nietzsche, who came to believe that the Schopenhaurerian metaphysical world was nonexistent, went so far as to claim that in *Parsifal*, Wagner "fell kneeling and hopeless before the cross." He went on to say that Wagner "flatters every nihilistic (Buddhistic) instinct and disguises it in music; he flatters everything Christian, every religious expression of decadence. Open your ears: everything that ever grew on the soil of impoverished life, all of the counterfeiting of transcendence and beyond, has found its most sublime advocate in Wagner's art."[157]

Parsifal was certainly inspired by the teachings of Jesus, as well as by a number of German Christian mystics. But, before exploring these influences, it is vital to note, as Wagner did in a letter to a friend about the meaning of his so called "stage-consecrating ritual," that he "mercilessly relinquishes the Church, and the whole phenomena Christianity in history." He exhorts further: "we do it for the sake of the Christ… whom we want to protect in His pristine purity… so that we can take him with us into those terrible times that will probably follow the inevitable destruction of all that now exits."[158] Thus, from one perspective, Wagner intended *Parsifal* as the one who could salvage a decaying world and bring a much needed "Redemption to the Redeemer."

One of the Christian mystics who inspired the composer's thoughts on *Parsifal* was Meister Eckhart (1260–1388), the man who Schopenhauer called "the father of German mysticism. There were many ideas in Eckhart's sermons that appealed to Wagner and which corresponded with his own mystical inclinations. One finds, for example, that both Eckhart and Wagner thought that the teachings of Jesus were universal and that his message applied to everyone. Eckhart believed that prayer consisted of opening the heart and mind to God. The most powerful form of prayer, he thought, comes from the person who seeks no gain, but abandons all self-will to the Will of God. Eckhart, like Wagner, thought that the great need for man was to unite his Soul with Deity. But for the Soul to know Him, "he must not seek Deity outside himself." Eckhart speaks further of the need for breaking through to the nothingness of God, likening the breakthrough to a "fundamental death." Additionally, Eckhart, like Wagner's *Jesus of Nazareth*, thought that this was possible for anyone— for all are sons of the Father. Consequently, what is possible for one Son is possible for all without distinction.[159]

Although the Christian element in *Parsifal* cannot be denied, it must be viewed in a larger, more inclusive context. One could say for example, that the opera concerns "the Christing of man." But this is not to imply that one is made or becomes a Christian. The operas purpose, so states the English author and Freemason, W. L. Wilmhurst, goes beyond any specific doctrine in an effort to reveal "an inward way of reintegration, the engrafting of the new self upon the old, the unifying of the personal will with the universal will and the transformation of one's natural manhood into God."[160] As the distinguished theosophist and author, Basil Crump evinces in a series of articles on

Wagner's mythic dramas, "Parsifal presents the essential truths of the great World-Religions in a form especially adapted to the Western world of today where Christianity is the ruling religion."[161] Crump maintains further that Wagner blended the historical Jesus and Buddha into the mythical Parsifal,[162] whose legends, we must recall, already contained Manichaean ideas about the transformation of evil, as well as Islamic, Masonic and Celtic elements.

Therefore, *Parsifal* might be seen as Wagner's great synthesis and the culmination of all his mystical works. Parsifal is a mythical and metahistorical figure who fuses the Love of Jesus and the Compassionate Wisdom of the Buddha (resulting in the highest aspect of the will),[163] into a new type of hero-soul who reestablishes the lost connection to the ground of being. Crump identifies him with the seeker, the Prodigal Son, Ulysses returning from war or the Soul seeking its heavenly state. Although the opera contains a fusion of elements, it is also clearly intended to articulate Schopenhauerian, and therefore, Buddhist themes. For it is here that Buddhist and Indian ideas related to suffering and compassion as well as the will to self-abnegation, are most prominent. Yet, the primary message of *Parsifal*— which Wagner called his "sacred festival play"—is that individual transmutation, transcendence and redemption are possible without the aid of supernatural intervention or any organized religious hierarchy or structure. Redemption and access to the inner hidden reality behind phenomenal appearance come not by way of a temple made by the hands of men, but via a self-initiated effort to purify the heart, illuminate the mind and live a life of complete self-offering.

(Richard Wagner at the piano in 1871)[164]

Conclusion

This article demonstrates that Richard Wagner was more than an illustrious but controversial composer known for his anti-Semitism and his crisis filled life, as well as for his complex and dramatic operas. Wagner was a fierce and courageous "Übermensch" who fought against extraordinary obstacles to reconcile a dying culture, wrought with anti-communal trends and rampant individualism, with the path of higher unity or wholeness. Not only was Wagner a "cultural visionary and intellectual artist, an iconoclastic genius and unapologetic firebrand"[165] whose powerful ideas inspired generations of thinkers and "left few aspects of the Western approach to music untouched;"[166] he was, despite his numerous flaws, a musical Initiate and an emissary of a new Spiritual Science who applied himself to the study of humankind, its place in the world and its growth and development.

From his youth onward, Wagner yearned for a numinous world that existed outside of time and space. However, he also longed passionately for a brotherhood of man, for a new world and for a new communal art—a

Gesamtkunstwerk or a "total work of art," that would touch the deeper recesses of the human psyche and awaken it to a new level of truth and meaning. Like no other composer, Wagner was determined to fathom the depths of the world's religious and mystical traditions, philosophy and myth in an effort to create a reinvigorated form of ritual where the religious or spiritual experience was "transferred to the aesthetic sphere."[167] Working with clear intent and strategic purpose, Wagner was able to draw upon the inspiration of his creative and harmonizing mind and essential Self, to clothe diverse religious and philosophical ideas in the garb of poetry, drama and beautiful music—music that expressed in an endless stream of harmony and poignant melody that, according to one Wagnerite, seems to engender an invisible magnetic field that extends into the reaches of space and penetrates to the very heart of the listener.[168]

Yet, the composer seldom used any of these ideas or influences in their original forms. Rather, the inner realities and archetypal truths that all of his music dramas contain, were creatively refashioned and shrouded within an intricate, multi-layered poetic veil.[169] "From these often contradictory and frequently mysterious sources," as Wentzel van Huyessteen, the Princeton Professor of Theology explains, "Wagner was able, with astonishing insight and serendipity, to assemble narratives that make sense on every level of interpretation: literal, metaphorical, symbolic and mythical."[170] While these dramatic creations, which contain so many symbolic layers, arduous narratives and dialogues, are not easy to penetrate, like all initiating rituals, they reveal the necessity and the methods for self-recreation to all those who can look behind the kaleidoscopic mantle in which they are disguised.

In examining the mystical and religious ideas that underpin Richard Wagner's music dramas and in touching briefly upon the many half-concealed and half-revealed methods and truths contained therein, this article has intended to show that the composer's greatest concerns were for humanity's perilous social, spiritual and political state. Wagner saw pure art, specifically music-drama, as a vital medium for bringing about a much-needed *Tikkun* or world repair. In each of his operas, the composer consciously employed a multi-level complex of ideas and allegory to convey the essential steps in humanity's development in a way that bypasses the need for religious and hierarchical structures and places the emphasis on the individual's own self-initiated effort.

A metaphysical examination of Wagner's most complex and influential work, his metahistorical tetralogy, *Der Ring Des Nibelungen,* tells a cosmic story about the conflict between the forces of being and non- being in which the past, present and future development of human freedom and consciousness are portrayed. Some of his other music dramas deal with the themes of purification, sexual transmutation, individuation and the marriage of the opposites. The concept of invisible aid and inspiration as well as redemptive love and self-offering to those in need are also prominent themes. Other works highlight the distinction between the right-hand and left-hand paths, the development of the will, and complete self-mastery.

As such, Wagner's aesthetically redemptive music dramas are examples of how high art, when it is informed by a large measure of spiritual insight and power, can reverse harmful and regressive tendencies and lead the individual and the masses out of the darkness and bondage of its mortal house into the realms of the innermost Soul.

For students of the perennial philosophy, and the world at large in acute need of complete catharsis and regeneration, the music dramas of Richard Wagner, with their great variety and depth of meaning, have as much and perhaps even more relevance today as they did in Wagner's day. Furthermore, his masterworks can tell us a great deal about the deep significance of beauty and harmony in the development of consciousness and thier role in helping humanity establish a connection with the currents of evolution.

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1 Portrait of Richard Wagner, photograph, 1871, image in the public domain.

[2] Richard Wagner, *Religion and Art*, 1800, trans., William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 228.

[3] Richard Wagner, "An End in Paris," 1841 *The Wagner Library*, Edition 7. http://users. belgacom.net/wagner/prose/wagnedpa.htm. (accessed November 3, 2013).

[4] Richard Wagner, "Rienzi's Prayer," Act V, *Rienzi, the Last of the Tribune.* http://www.aria-database.com/cgi-bin/aria-search.pl%3Fopera%3DRienzi%26a (accessed July 27, 2014). The quote, "Lord, dissolve the dark night that envelops men's soul," is from the libretto of *Rienzi*, an early opera dealing with the liberal ethos of the hero Cola Rienzi, leader of the *Volk* or Folk, and the political intervention of a reactionary clergy.

[5] Corinne Heline, *Esoteric Music Based on the Musical Seership of Richard Wagner* (La Canada, CA: New Age Press Inc., 1948), 11.

[6] Richard Greenberg, "Music of Richard Wagner," *The Great Composers* (Chantilly, VA: The Teaching Company).

[7] Richard Wagner, *The Diary of Richard Wagner, 1865-1882*; trans., George Byrd (London, UK: Cambridge University Press 1980), 73.

[8] Heline, *The Esoteric Music of Richard Wagner*, 11.

[9] Barry Millington, *Wagner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 3.

[10] Cosima Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries 1869-1883* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), July 5, 1871.

[11] Richard Wagner, *My Life: Part 1* (Middlesex, UK: Echo Library, 1992), 10.

[12] Cosmia Wagner, *Cosima Wagner's Diaries 1869-1883*, July 5, 1871.

[13] Richard Wagner, *Mein Liben*, 5.

[14] Wagner's reputation was marred by a number of outstanding debts and romantic relationships with married women.

[15] Wagner, *Religion and Art*, 198.

[16] Maurice Kupperath, *The Parsifal of Richard Wagner*, (1892; reprint; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Library, 2009), 214.

[17] Ibid.

[18] See for example, *Wagner, The Last of the Titans,* by Joachim Köhler

[19] Richard Wagner, "Autobiographical Sketch," 1843, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 9. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagauto.htm (accessed October 3, 2013).

[20] Ibid.

[21] Howard Gray, *Wagner* (London: Omnibus Press, 1990), 121.

[22] Richard Wagner, "A Pilgrimage to Beethoven," 1840, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 9. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagpilg.htm#d0e980 (accessed November 5, 2013).

[23] Runciman, *Richard Wagner Composer of Operas* (1913; reprint; Hamburg: Tredition Classics, 2012), 11.

[24] Klaus Kropfinger, *Wagner and Beethoven: Richard Wagner's Reception of Beethoven* (Cambridge, ENG: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 15-16.

[25] Roger Scruton, "Desecrating Wagner," *Prospect Magazine* (London: Prospect Publishing, April 20, 2003), 14.

[26] Ernest Newman, *The Life of Richard Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 403.

[27] Robert Donington, *Wagner's Ring and its Symbols* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1963).

[28] Ibid., 31.

[29] Richard Wagner, "Opera and Drama," 1852, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 1.0. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wlpr0063.htm (accessed November 19, 2013).

[30] Michael Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner: An Introduction to Der Ring Des Nibelungen* (Oakland CA: Regent Press, 2004), 13.

[31] Bryan Magee, *The Tristan Chord* (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Co., 2000) 86.

[32] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 12.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Father Owen Lee, *Athena Sings* (Toronto, CAN: University of Toronto Press, 2003). Cover page.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Lee, *Athena Sings*, 68.

[37] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*.

[38] Ibid., 57

[39] Ibid., 191.

[40] Helena Blavatsky, "The Collected Writings," *Electronic Books Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 2003) 49-50.

[41] Lee, *Athena Sings*, 69.

[42] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 13.

[43] Richard Wagner, The Artwork of the Future, 1849, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 1.09. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagartfut.htm (accessed January, 18, 2014).

[44] Bessak, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 2.

[45] Ibid., 33.
[46] Manly P. Hall, *The Symbolism of the Great Operas,* Audio Cassette published by Philosophical Research Society (January 1, 1993).
[47] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 64.
[48] See Wagner's essay on the "Wibelungen" for more detailed information on *World History as Saga* at: http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagwibel.htm.
[49] Manly P. Hall, *The Symbolism of the Great Operas.*
[50] Wagner, "Wibelungen," 1848, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 1.0. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagwibel.htm (accessed May 2, 2014).
[51] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 16.
[52] Ibid., 37.
[53] Ibid
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., 226.
[56] Richard Wagner, "Art and Revolution," 1849, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 0.9. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagartrev.htm (accessed May 8, 2014).
[57] Aaron Green, *A Look at Wagner's Ring Cycle*: http://classicalmusic.about.com/od/opera/a/wagnerimpact.htm (accessed January8, 2014).
[58] See for example, "Wagner as a Metapolitical Revolutionary." The article, by Kerry Bolton, was written for the *Wagner Bicentennial Symposium* and was posted in May 2013 on the following website: http://www.counter-currents.com/2013/05/wagner-bicentennial-symposiumwagner-as-metapolitical-revolutionary/print/ (accessed July 30, 2014).
[59] Ibid.
[60] Wagner, *My Life*, 347.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 8.
[63] Wagner, "Art and Revolution," 12.
[64] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 18.
[65] *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Vol. 1, 1869–1877 (San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1978).
[66] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 2.
[67] This cartoon, which appeared in a 19th century newspaper, mocks Richard Wagner's Jewish friends and supporters. *The Jewish Standard.* http://jstandard. com/content/tag/anti-semitism (accessed January 28, 2014).
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 5.
[70] Ibid., 2.
[71] Haggai Hitron, "For Wagner, there were good Germans and bad Germans, good Jews and bad Jews." *The Wagnerian*, February 11, 2013. http://www.the-wagnerian.com/2013/02/for-wagner-there-were-good-germans-and.html?goback=%2_Egde_4792528_member_212789491#%21. Also see: Haggai Hitron, "Wagner didn't hate all Jews, just the bad ones, argues Israeli scholar," *Haaretz Digital Edition*, January 1, 2013. http://www.haaretz.com/culture/arts-leisure/wagner-didn-t-hate-all-jews-just-bad-ones-argues-israeli-scholar.premium-1.496698 (accessed April 11, 2014).
[72] Ibid.
[73] See for example, *Richard Wagner: New Light on a Music Life*, by John Louis Digaetani.
[74] Two individuals who had a notable influence on Adolph Hitler's racial theories were Guido von List and Jörg Lanz von Libenfels, who distorted Helena Blavatsky's theories on the Sub-Races into a racial, anti-Semitic occultism called "Ariosophy." For additional information on Hitler's racist appropriation of occult theories see: *Madame Blavatsky: The Mother of Modern Spirituality*, by Gary Lachman.
[75] Richard Wagner, "Heldentum und Christentum," *Bayreuther Blätter* (1881).
[76] John Louis Digaetani, *Richard Wagner: New Light on a Musical Life*, 164-165.
[77] Richard Wagner, "On State and Religion, 1864, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 1.1. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagstarel.htm (accessed May 7, 2014)
[78] Richard Wagner, *My Life*, Vol. 1, (Cambridge, Mass: DeCapo, 1992), 23.
[79] Alan Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas: A Spiritual Journey* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), 4.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., Introduction.
[82] Ibid., 130.
[83] Richard Wagner, "Religion and Art", 1880, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 1.1. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wlpr0126.htm (accessed February 2, 2014).
[84] *Cosima Wagner's Diaries*, Vol.1, 1869–1877.
[85] Wagner, "Religion and Art."
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, 17.
[89] Richard Wagner, "The Art Work of the Future," 1849, *The Wagner Library*, Edition 1.0. http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagartfut.htm (accessed February 5, 2014).

[90] Wagner, "The Art Work of the Future."
[91] Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, Introduction.
[92] See *The Esoteric Wagner*, 5 and *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, 233- 234.
[93] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 5, 28.
[94] Milton E. Brener, *Richard Wagner and the Jews* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), 92.
[95] Ibid., 293. See also, Michael Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, Alan D. Aberbach's, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas.*
[96] See: *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner*, by Dieter Borchmeyer and Daphne Ellis (Oxford, K: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[97] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 5.
[98] Alan David Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, 205.
[99] Ibid., 98.
[100] There is some speculation that *Jesus of Nazareth* was originally intended to be a three-part music drama, but that idea was ultimately abandoned.
[101] Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, 121-122.
[102] Mathew Giessel, "Richard Wagner's Jesus von Nazareth," Virginia Commonwealth University, 2013, 6.
[103] Ibid., 10.
[104] Richard Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Briefe an Theodor Uhlig, Wilhelm Fischer, Ferdinand Heine* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1888), letter to Uhlig of December 27, 1849, no. 5. 20. https://archive.org/ details/richardwagnersb00wagn (accessed August 22, 2014).
[105] Giessel, "Richard Wagner's Jesus von Nazareth," 31.
[106] Ibid., 5.
[107] Ibid., 312.
[108] Ibid., 298.
[109] Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, 98.
[110] *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1 Corinthians. 6:19-20, as cited by Wagner in *Jesus of Nazareth.*
[111] Wagner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 302.
[112] *The Jerusalem Bible*, John 13:34-3, as cited by Wagner in *Jesus of Nazareth*.
[113] Wagner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 311.
[114] Ibid., 304.
[115] Ibid.,
[116] Aberbach, *Richard Wagner's Religious Ideas*, 92.
[117] Ibid., 130.
[118] Giessel, "Richard Wagner's Jesus von Nazareth," 209.
[119] Both the *Schiller Society* and the *Tunnel über der Spree* were organizations that cultivated the spirit of liberation that would lead to the coming revolution.
[120] Max Graft, "Wagner and Freemasonry," 1939, *The Ottawa Evening Citizen*.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Jacques Chailley, *Parsifal, de Richard Wagner: Opera Initiatique*, (Paris, France: Buchet Chastel, 1994), 192.
[123] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 12.
[124] Ibid., 251.
[125] Graft, *Wagner and Freemasonry*.
[126] Ibid.
[127] See for example, "The Ceremony of Passing,"1933, by W. L. Wilmshurst. Made available through the University of Bradford, UK, via *The Web of Hiram.* http://www.brad.ac.uk/webofhiram/?section=walter_leslie_wilmshurst&page=Passing.html.
[128] Corinne Heline, *Esoteric Music of Richard Wagner*, 150.
[129] Besack, *The Esoteric Wagner*, 44.
[130] Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon, *The Documented Image: Visions in Art History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1987), 168-169.
[131] Ibid.
[132] This article uses the German spelling "Hafiz" as opposed to "Hafez."
[133] In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche pays tribute to Zarathustra/Zoroaster. Nietzsche states explicitly "I must pay tribute to Zarathustra, a Persian. Persians were the first who thought of history in its full entirety."
[134] Richard Wagner to August Röckel, September 12, 1852, *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*; trans., and ed., Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington (New York, NY: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1987), 270.
[135] William Ashton Ellis, "Richard Wagner to Theodore Uhlig," *The Life of Richard Wagner*, September 12, 1852 (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1977), 3:427.
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[152] See "Ideas from Indian Religion, Philosophy and Literature in Parsifal," by Carl Suneson. www.monsalvat.no/suneson.htm (accessed April 3, 2014).
[153] Roger Scruton, *Death Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 180.
[154] Ibid., 183.
[155] In the various legends about *Tristan and Isolde*, "Tantris" is the name Tristan initially gives to Isolde as he lay dying from a poisoned wound in the bottom of his boat. Later in the drama as he points to his weapon, he tells Isolde that "Tristan and Tantris are the same and both shall die from this sword."
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Book Reviews

The Path to Higher States of Consciousness: A Collection of Esoteric Essays, by Iván Kovács, 200 pages, $15.93, ISBN-10: 149960872. Available at: http//: www.Amazon.com.

The Path to Higher States of Consciousness is a collection of nine essays, previously published in either the *Beacon* or *The Esoteric Quarterly*, in which various aspects of the Ageless Wisdom are discussed. Bringing together the esoteric philosophy of east and west, with the teachings of Helena Blavatsky, Helena Roerich and Alice A. Bailey, Kovács presents a wide range of insightful and informative essays that invite deep reflection.

The title essay—*Esotericism and the Feminine Principle*—begins with an historical overview of the feminine principle showing how the perception of women has changed throughout the ages. The article demonstrates that while the feminine principle's life-sustaining approach has fluctuated overtime, it has never ceased to exert a valuable and important influence on society. The article then singles out the lives of the three aforementioned women whose influence carried substantial weight in inaugurating the New Age.

The next article discusses *The Apu Trilogy*, a set of three films by the Indian filmmaker, Satyajit Ray. Kovács' examination of the trilogy touches on the story from both the literal and metaphysical levels. On the surface, the trilogy traces the epic journey of Apu, from his impoverished beginnings to his marriage and fatherhood. On an esoteric level, as Kovács' retelling shows, the three films contain many spiritual lessons. Ultimately, *The Apu Trilogy* depicts the initiatory journey toward simplicity and truth and the eternal existence of the human soul.

The third article in this series provides a selective historical overview of Christianity in which several of its obvious problems and flaws are discussed. The essay also posits an alternative or esoteric view of Christianity's development and looks forward to a "new theology."

Another essay considers the three-fold relationship between the soul-infused personality, discipleship and the construction of the Antahkarana, while a fifth essay discusses language and mantra as causal forces with enormous creative and transformative power.

The sixth article in this collection explores the various incarnations of one of the 'flowers of humanity"—the Master Rakoczi, one of the most mysterious and important members of the Planetary Hierarchy. The article examines the activities of the Master Rakoczi in his present role as the Lord of Civilization and head of the now incoming Seventh Ray, as well as his previous incarnations as Roger Bacon, Francis Bacon, Francis Rakozci II, and the Comte de St. Germain. In recounting the lives of these distinguished individuals and by establishing a clear link between them, Kovács gives us a fuller picture of some of the divine characteristics that constitute a perfected Soul, a Master of the Wisdom and senior member of the Spiritual Hierarchy.

Following Kovács' informative essay on the Master Rakoczi, is an article that looks beyond the generally accepted rendering of "dharma" as it appears in the *Mahabharata*. The article provides some background on the text for those who might not be familiar with this sacred Sanskrit epic. After touching on the main narrative in the story, Kovács discusses the centrality of dharma from which many of the other values and principles in Hinduism flow. However, the author's principle emphasis is on the symbolism and significance of dharma as it pertains to the "spiritual warrior" or striving Soul. In addition to his examination of the theme within the context of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Dharma of Kings*, the author draws upon the writings of Alice A. Bailey and others to "illuminate these verses in such a way that they can be of practical use to the modern-day disciple."

The second to last article in this collection, surveys the ways in which knowledge of the Seven Rays is being disseminated by individuals in the esoteric community, the psychological profession and elsewhere. Since the article is written for those who are relative newcomers to esoteric teachings and the Science of the Seven Rays, the article does not provide comprehensive information about each ray; rather, it examines the latest material written after Alice Bailey's pivotal exegesis on the theme. However, the article does include a concise introduction and description of the rays, followed by a discussion of the rays from Rosicrucian, Anthroposophical, Theosophical and Psychological perspectives. Kovács stresses the contributions of Kurt Abraham and Michael Robbins whose work serves as the most important adjunct to Bailey's teachings to date. The article concludes with some practical examples of how to think more creatively about the rays.

The Path to Higher States of Consciousness as Perceived in the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutras, and the books of Alice A. Bailey is Kovács final full length contribution to the book. In this article, Kovács presents an overview of the tiered and evolving levels of consciousness as they are understood in the Vedas, the works of Patanjali and the teachings of Alice A. Bailey. In order to familiarize the reader with the various degrees of consciousness as they are reflected from the macrocosmic whole into the human microcosm, the author opens with a discussion of the Human Constitution as it is presented in Bailey's work. The author also draws upon numerous passages from the Upanishads which focus on Self-realization and the relationship between the universal and individual Soul, as well as Bailey's commentaries on the Yoga Sutras and Raja Yoga. A section on the Antahkarana as a means of approach to the Spiritual Triad is included.

In addition to the themes discussed above, the book contains appendices consisting of four brief informal papers. The first of these—*The Kundalini Syndrome*—investigates the traumatic and often misunderstood experience of kundalini arousal. In addition to examining the all-important requirements for a timely kundalini awakening, Kovács also outlines the the numerous symptoms accompanying such an awakening.

The next paper, *Genius, Insanity and the Noble Middle Path*, is an intriguing commentary on the thin line between genius and insanity. The paper examines the lives of a number of individuals who exhibited qualities that are characteristic of both extremes. It also reflects upon genius in its purest form as seen in those who have learned to tread the path of balance or equilibrium between the pairs of opposites.

In another paper —*The Energy of Love*— Kovács attempts to probe the deeper meaning of Love as a "thing in itself" without necessarily linking it to a specific act of compassion or charity.

In the concluding paper, the author considers the genius of *Jan Smuts and the Concept of Holism.* The article touches upon Smuts' formative years, his years as statesman, scholar and a true spiritual visionary who developed the theory of "holism" in 1926 and a related theory of evolution. The paper concludes with a brief discussion about how Smuts' theories have been validated today.

In this interesting and accessible anthology of essays, Kovács shares his knowledge and insights into some of the many facets of the Ageless Wisdom teachings, making *The Path to Higher States of Consciousness* a valuable resource for all those who have set their foot on the spiritual path.

The Editorial Staff
The Esoteric Quarterly

Nicholas & Helena Roerich: The Spiritual Journey of Two Great Artists and Peacemakers, by Ruth A. Drayer, Wheaton, IL: Quest Books, 2003/2005, 360 pages. List price US$21.95.

Nicholas and Helena Roerich are revered by millions of people for their contributions to modern esotericism. Along with Helena Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Alice Bailey, and a handful of others, they were selected by the Planetary Hierarchy to receive what we now call the Trans-Himalayan teachings, during that pivotal period in world history from 1875 to 1950. Nicholas is best-remembered for his legacy of spiritual art, though he did much more, while Helena served as amanuensis to the Master Morya to produce the Agni Yoga teachings.

Ruth Drayer's valuable—though in some ways disappointing—book was first published more than ten years ago, but a review at this time is appropriate in the light of recent attention on social media. Drayer's research, extending over fourteen years, is impressive. Much of the material she presents was not previously available, and original sources and private letters are quoted at length. Her writing style is lively, enabling her to hold the reader's attention.

Like Blavatsky, the Roerichs were Russian: Helena of noble birth, Nicholas from a wealthy family that played prominent roles in the professions, politics, and the military. They grew up in positions of privilege in the highly stratified society of Tsarist Russia, blessed with opportunities to travel, read, and learn. By any measure, they put those gifts to good use throughout their full lives together. The Roerichs had two sons: George, who became an expert in oriental languages; and Svetoslav, an artist and architect.

Nicholas & Helena Roerich focuses on Nicholas' art, his peacemaking efforts, and most importantly on the explorations of central and eastern Asia. Nicholas first established himself as an artist and was widely acclaimed in his native Russia and, after the Revolution of 1917, in the West. He conceived of the Master School of United Arts, which came to fruition in 1921, in New York City, with the backing of wealthy supporters. It was to be an institution in which all the arts, along with their creators or performers, could be brought together in the service of world peace.

At the Masters', or Mahatmas', urging, however, the Roerichs were drawn to Asia, with another vision: "to establish and lead . . . the 'New Russia,' a Buddhist spiritual state in the areas surrounding the Altai Mountains, Mongolia, and the Gobi [Desert]" (p. 65). This second vision and the related quest to find the mythical Shamballa were the driving forces behind the expeditions that occupied the latter part of the 1920s. George Roerich accompanied his parents on the expeditions, and his knowledge of local languages was an enormous asset.

Drayer gives a good account of the hardships of the expeditions, on which Helena—whose health was always fragile—bravely accompanied her husband. They traversed frigid high mountain ranges, blistering deserts, and areas roamed by brigands or controlled by hostile warlords. In several instances, they were delayed for weeks or months by the petty bureaucracy of one country or another, and in one instance they nearly perished while confined over the winter months in a mountainous area on the border of Tibet because officials in the British Raj suspected that they were Bolshevik spies or revolutionaries (pp. 231ff).

Despite the hardships, the Roerich's experienced and recorded the beauty of Asia, made numerous archeological discoveries, and established lasting contacts with Buddhists, Muslims, Christians, and members of numerous ethnic groups. They were struck by the pervasiveness of legends, throughout Central Asia, of Jesus' travels to the Himalayas during the gospels' "silent years." And they learned much about Shamballa.

Ever promoting peace among nations, ethnic groups, and religions, Nicholas Roerich was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1929. The following year he proposed an international treaty, the Roerich Peace Pact, to protect art treasures and scientific discovery in the event of war. The treaty was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt and twenty-two

other world leaders (p. xiii). Thirty-two countries were represented at the Second International Peace Banner Conference in 1932 (pp. 272-281).

The Great Depression struck in 1929, followed in 1934 by the Dust Bowl in the American and Canadian prairies. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, who at that time admired Roerich, devised a plan to send him to East Asia to bring back samples of drought-tolerant grass which might restore fertility to the affected areas. Nicholas agreed, seeing the expedition not just in terms of its botanical objectives but also as a fresh opportunity to promote his vision of a New Russia. But the expedition was doomed almost from the outset. It became caught up in the political standoff between China and Japanese-occupied Manchuria (Manchukuo). Japan—which the U.S. distrusted—was accommodating of the Roerichs and their mission. But the Chinese authorities were even more obstructive than they had been during the earlier expeditions.

Suspicions about his alleged ties with Bolshevism also surfaced again among U.S. officials, Wallace turned against his former friend, and the expedition was terminated (pp. 290-302). In a climate of accusations and outright lies, the Roerichs became *persona non grata* in America. Helena Roerich who had corresponded with Roosevelt, was forbidden to continue doing so.

Louis Horch, who had been a close friend and financial supporter, and to whom operation of the Master School of United Arts had been entrusted, also turned against the Roerichs, accusing Nicholas of being "an imposter and a cheat," and "a dangerous person who mixed "politics with art and would be a troublemaker wherever he went" (p. 319). Horch even managed to oust Nicholas Roerich as a trustee of the School—the very institution that Nicholas had conceived of and founded. Priceless works of art and Helena's private diaries were seized. Drayer quotes a harsh but accurate judgment by one of the Roerich's loyal disciples: "[T]he entire Museum was stolen by criminals, people without any scruples, people who deliberately ousted the rightful shareholders and trustees from the Institutions and who succeeded in winning the courts and the judges over to their side."

These were just some of the setbacks and disappointments that plagued the last years of the Roerichs' lives. Nicholas never reached Lhasa, the capital of Tibet; he never found Shamballa, at least on the dense physical plane; and his vision of a Buddhist state—which he firmly believed had the support of the Mahatmas—was unrealized. Betrayed by friends and governments, the Roerichs retired to northern India, to live in relative seclusion. There they remained during World War II. They lived to see India and Pakistan win their long-sought independence from British rule. But Nicholas, who had worked so hard to bring people together, did not live to see peace in his adopted country. He made his transition in December 1947, as the two new nations went to war against each other. Helena continued her work for another eight years, at the urging of the Masters, before she too passed away.

Like many world disciples, the Roerichs faced many challenges, not least from some of their closest disciples. But their legacy speaks for itself. Drayer sums up their achievement thus: "Spiritual pioneers, searching for something greater than themselves, the Roerichs cut a path through the darkness for all of us" (p. 336).

A new Roerich Museum was chartered in New York City in 1958, containing 200 of Nicholas's paintings and an extensive archive of his and Helena's writings. It flourishes today and is visited by pilgrims from every part of the world. The Roerichs' work also found favor in the Soviet Union in the 1980s, under the new political climate of *perestroika*. Svestoslav Roerich met with Soviet premier Mikhail Gorbachev and his wife Raisa, herself a student of Agni Yoga (pp. 339-340). Many of Nicholas's paintings are now on permanent exhibition at museums in Russia, including the Nicholas Roerich Museum in Moscow. Other paintings found their way to museums around the world.

Ruth Drayer's *Nicholas & Helena Roerich* makes a valuable contribution to the literature, and this reviewer has no hesitation in recom-

mending it to readers of *The Esoteric Quarterly*. But readers need to be aware that the book's title, subtitle and dedication do not accurately describe what it achieves. The book is a biography of *Nicholas* Roerich, rather than Nicholas and Helena. Moreover, its subtitle speaks of a "spiritual journey." The expeditions certainly merit that description, but Nicholas' inner journey is not discussed at any length. More attention is paid to political matters, and to interactions with friends and foes, than to the spiritual message of his paintings or to his writings.

The book, we are told, is "[d]edicated to Helena Ivanovna Roerich, Urusvati, the Light of the Star of the Morning, who foresaw the 'Era of the Woman' as a time requiring great courage, cooperation, and compassion" (frontispiece). Helena is at Nicholas' side throughout the story, and certainly her courage and cooperation with her husband comes across. But little is said about her other than the brief account of her childhood, in the first chapter, and an equally brief account of her life after Nicholas' death. Even a single chapter would have been welcome, recalling her work with the Master Morya, the development of the Agni Yoga teachings, and her contribution to modern esotericism. As it is, we must turn elsewhere to find out why she could be called "Light of the Star of the Morning."

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