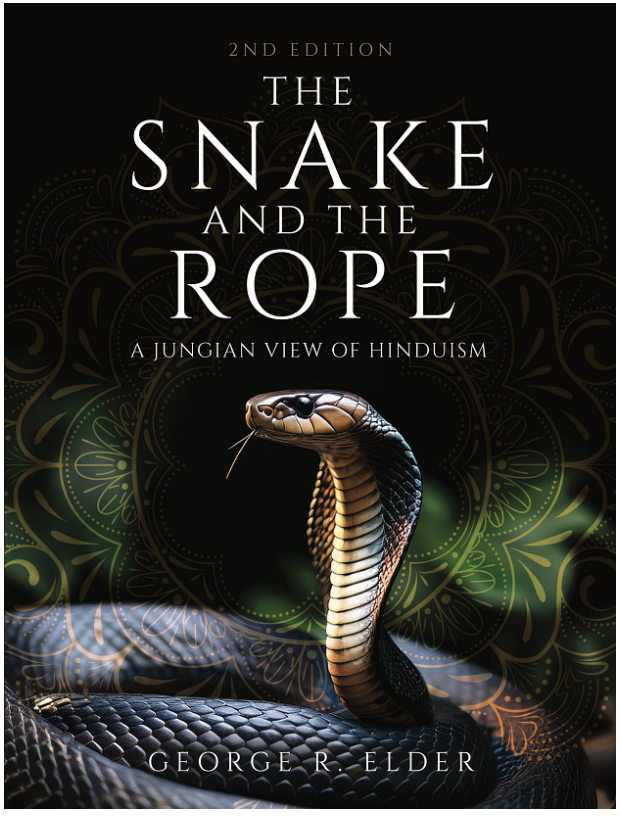

This is a historical survey of Hinduism from its ancient Indian origins. It is also a modern psychological interpretation of that religion so that we may find meaning in Hinduism today.

The Snake and the Rope: A Jungian View of Hinduism

By George R. Elder

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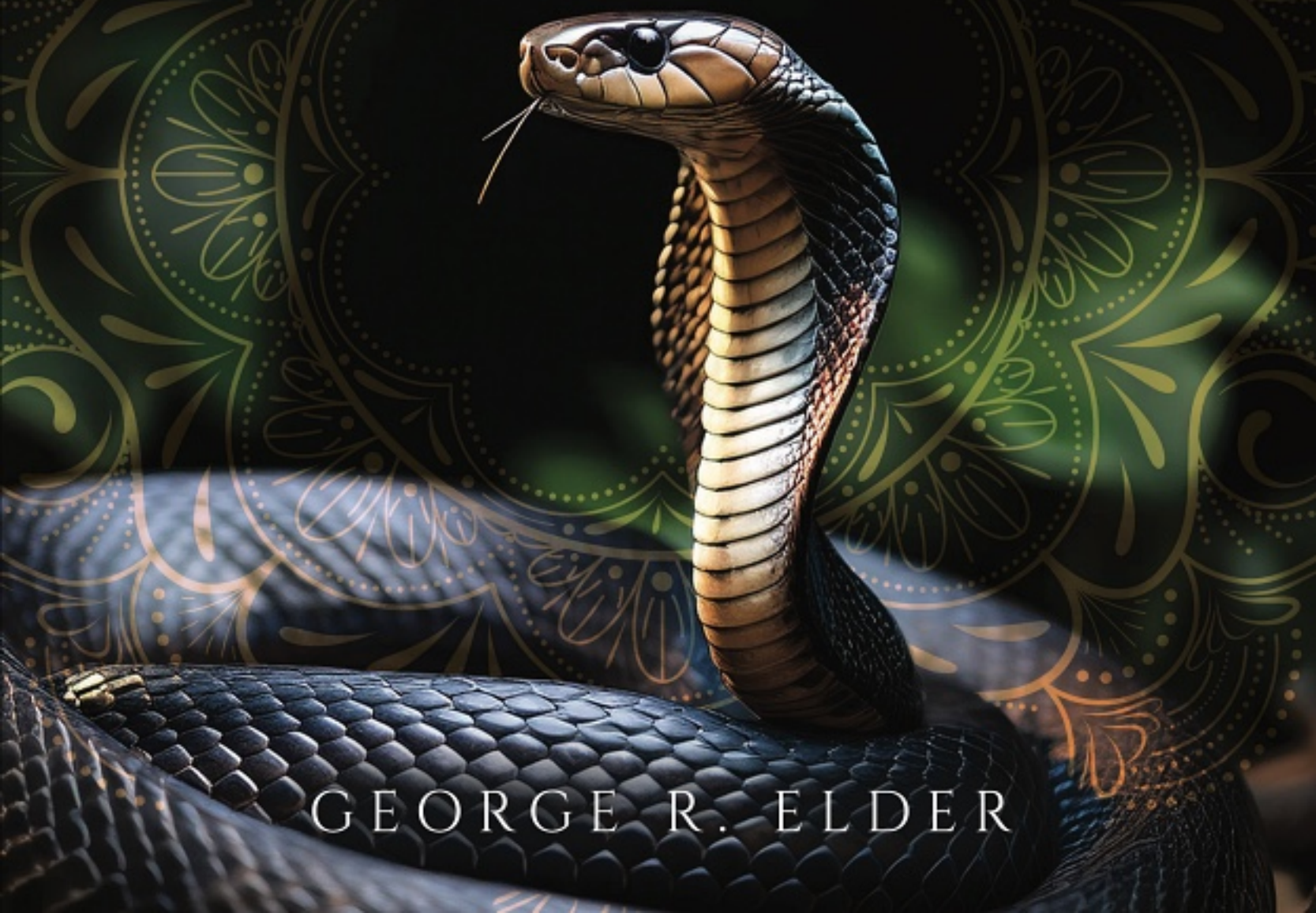
THE SNAKE AND THE ROPE

A JUNGIAN VIEW OF HINDUISM



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First published 2012

Paperback ISBN: 978-1-959620-34-1

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia, U.S.A.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2025

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Elder, George R.
The Snake and the Rope by George R. Elder
Library of Congress Control Number: 2025903742

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INTRODUCTION

The Snake and the Rope

There is a story told by Hindus of India—and by Buddhists throughout Asia—that I like to retell in the following way:

> A man worked hard all day and was walking home at night through the forest. Suddenly, he came upon a snake on the path! His heart beat fast, a cold sweat appeared upon his brow, as he worked his way around the snake. He was a pious man and sent up a prayer to Lord Kṛṣṇa—or whatever deity he was worshipping at the time—in gratitude for saving his life. But just then the moon, that had been hiding behind some clouds, shone her light upon the path. And the hero of our story looked back to find: "That was no snake, it was a rope."

We are told by the traditional East that this is a *religious* story having to do with the attainment of Release (say the Hindus) or Enlightenment (say the Buddhists) freeing one from human suffering. Yet from the point of view of the modern West it is clearly a *psychological* story having to do with the problem of perception: how it is that one's eye can perceive an outer object accurately (the man in our story does not have bad eyes) while one's apperception or mental interpretation of what one sees can be distorted. From the point of view of depth psychology, we see a tired man whose lowered level of *consciousness* has rendered him vulnerable to influence from some *unconscious* part of his mind. We witness, furthermore, the power of this unconscious to "throw itself forward" (in Latin, *projectio*) onto an outer object to alter it—or so it seems, even though the entire process may be occurring intrapsychically. In any case, the mind has created from a mere rope a threatening "snake." True, this mental snake is an illusion (in Sanskrit, *māyā*) yet one capable of tricking not only ego consciousness but the trembling body as well. Ancient India observed that people bitten by such snakes—created "only" by the mind—sometimes die. In the ninth century CE, the Hindu religious thinker, Śaṅkara, wrote: "as a matter of fact we do see real effects to result from unreal causes, for we observe that death sometimes takes place from imaginary venom."[1]

Our own experiences are often of a subtler kind. We consciously know it is only the end of a love relationship or only a job interview, yet the heart pounds: because the unconscious is adding itself to the event and coloring it. The coloring may be positive, of course, and we may be confronted with a snake and think it is just a "rope." Why, a person may even marry someone entirely inappropriate! The sudden appearance of the moon in our story indicates that external or social factors may enter into the problem. But, more important, the "moon" serves as a metaphor for the one psychological

[1] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore, eds., *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 528.

factor that can do away with distorted reality—the "light" of consciousness. For the East to insist that matters such as these have to do with the religious life tells us that in traditional India, Tibet, China, and Japan there is no serious difference between religion and what we call depth psychology. Their attitude offers hope that the gap existing in the West between these two very different and even antagonistic points of view will eventually close.

Old and New World Views

It is also true that we live in apocalyptic times which require us to search for wisdom here or abroad, wherever we can find it. By "Apocalypse" most people understand a worldwide catastrophe of a mainly physical sort—volcanic fires, the flooding of entire continents, much bodily pain accompanied, of course, by mental anguish—all of it caused by an angry God. But the Greek word *apokalypsis* actually means "uncovering" and, by extension, a "revelation" from the angry God of some great new truth.[2] If we take the phenomenon less concretely as the *end of a subjective world view*—itself sufficiently catastrophic—we can see "signs of the times" all around us. One sign is Nietzsche's pronouncement just over a century ago that "God is dead!" He was echoing a mysterious voice that some ship's pilot heard two thousand years earlier, crying, "Great Pan is dead!" The ancient report so disturbed the Roman emperor that he called a committee to investigate.

We know now that they would have been "investigating" the cultural fact that at the center of every world view lies a God-image or experience of divinity. When that *image* shifts, the world view shifts apocalyptically. And just as the Greco-Roman view of reality gave way, with blood and distress, to Christendom, so now we can anticipate that Christendom—if not also the world's other great religious traditions—is giving way with great difficulty to something new.

C. G. Jung reminds us that religion is that institution charged with carrying a culture's saving self-knowledge and that religion often likens itself to a "boat": "A religious system is like a safe form, a body of teaching, of principles, of advice and so on, which is destined to help man to navigate over the troubled waters of the unconscious. It is a human contrivance to protect one against the dangers of real life."[3] Thus, the Early Church Father Hippolytus wrote:

> the sea is the world in which the Church is set, like a ship tossed in the deep but not destroyed; for she has with her the skilled Pilot, Christ. . . . For her prow is the east, and her stern is the west, and her hold is the south, and her tillers are the two Testaments; and the ropes that stretch around her are the love of Christ, which

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[2] See Edward F. Edinger, *Archetype of the Apocalypse: A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, ed. George R. Elder (Chicago: Open Court, 1999), 2-3. Notice the cover painting by John Martin, "The Great Day of His Wrath," depicting catastrophic natural disaster.

[3] C. G. Jung, *Nietzsche's "Zarathustra": Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934-1939*, ed. James L. Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 1:970. See Barbara Hannah, *The Inner Journey* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 2000), 55-57, where she discusses a troubled minister's dream that "a very large ship had sunk some time ago in very deep water and the dreamer had the task of going down as a diver to explore the ship and to bring up any valuables he might find."

> bind the Church. . . . The ladder in her leading up to the sailyard is an emblem of the passion of Christ which brings the faithful to the ascent of heaven.[4]

Not surprisingly, the main space of a church is called the nave—from Latin, *navis*, "ship"—while the Gothic church ceiling actually looks like the inside of a hull.

Hinduism shares this symbolism. All of its sacred places are called "crossings" or "fords" (*tīrtha*, pronounced TEER-tuh in Sanskrit), because the religion envisions itself as a boat for crossing the dangerous waters of everyday existence—to a shore where life is free of ignorance and suffering. Buddhism, which originated in India, invites us to board either of its two main forms. They are called the Hīnayāna ("Little Vehicle") or Mahāyāna ("Great Vehicle") and are likened to rafts capable of "crossing the water" of worldly *saṃsāra* to reach the "far shore" of *nirvāṇa*.

But what if one's traditional "boat" is sinking during an Apocalypse? Then it is crucial that there be within swimming distance another "boat," another convincing system of beliefs to keep one afloat, to make sense of all the chaos and provide hope for a meaningful outcome. For some, this means boarding a different traditional religion: e.g., a Jew who finds insufficient meaning in the extraverted way he was raised converts, shaved head and all, to a more introverted Krishna Consciousness; or a Christian, finding her church's claims for prayer inconsequential, adopts a more directed Zen Buddhist meditation. For many, it means daring to ride out life's storms on the personal goals of ego prestige and material gain that history and the psychoanalytic office reveal are not really seaworthy.

It is my belief that the evolution of our culture has prepared for us, instead, a new vessel—the next most adequate container of the psyche—as the new world view found in the psychology of C. G. Jung. The eminent Jungian analyst, Esther Harding, had not yet found her way and was in crisis. She dreamed, "she was floundering helplessly in the open sea and had almost lost hope when Jung appears in a large, sturdy ship in the guise of Noah." He reached down his hand to help her aboard.[5]

A Jungian Attitude

The reader will find in this book the same attitude as Marie-Louise von Franz expresses early in her biographical study, *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time*:

> As he reads the following pages the reader will notice that Jung's ideas carry conviction for me. This should not be understood as meaning that I regard them as universally valid, "absolute," scientific truths. However, since my youth, I have myself had inner experiences for which Jung's discoveries have offered me the most illuminating explanation to date, and I have seen that it is the same with many people. Thus, I am convinced on the one hand that certain background processes in Jung's life and work parallel those of numerous modern men and women, and

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[4] Hippolytus, "Treatise on Christ and Antichrist" in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 5 (repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 216-217.

[5] As reported by Edward F. Edinger in a memorial address, "M. Esther Harding: 1888-1971," in George R. Elder and Dianne D. Cordic, eds., *An American Jungian: In Honor of Edward F. Edinger* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 2009), 177.

> on the other hand that Jung's careful and honest attempt to interpret them leads farther than any other explanation known to me.[6]

In a seminar published posthumously, she puts the matter more strongly while discussing a fairy tale "Cat" that is forcing a son to confront his emperor father:

> She has the intention of making him a man and forcing him to take an absolute stand against the old emperor, not just to go away from it but to really say what is what. . . . That's what I feel we have to say about Jungian psychology. That's why, to the great annoyance of certain of my colleagues, I am against making a cocktail of a bit of Jung and bits of other things, watering the whole of Jungian psychology down until it is again nineteenth-century philosophy, and no longer the shocking newness which I feel Jungian psychology is.[7]

My book, then, is something of a "shocking" demonstration of the principles of Jungian psychology by way of an Eastern religion which by its very nature encourages psychological reflection.

It is worth noting that the Jungian "boat" is not just new but different in kind from the others that have been launched in the past and that, admittedly, still float for the vast majority of humanity. One difference can be felt in von Franz's reticence to claim "absolute" truth. Edward Edinger explains this in a discussion of psychological "containment" as it pertains to the practice of analysis:

> To the extent one is contained in a metaphysical belief one is identified with one's subjective experience, and one gives universal validity to an experience which is only individually valid. . . . All analysts have belief systems of one kind or another to serve as a boat to keep one afloat on the sea of the collective unconscious. One must have a boat. These belief systems are based on one's subjective experience; we have no other basis for them. Either they derive from past experience taken over from someone else—which is still our subjective experience—or from our own individual experience. Such a boat is absolutely necessary, but one should be aware it is one's own boat and should not assume the same boat will keep someone else afloat.[8]

His point is that traditional religion still works for persons who are able to believe in *metaphysical* reality—which in Greek means literally what comes "after" (*meta*) the "physical" (*physika*) has been taken into account. While, logically, what comes "after physical" reality could be understood as "psychological" reality, the psyche's *reality* has only recently dawned.

Thus, the metaphysical still tends to refer to some supernatural realm "Beyond"—and to stories of miracles that fly in the face of physical reality. For the truly modern person, however, a fascination

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[6] Marie-Louise von Franz, *C. G. Jung: His Myth in Our Time* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), 14n.

[7] Marie-Louise von Franz, *The Cat: A Tale of Feminine Redemption* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1999), 119-120.

[8] Edward F. Edinger, *The New God-Image: A Study of Jung's Key Letters Concerning the Evolution of the Western God-Image*, ed. Dianne D. Cordic and Charles Yates (Wilmette: Chiron Publications, 1996), 10.

with the possibility that shamans just might fly, or that gurus levitate, or that Jesus walked on water, has dissolved. The projected snake has become a rope—in the light of greater consciousness—and cannot be made to look like a snake again. Yet, the subsequent discovery of a meaningful Jungian world view includes for the first time an awareness of its own relativity. It is even a measure of its superiority that this new view accepts the likelihood that a more adequate container will appear in the distant future for the next stage of human evolution—should we survive the one that is now upon us.

The Task of Assimilation

The following chapters are also my contribution to the task of "assimilating" into the new world view what has gone before. As Jung says, "Any renewal not deeply rooted in the best spiritual tradition is ephemeral"—a statement to which any historian, sociologist, or anthropologist can give assent.[9]

Edinger, again, explains in an essay on Ralph Waldo Emerson:

> If the new world view is to take its place as a new cultural dominant, a long process of reorientation and assimilation is required. Just as emergent Christianity required the devoted efforts of generations to assimilate the previous Greek learning, so modern psychology will gradually assimilate into its own forms and modes of understanding the products of human culture that have preceded it. This task I take to be the responsibility of the analysts and psychologically informed laity of the present and the future. One of the best ways to promote an understanding of the new psychological view is to compare its discoveries with the intuitions of the wise men and poets of the past and thus to throw new light on old and familiar material.[10]

Edinger calls such work "archetypal psychohistory" which he believes Jung introduced as a "whole new department of human knowledge" in his volume, *Aion*.[11] Elsewhere, Jung refers to his work as "research in the field of comparative psychology of religious symbolism."[12]

Jesus warns us in an apocalyptic metaphor not to "put new wine into old wineskins" (*Matthew* 9.16-17)—not to mix the old with the new. Yet this is what we do when we deliberately pour old wisdom into a new psychological container. In that early scripture, Jesus seems worried that his new vision might get confused with what had gone before—that the Christ who turned water into wine be taken as just another Dionysus and no religious progress be made. But progress can be made along

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[9] C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, vol. 14 of *Collected Works of C. G. Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953-1979), par. 521. Hereafter, the *Collected Works of C. G. Jung* will be designated as *CW* without publication data.

[10] Edinger, "Ralph Waldo Emerson: Naturalist of the Soul," in Elder and Cordic, *An American Jungian,* 137.

[11] Edward F. Edinger, *The Aion Lectures: Exploring the Self in C. G. Jung's "Aion"*, ed. Deborah A. Wesley (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1996), 9. See also Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, *CW* 9ii.

[12] C. G. Jung, *Letters*, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffe, vol. 2: 1951-1961 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 244.

with continuity; indeed, real psycho-religious progress requires continuity with what has already occurred. Jung argues his own point with a metaphor from metallurgy:

> To gain an understanding of religious matters, probably all that is left us today is the psychological approach. That is why I take these thought-forms that have become historically fixed, try to melt them down again and pour them into molds of immediate experience. It is certainly a difficult undertaking to discover connecting links between dogma and immediate experience of psychological archetypes, but a study of the natural symbols of the unconscious gives us the necessary raw materials.[13]

Though Jung's "melting down" may threaten persons who still believe in the fixed forms of their tradition, the procedure actually preserves what has gone before but in a new form. It may even be a godsend for those who are all at sea, wondering what to believe next.

Jungian Psychology

Since the readers of this book are likely to be sympathetic toward Jung, they will not need definitions of basic terms. I offer them, nonetheless, for those new to the subject or simply to "circumambulate" some psychological terms that are actually symbolic and, thus, forever elusive for our intellects. I have in mind a naïve model of the psyche which came to me years ago as I was preparing lectures for undergraduates. This image may have been influenced by Diagrams 10 and 11 in Jolande Jacobi's, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*. But, then, she seems to have been influenced by Jung's Diagram 10 in his Seminar on "Analytical Psychology" of 1925.[14] There, Jung speaks of "individuals coming out of a certain common level, like the summits of mountains coming out of the sea."

The Mind as a "Mountain"

It follows that the human psyche is symbolically a "mountain," yet a peculiar one that is "mostly under water" (Figure 1.1). The image tells us two things immediately. First, it announces that the mind is real, as real as a mountain and not to be taken lightly in one's journey through life. It appears universally in many important religious contexts—as Mount Sinai, Mount Olympus, Mount Meru, Mount Fuji. Some of these mountains are externally real, all of them are colored by the unconscious. This would be the "mountain" that Jesus said—speaking again in apocalyptic extremes—could be moved if we had faith the size of a mustard seed. This would be the "mountain"

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[13] Jung, "Psychology and Religion," in *Psychology and Religion: West and East, CW* 11, par. 148.

[14] Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 33-34. C. G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 133.

of which Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote in *Carrion Comfort*: "O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall / Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap / May who ne'er hung there."[15]

Second, our mountain that is mostly under water shows us that the psyche is "whole" in its natural state—as a mountain is always entire. Nevertheless, an internal distinction exists: between a very small part that is symbolically "dry and in the light" and a much larger part that is symbolically "wet and dark." Many myths, dreams, and fantasies—as well as poems, novels, movies, and even music— make use of this symbolism of light and dark, dry and wet. Psychologically, the distinction is that between consciousness and the greater reality of the unconscious. In our diagram, the ego would be the mountain's "peak," surrounded by its own conscious contents of diminishing clarity as they approach the water line.

As we look at this model, we observe a further distinction within the unconscious itself. There are the "shallows" of the unconscious (indicated here by the dotted line) that are dimly visible just below the water line or threshold of consciousness. This is a region of repressed *personal* contents that Jung was prompted to call the "shadow."

Then, there are the impersonal or *transpersonal* "depths" of the unconscious that are not visible to the ego in any direct way. Speaking of the unconscious as "water," von Franz remarks: "Just as we cannot 'see' into the depths of the waters, so the deeper areas of the unconscious are also invisible to us; we can draw only indirect conclusions about them."[16] I have placed brackets at this point in the Figure to indicate that we do not really know what is there despite what imaginative products of culture such as myths or the profounder dreams of individuals suggest about this region. It is this level, however, that gives meaning to the term "depth" psychology and that provides a firm "foundation" for the rest of the psyche. This foundation is felt as vitality or *psychological energy*—what Jung calls libido but not limited to Freudian sexual energy. It is here, too, that we find the distinctive character of Jungian psychology.

[15] See Matthew 17.20 where Jesus chides his disciples for having virtually no faith at all, a context that explains his hyperbole. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Carrion Comfort," in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Selection of his Poems and Prose* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1953), 61.

[16] Marie-Louise von Franz, *Projection and Re-Collection in Jungian Psychology: Reflections of the Soul* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1980), 185.

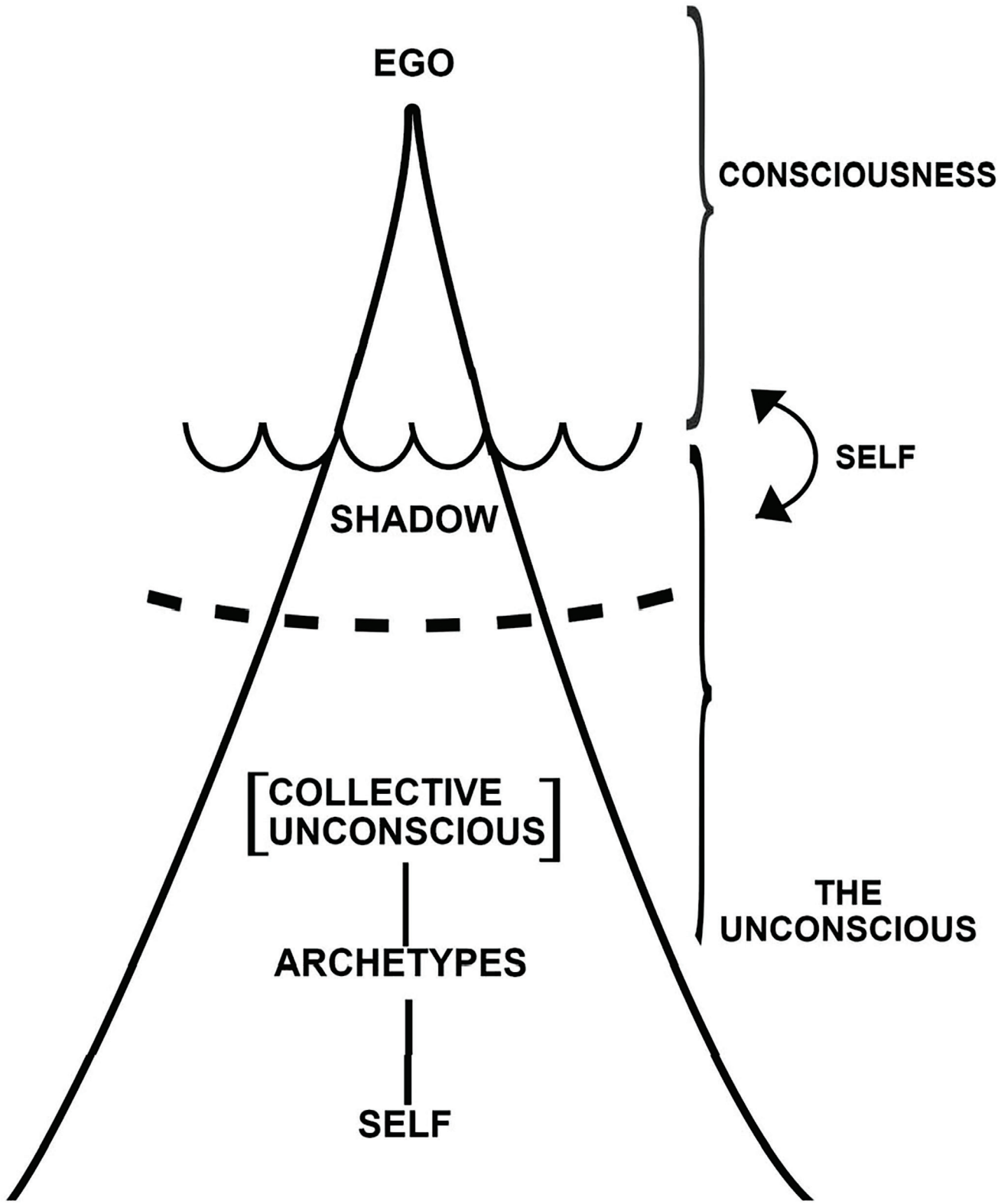

Figure 1.1 The Mind as a “Mountain”

The Shadow

Looking back "just below the water line"—at the personal unconscious—we notice that in principle the ego could become aware of some of these underlying contents without much difficulty. Few people, however, make the effort. Instead, the shadow is lazily projected in unconsidered opinions about what is wrong with others ("They are snakes!") or occasionally what is right about them ("They are such wonderful ropes!")—no matter who these others actually are or what they do. Thus, a great deal of life is lived in illusion. Fate may intrude with a crisis and force a person to question, "What is really going on here?" But even then one rarely becomes aware of contents below consciousness without the benefit of analysis with someone who has suffered these crises and performed the necessary reflective work already.

The individual who is obliged to "realize the shadow"—to discover it consciously—gains, however, not only the personal satisfaction of becoming more honest but also becomes less touchy, not so defensive or inclined to know for certain what is right and wrong. A person who can acknowledge to some degree his or her shadow becomes more compassionate toward others' weaknesses. Logically, a shadow that is "in the light" is no longer a shadow; but outer nature does not apply here. Everyone has a shadow, not only attributes that are still repressed but also attributes that remain "shadowy": in the sense of being one's own inferiorities or perhaps being morally dubious even though consciously acknowledged.

The Jungian attitude about this is nicely put by Edinger in an informal interview:

> Practically everybody—I do it all the time—practically everybody lives as though he's better than he is. He lives as though he's more considerate, more loving, more generous, more unselfish than the facts of his psychology warrant. In other words, it's as though he distributes checks to various people written on an overdrawn bank account, on a psychic bank account that doesn't have anything in it—under the guise of being a kind, loving, considerate, related person. It's not virtue to sham virtue. It's much more authentically virtuous to be what one is. And it also then has the great advantage of allowing one to carry his own weight. Because if he does *not* acknowledge what he is, then by an unconscious process he transmits to his environment around him the task of carrying the weight that he won't carry for himself.[17]

Jung said that he could have coined a "more scientific-looking Greco-Latin neologism" for this part of the psyche—Freudians prefer the Latin "Id"—but decided against it in favor of what has been "expressed so trenchantly and so plastically in poetic language by the word 'shadow.'"[18]

Living with this truth, however, goes beyond a poet's aesthetic concerns: "Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is in himself, and if he only learns to deal with his own shadow he has done something real for the world. He has succeeded in shouldering at least an infinitesimal

[17] David Serbin, "In Conversation with Edward Edinger," in Elder and Cordic, *An American Jungian*, 219.

[18] Jung, "On the Nature of the Psyche," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, *CW* 8, par. 409.

part of the gigantic, unsolved social problems of our day."[19] We should ponder this as we read the newspapers.

The Collective Unconscious

Were this all that we could learn from Jung—which would be enough to improve everything!—he would simply be among many wise persons who have long been asking us to confess our "sinfulness," wise ones who have even designed methods to get at the truth of this personal repressed unconscious. But Jung stands apart by virtue of his discovery of what for now appears to be the very depths of the human psyche—where it becomes continuous with the body which is itself continuous with all of nature. This profound continuity accounts for psychosomatic phenomena. And it accounts for the meaningful coincidence or "synchronicity" of outer and inner events, e.g., the way that natural catastrophes accompany the crumbling of a traditional world view.

It also explains the ease with which "body" imagery comes to Jung's mind when speaking of the foundation of mental life:

> it must be pointed out that just as the human body shows a common anatomy over and above all racial differences, so, too, the human psyche possesses a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness. I have called this substratum the *collective unconscious*. This unconscious psyche, common to all mankind, does not consist merely of contents capable of becoming conscious, but of latent predispositions towards identical reactions. The collective unconscious is simply the psychic expression of the identity of brain structure irrespective of all racial differences. This explains the analogy, sometimes even identity, between the various myth motifs and symbols, and the possibility of human communication in general. The various lines of psychic development start from one common stock whose roots reach back into the most distant past. This also accounts for the psychological parallelisms with animals.[20]

This passage is so rich that it will take the rest of this book to suggest what it means. For now, let us note that certain experiences of the psyche lead to the reasonable and exciting conclusion that we are all psychologically "one"—as we are physically one—and that the global culture we so desperately need is a future conscious possibility.

Jung goes on to say that the collective unconscious has many contents which he calls "archetypes," i.e., age-old patterns of psychological functioning that lie behind and even shape our conscious thoughts, autonomous quanta of energy influencing our feeling responses and qualifying what we imagine are acts of free will. Better, the archetypes are "like the morphological elements of the human body," are the "unfailing causes of neurotic and even psychotic disorders behaving exactly like neglected or maltreated physical organs": "In reality we can never legitimately cut loose

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[19] Jung, "Psychology and Religion," in *Psychology and Religion,, CW* 11, par. 140.

[20] Jung, "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower,'" in *Alchemical Studies*, *CW* 13, par. 11. My italics.

from our archetypal foundations unless we are prepared to pay the price of a neurosis, any more than we can rid ourselves of our body and its organs without committing suicide."[21]

Indeed, the lack of a "vital link" to our *psychological* depths is what leads to individual suicide since biologically the idea of self-destruction would not occur to us. Even cultures can commit suicide, as elected leaders make self-destructive decisions with which everybody just goes along. But that only happens if the culture's religion is sick. If the religion is healthy, its store of archetypal symbols— expressed in ritual, myth, and symbol—provide a vital connection to the "living waters" deep within the many individuals who make up that culture.

The Divine Life

It is religion that does this because, in the final analysis, the archetypes of the collective unconscious are "gods," those mysterious powers to which the religious life is always dedicated. It is the gods who have long patterned—guided, even forced—human ways of loving, ways of conducting war, the search for wisdom, etc. Here, the Jungian perception is revolutionary:

> Modern psychological development leads to a much better understanding as to what man really consists of. The gods at first lived in superhuman power and beauty on the top of snow-clad mountains or in the darkness of caves, woods, and seas. Later on they drew together into one god, and then that god became man. But in our day even the God-man seems to have descended from his throne and to be dissolving himself in the common man. . . . *But since the development of consciousness requires the withdrawal of all the projections we can lay our hands on, it is not possible to maintain any non-psychological doctrine about the gods* [italics mine]. If the historical process of world despiritualization continues as hitherto, then everything of a divine or daemonic character outside us must return to the psyche, to the inside of the unknown man, whence it apparently originated.[22]

This means that Nietzsche was wrong: "God" is not actually dead but changing the way that "He" wishes to be perceived. Nor is it true that "Pan is dead."

Instead, Pan lives within the depths of the psyche as the archetypal "goat god" behind our passion for nature, for play, for joy in sex. "Aphrodite" lives as the force that patterns the way we love, who alerts us—even physically with impotence or frigidity—when the proper pattern is off. "Ares" is the archetypal power behind the ego's ability to defend or assert itself, while "Athena" urges us to search for wisdom. We see that "Zeus" acts supreme among the gods. Thus, we know that among the many archetypes there is a central authority—what Jung called the *central archetype of the Self*.[23] The entire Greek pantheon is returning "to the inside of the unknown man, whence

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[21] Jung, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, CW* 9i, pars. 262ff. See also my essays in *An Encyclopedia of Archetypal Symbolism: The Body*, vol. 2 (Boston: Shambhala, 1996) for an exploration of "body" symbolism as psychological symbolism.

[22] Jung, "Psychology and Religion," in *Psychology and Religion, CW* 11, par. 141.

[23] The appearance of the word "Self" at two points on this model is explained in Chapter 5.

it apparently originated." And the same can be said for the pantheons of all the world's religions since—over time— it will not be possible "to maintain any non-psychological doctrine about the gods."

Jung wisely observes, "No doubt this discovery is hardly credible at present."[24] It is also hardly credible that C. G. Jung's psychological achievement is as important as that of previous breakthroughs in religious understanding, like that of Siddhārtha in India and Jesus in Palestine whose new perceptions of sacred reality transformed their cultures' world views. Edinger, nevertheless, has called Jung an "epochal man" whose life "inaugurates a new age in cultural history."[25] Part of the difficulty of accepting Jung's rank is that both Siddhārtha and Jesus still have projected onto them the central orienting archetype of the Self—which for Indians of the fifth century BCE was called "Buddha" and for the Jews of the first century CE was called "Christ." C. G. Jung of the twentieth century, on the other hand, is just plain Jung.

Profoundly, that is because the psychological development toward increasing consciousness—a process Jung calls *individuation*—challenges all our projections, including those that would make of Jung more than a man. It is also true that a genuine appreciation for this man's extraordinary achievements is all but smothered by the materialistic prejudice of our day—i.e., the incapacity to take the psyche seriously—and smothered by a failure of feeling, of valuing someone of great stature. Still, I believe that no one before has stated so clearly and so fully (i.e., so consciously) that divine reality— worshipped by human beings since time immemorial, the sanction of every civilization, the object of the highest levels of awareness in mystical traditions both East and West—is a name for numinous reality that lies within the human psyche.

Jung's Attitude toward Eastern Religions

While Jung's attitude toward Eastern religious materials will become obvious in the following study of Hinduism, a few words may be in order here. First of all, let us note that Jung read widely in the monumental series, "Sacred Books of the East," of which he possessed all but four of the fifty volumes edited by Max Müller. I have been impressed at several turns in my research to find Jung had already visited the topic upon which I was working.[26] Of course, he also conversed with Indologists throughout his life and counted the great scholar Heinrich Zimmer among his friends.

In a commentary on a Buddhist text—written in English in 1939, with publication delayed until 1954—we find his general attitude of respect for all scriptures:

> A scientist forgets all too easily that the impartial handling of a subject may violate its emotional values, often to an unpardonable degree. . . . In dealing with a sacred text, therefore, the psychologist ought at least to be aware that his subject represents an inestimable religious and philosophical value which should not be

[24] Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, in *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, *CW* 9.i, par. 50.

[25] Edward F. Edinger, *The Creation of Consciousness: Jung's Myth for Modern Man* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1984), 12.

[26] See Jung, *Analytical Psychology*, 72-73n.

> desecrated by profane hands. I confess that I myself venture to deal with such a text only because I know and appreciate its value.[27]

Jung went on to interpret important Buddhist terms in the translation provided him. Before doing so, he wrote a brief statement on "The Difference Between Eastern and Western Thinking" that applies to both Buddhist and Hindu materials. If we examine this section, it will give us an angle—and some difficulties—that we would not get by merely quoting from here and there.

A Problem with Metaphysics

At the outset, Jung sounds almost demeaning:

> Dr. Evans-Wentz has entrusted me with the task of commenting on a text which contains an important exposition of Eastern "psychology." The very fact that I have to use quotation marks shows the dubious applicability of this term. It is perhaps not superfluous to mention that the East has produced nothing equivalent to what we call psychology, but rather philosophy or metaphysics. Critical philosophy, the mother of modern psychology, is as foreign to the East as to medieval Europe. Thus the word "mind" as used in the East, has the connotation of something metaphysical. Our Western conception of mind has lost this connotation since the Middle Ages, and the word has now come to signify a "psychic function." (par. 759)

Jung says the same thing elsewhere in a different tone, acknowledging that Indian religion uses Sanskrit words that can be correctly translated as "ego" and "Self" (respectively, *ahaṃkāra*—pronounced uh-hum-KAR-uh—and *ātman*):

> We might therefore be inclined to assume that in India the metaphysical problem "man and God" has been shifted on to the psychological plane. On closer inspection it is clear that this is not so, for the Indian concept of "ego" and "Self" [my capitalization] is not really psychological but—one could well say—just as metaphysical as our "man and God." The Indian lacks the epistemological standpoint just as much as our own religious language does. He is still "pre-Kantian."[28]

It is clear now that the issue is epistemology—what one can and cannot know. And Jung is saying he himself is following the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant who perceived that everything we know is limited by mental categories, that we are always caught inside our

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[27] Jung, "Psychological Commentary on 'The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation,'" in *Psychology and Religion*, *CW* 11, pars. 759-830.

[28] Jung, "The Holy Men of India," in *Psychology and Religion*, *CW* 11, par. 956.

subjectivity. This means that we can never know something "as it is" either within or outside the mind.

Jung is also saying that this "critical philosophy"—with its epistemological limit—is the "mother of modern psychology." For, without Kant, modern persons would not be so interested in human subjectivity, in processes of thought and feeling that shape our world. We would not have stumbled upon the unconscious—like soldiers stumbling upon the Rosetta stone—first as an idea in nineteenth-century philosophy and then as an explanatory hypothesis in psychology.

It follows, Jung continues, that we cannot know metaphysical truths:

> Psychology accordingly treats all metaphysical claims and assertions as mental phenomena, and regards them as statements about the mind and its structure that derive ultimately from certain unconscious dispositions. It does not consider them to be absolutely valid or even capable of establishing a metaphysical truth. We have no intellectual means of ascertaining whether this attitude is right or wrong. We only know that there is no evidence for, and no possibility of proving, the validity of a metaphysical postulate such as "Universal Mind." (par. 760)

This last term pertains to the text Jung is about to interpret but it might just as easily refer to the Vedic "One" or to the Upaniṣadic "Self" that we will encounter in this book.

Hindu "seers" claim they know these transcendent realities while Jung claims they can only think they know. Their profound mystical experiences are undeniable, of course, even wonderful. But what these experiences mean or how they are interpreted depends always upon the natural human psyche inside which we are "trapped."

Edinger has pondered these issues and writes:

> All experience is subjective, psychological experience. It is an experience of the soul, because there is nothing else to be experienced except the psyche. For the individual this is either a self-evident perception or it is a ridiculous presumption. Either one sees it as a fact—"Yes, of course, it is a self-evident truth"—or one does not. There are those that follow Kant and those that cannot. It is not a philosophical issue. It is an issue of perception of the nature of human experience. It is a question of seeing, of vision.[29]

Thus, all Western converts to Eastern religions I have known—even those who admire Jung—say that he either cannot or will not cross the threshold of transcendent religious experience. Jung says the threshold they have in mind cannot be crossed and that they have not yet experienced the human psyche at depth, the numinosity of which can satisfy one's religious longing.

[29] Edinger, *The New God-Image*, 9

Our Failure of Nerve

In this short essay, Jung goes on to explain that despite the superiority of Western "epistemological criticism," the majority of educated persons in the West have actually not kept pace. Instead, we have developed a "new disease"—the conflict between science and religion:

> The conflict between science and religion is in reality a misunderstanding of both. Scientific materialism has merely introduced a new hypothesis, and that is an intellectual sin. It has given another name to the supreme principle of reality and has assumed that this created a new thing and destroyed an old thing. Whether you call the principle of existence "God," "matter," "energy," or anything else you like, you have created nothing: you have simply changed a symbol. The materialist is a metaphysician *malgré lui* ["despite himself"]. Faith, on the other hand, tries to retain a primitive mental condition on merely sentimental grounds. It is unwilling to give up the primitive, childlike relationship to mind-created and hypostatized figures; it wants to go on enjoying the security and confidence of a world still presided over by powerful, responsible, and kindly parents. In this way the faithful remain children instead of becoming as children, and they do not gain their life because they have not lost it. (par. 763)

At first glance, this criticism of our culture—with its secular materialism and infantile religion—means that Jung finds the East and the West to be spiritually on an equally poor footing. Indeed, toward the end of the section, he writes that "Both are one-sided in that they fail to see and take account of those factors which do not fit in with their typical attitude (par. 786)."

The Typological Difference

This difference in "typical attitude," however, matters greatly to Jung and determines ultimately why he thinks we must pay attention to the religions of the East despite their metaphysics. Notions such as "Universal Mind," after all, are mental notions and reflect the fact that in Eastern cultures the introverted life rather than the extraverted life has chief value. The reverse is true for the West:

> Even a superficial acquaintance with Eastern thought is sufficient to show that a fundamental difference divides East and West. The East bases itself upon psychic reality, that is, upon the psyche as the main and unique condition of existence. It seems as if this Eastern recognition were a psychological or temperamental fact rather than a result of philosophical reasoning. It is a typically introverted point of view, contrasted with the equally typical extraverted point of view of the West. (par. 770)

It is not that one temperament is better than the other. We need both to survive, and both introverted and extraverted tendencies exist within everyone. But we have collectively gone too far in our fascination with the outer world. It shows up in our fact-mongering:

> By way of compensation for the loss of a world that pulsed with our blood and breathed with our breath, we have developed an enthusiasm for *facts*—mountains of facts, far beyond any single individual's power to survey. We have the pious hope that this incidental accumulation of facts will form a meaningful whole, but nobody is quite sure, because no human brain can possibly comprehend the gigantic sum total of this mass-produced knowledge. . . . It is a paradox, yet nevertheless true, that with us a thought has no proper reality; we treat it as if it were a nothingness. Even though the thought be true in itself, we hold that it exists only by virtue of certain facts which it is said to formulate. We can produce a most devastating fact like the atom bomb with the help of this ever-changing phantasmagoria of virtually non-existent thoughts, but it seems wholly absurd to us that one could ever establish the reality of thought itself. (pars. 767-768)

Here we see that, ultimately, what is at stake is not philosophy or epistemology or even a theory of the psyche but has to do with the practical problem of avoiding mass suicide. As Jung warned in the Houston filmed interviews: "*the world hangs by a thin thread, and that thread is the psyche of man."*[30] Thus, we need to know as much as possible about this psyche that decides to make bombs and decides—or, more likely, is driven either by the personal shadow or by a transpersonal archetype—to use them. We need to learn the soul's requirements, how to come to terms with its capacity for destruction and how to encourage its creativity. To learn these things, however, we will have to look within, not outside—and become more introverted like the East.

Lessons from the East

In an unsystematic and somewhat repetitive way, Jung completes his comments with a comparison of certain aspects of Western and Eastern views (pars. 759-787). He points out that our materialists consider the psyche to be entirely conscious and the "result of biochemical processes in the brain cells"—a prejudice William James in 1902 had already called "medical materialism." Of course, this attitude is even more rife today than when Jung was writing in 1939. By dramatic contrast, "in the East, the mind is a cosmic factor, the very essence of existence"—albeit what we would call the collective unconscious. Our own religious folk, moreover, find God entirely "outside" with grace coming entirely from that direction. Grace cannot arrive from "within" since, as Protestant Christianity understands it, "before God man is always wrong." Jung says, "Extraversion goes hand in hand with mistrust of the inner man, if indeed there is any consciousness of him at all."

Again, by contrast, "we doubt the very thing that seems so obvious to the East, namely, the *self-liberating power of the introverted mind.*" Here, Jung is referring to the pan-Asian techniques of meditation which not only deliberately withdraw psychological attention from the outer world but soften the ego: "Certainly the ego does not play the same role in Eastern thought as it does with us. It seems as if the Eastern mind were less ego-centric, as if its contents were more loosely connected with the subject, and as if greater stress were laid on mental states which include a depotentiated

[30] C. G. Jung, "The Houston Films," in *C. G. Jung Speaking: Interviews and Encounters*, ed. William McGuire and R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 303. Editors' italics.

ego." The virtue of being less egocentric is that psychological energy is available to be more Self-centric when—in a cultural crisis—one needs wisdom from the psyche's archetypal core.

Aware of the Eastern religious emphasis upon "Oneness," Jung writes: "An introverted attitude, therefore, which withdraws its emphasis from the external world (the world of consciousness) and localizes it in the subjective factor (the background of consciousness) necessarily calls forth the characteristic manifestations of the unconscious, namely, archaic thought-forms imbued with 'ancestral' or 'historic' feeling, and beyond them, the sense of indefiniteness, timelessness, oneness." It is this sense of profound "oneness"—the innate wholeness of the psyche and collective continuity of all humanity—that can inspire solutions to inner and outer conflicts in a time of transition.

Much of what Jung is saying here is broadly stated. There are many in the West (including Jung!) who do value the introverted life while the businesses flourishing today in Bangalore and Shanghai are vigorously extraverted. Yet the cultural tendencies of West and East—and certainly their traditional styles in centuries past—are, I believe, as Jung describes them. To put this personally, all the bus drivers and most of the government officials I met during my two years living in Thailand as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the 1960's were extraverted; but the vast majority of the villagers and monks with whom I shared my life taught me the very meaning of introversion. Jung is also paying attention in his essay to the yogic side of Indian religious practice and ignoring the external rituals that are also part of Asian religions. Then, again, Jung is about to interpret a "yogic" text.

Finally, one might conclude—as many wish—that Jung is calling us to convert to Hinduism or Buddhism or at least to practice some kind of traditional yoga. But genuine conversions are never voluntary and adopting some Eastern technique of meditation (as distinct from the physical yoga that is a beneficial feature of modern society) will only exacerbate our extraverted tendencies. Jung states the issue clearly:

> By an inevitable decree of fate the West is becoming acquainted with the peculiar facts of Eastern spirituality. It is useless either to belittle these facts, or to build false and treacherous bridges over yawning gaps. Instead of learning the spiritual techniques of the East by heart and imitating them in a thoroughly Christian way—*imitatio Christi!*—with a correspondingly forced attitude, it would be far more to the point to find out whether there exists in the unconscious an introverted tendency similar to that which has become the guiding spiritual principle of the East. We should then be in a position to build on our own ground with our own methods. If we snatch these things directly from the East, we have merely indulged our Western acquisitiveness, confirming yet again that "everything good is outside," whence it has to be fetched and pumped into our barren souls. It seems to me that we have really learned something from the East when we understand that the psyche contains riches enough without having to be primed from outside, and when we feel capable of evolving out of ourselves with or without divine grace. (par. 773)

The Audience for this Book

These pages are not intended for traditional Hindus who neither need nor, understandably, want their religion reinterpreted. Nor are these materials intended for scholars of religion who have decided that their task is to describe religious traditions as accurately as possible with a minimum of interpretation. Let me say without hesitation that I am deeply indebted to these scholars—for their skill and, given our society's priorities, for their thankless labor—without which I could not have begun my own study. With regard to Jungian psychology, however, the sticking point for them is always "transcendence" and the fact that Jung wishes to "reduce" categories of transcendence to the collective unconscious (that transcends consciousness but not the human psyche). Today's scholar is in no position to agree with such a project; and there can be no real conversation between two essentially different levels of discourse. The academic community does not always know this, however, and sometimes criticizes Jung for "reading into" traditional religions what is not there when—as I am trying to show— he is reading them in a new and creative way. This modern psychological way, of course, is not how the traditions read themselves.

Jung is sometimes even criticized for using generalizations, such as "East and West" (as I myself do)—the presumed error being, as Edward Said puts it, an "uncritically essentialist standpoint," i.e., thoughtlessly ignoring differences in favor of what the data have in common. [31] I think it is fair to say that Jungian writing on culture is biased in favor of the "universal" as opposed to the "particular," a pair of opposites that really do belong together. This bias, however, is not always due to ignorance but is inspired by the discovery of a "collective" psyche. On the other hand, today's scholarship in religion is uncritically particularist and suffers from the larger cultural problem, what we heard Jung call our soulless "enthusiasm for facts, mountains of facts." As we shall soon see, however, Hinduism itself tends to favor the Universal over particulars. And any genuine scholarly treatment of that religion should reflect the spirit of its subject.[32]

The Feminine

It should be noted that Jung expressed great praise for the Sinologist Richard Wilhelm: "I feel myself so very much enriched by him that it seems to me as if I had received more from him than from any other man."[33] What made the difference, the feeling difference, in the case of Wilhelm was this scholar's relationship to the "Feminine":

> As a rule, the specialist's is a purely masculine mind, an intellect to which fecundity is an alien and unnatural process; it is therefore an especially ill-adapted

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[31] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 322.

[32] The reader may wish to consult Harold Coward, *Jung and Eastern Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) with chapters by John Borelli and J. F. T. Jordens, sometimes considered the best scholarly work on Jung and Eastern religions. There is also the survey by J. J. Clarke, *Jung and Eastern Thought: A Dialogue with the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1994). While very useful, neither work is certain of Jung's stature; and the latter is openly dismissive in its final chapters. A work by J. Marvin Spiegelman and Arwind U. Vasavada, *Hinduism and Jungian Psychology* (Phoenix: Falcon Press, 1987) is respectful of Jung but not technical.

[33] Jung, "Richard Wilhelm: In Memoriam," in *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, *CW* 15, par. 96.

> tool for giving rebirth to a foreign spirit. But a larger mind bears the stamp of the feminine; it is endowed with a receptive and fruitful womb which can reshape what is strange and give it a familiar form. Wilhelm possessed the rare gift of a maternal intellect. To it he owed his unequalled ability to feel his way into the spirit of the East and to make his incomparable translations.[34]

We will hear much more about the "feminine," the "maternal," and the "fruitful womb" in the following several chapters because they are essential motifs of Eastern religions themselves; we will even ask the East, and Hinduism in particular, to help us feel our way into what these terms mean.

Put differently, we will hear much about the feminine "principle of Eros," a law or archetypal tendency of the psyche as distinct from the masculine "principle of Logos," a different law with an opposite tendency. Jung warns us that these principles are "intuitive concepts" about which we can say nothing exact; he also calls them "gods" to indicate that they are urgencies out of the unconscious and not to be identified with conscious feeling and thinking. Let us listen to Jung exploring:

> So one asks oneself, "What have I to say about Logos? The nearest I can get is, that it is a certain peculiar quality in a man's being which leads him to discriminate, to reason, to judge, to divide, to understand in a particular way." And one cannot understand all this without also thinking of its antithesis, the equally intuitive concept of Eros, which would be, then, a principle of relatedness, seeing things together, gathering things together, establishing relations between things—not judging things, not looking at them properly, but rather attracting or repelling them. That is Eros.[35]

It should be obvious that we in the West are already deeply committed to the "god" Logos (it drives the bias in favor of particulars) but are in need of a better relationship to Eros and its ability to show us how things connect (driving the Jungian bias in favor of universals). Von Franz says that "we have reached a point in history at which the differentiation of Eros is a matter of the greatest urgency" since "we are all in the same boat."[36]

Religions often speak of the Union of the "Masculine and the Feminine" as a grand *hierosgamos* or Sacred Wedding—Osiris and Isis, the biblical Beloved and his dark Shulamite, Śiva and Pārvatī—which we can take to mean a proper balance between Logos and Eros within a civilization. Since Western culture already knows the Bridegroom, it is imperative that we now find the Bride that they might marry. It is difficult for organizations or communities of any size to make that search, and so we must rely upon the creative minority of individuals who have been called to the task of contributing to the future. It is for these individuals that I write, with the expectation that they will appreciate a survey of Hinduism that is so strongly influenced by the archetypal Feminine.

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[34] Ibid., par. 76.

[35] Jung, *Nietzsche's "Zarathustra,"* 1:382. See also C. G. Jung, *Dream Analysis: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1928-1930*, ed. William McGuire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 697-702.

[36] Marie-Louise von Franz, "The Transformed Berserker," in *Archetypal Dimensions of the Psyche* (Boston: Shambhala, 1997), 56-57.

I must warn that this survey is far from complete: there is no serious discussion of Indian philosophy (hardly a word on the highly influential Sāṃkhya), no sustained treatment of yoga, and no materials on Tantra, etc. My excuse in the case of the philosophical schools is both ignorance and a lack of interest in ratiocination as opposed to religious stories. As for yoga, I hope to treat it at some length in a future study of Buddhism, where the Jungian discussion has begun in earnest. As for Tantra, that is a pan-Asian phenomenon that deserves its own separate consideration, almost as if it were a distinct religion.The incompleteness of this work—and should I not get to more work as planned—may perhaps act as a "goad" for someone else to engage in archetypal psychohistory.

None of us should make the mistake, however, of thinking we are writing about some rope with no snake in the way of our perception. The subjective character of all human knowledge—if not full-blown unconscious projection—keeps us honest in this regard. But the positive side of the new epistemology is that we are always working, thinking, writing or reading about our own otherwise inaccessible depths with which we need communication to be happy. Jung put it this way in a letter:

> But it is not due to any intention or activity of mine that the spiritual and historical analogy with the East gets into my way of looking at things. The intrusion of the East is rather a psychological fact with a long history behind it. It is not, however, the actual East we are dealing with but the collective unconscious, which is omnipresent. You have seen very rightly that I have landed in the Eastern sphere, so to speak, through the water of this unconscious. [37]

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank not only the religionists upon whose work I rely but also the many Jungian thinkers who have already written. Indeed, it often occurs to me that all we need to know psychologically has already been said, and it remains for us to put that wisdom into practice. My contribution, then, is largely synthetic, bringing together in one place what has been wisely said by others.

I wish to thank Dianne Cordic, a founding member of the C. G. Jung Study Center of Southern California, for being a psychological companion of this work. I thank also my daughter, Isobel Elder, for her technical help that allowed so many pictures to grace this book. I am grateful to Angela Hoy of BookLocker for her support of this second unrevised edition and, especially, to Charlyn Samson who is not only a skilled book designer but also has been patient with me. Finally, I wish to thank my wife and all three daughters for enduring my very long process of research and writing. While it is customary to say such things, my wife—Jo Ann Engelhardt—is not only my first careful reader, she is a genuine "patron of the arts" with a willing and happy heart. For that, I can offer no words of sufficient gratitude. My family did sometimes complain, however, and I am reminded of an old *New Yorker* cartoon: a wife has just spoken to her husband at his desk surrounded by the piles of a manuscript; and he responds, "Finish it? Why would I want to finish it?"[38] Enough said.

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[37] Jung, *Letters*, 1:87.

[38] Cartoon by W.B. Park, 1985, now in Robert Mankoff, ed., *The Complete Cartoons of the New Yorker* (New York: Black Dog and Leventhal Publishers, 2004), 494.

Chapter 9
VIṢṆU AS RĀMA

Introduction

The seventh *avatāra* of Viṣṇu is named Rāma as is the sixth, but we are relieved to find him much more "human" than his earlier namesake. The former, as we witnessed, wielded a terrible ax. This one is "perfect." As one scholar describes him: "he is self-controlled, eloquent, majestic and capable of annihilating all his enemies. Above all, he is truthful and totally devoted to only one wife."[1] As for his capacity to "annihilate" enemies, it is applied only as needed: Rāma is a *kṣatriya*—not a *brāhmaṇa*— and it is his social duty to protect the Dharma. His name means "charming," befitting the figure as it appears in the Sanskrit epic poem, *Rāmāyaṇa* (raw-MY-uh-nuh, the tale "relating to Rāma"). Vālmīki may have been the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa's* core chapters and, if so, he would have put them to verse around 500 BCE. But new chapters and additions to old ones appeared for centuries afterward.

Like our own *Odyssey* epic, it has inspired Indian art, drama, dance, and an entire literature of "amplifications." Epics are, by definition, rich revelations of the collective unconscious that one can at best circumambulate, catching a moral here or drawing out an implication there—as we will try to do— to discover meaning.

The Perfect Kingdom

The story as it stands opens in the "perfect" northern capital city of Ayodhyā, located today in the state of Uttar Pradesh and one of the seven sacred cities of India:

> Peaceful lived the righteous people, rich in wealth in merit high, Envy dwelt not in their bosoms and their accents shaped no life, Fathers with their happy household owned their cattle, corn, and gold, Galling penury and famine in Ayodhya had no hold,
> Neighbors lived in mutual kindness helpful with their ample wealth,
> None who begged the wasted refuse, none who lived by fraud and stealth.[2]

There is, however, one problem. The king has three wives but no children—as if to say the Feminine principle of "fertility" (biological or otherwise) does not sit well with all this "perfection" and prefers instead what Jung calls "completeness." He writes: "For, just as completeness is always imperfect, so perfection is always incomplete, and therefore represents a final state which is hopelessly sterile."[3]

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1 Velcheru Narayana Rao, "Rāma," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 12:208-209.

2 Romesh C. Dutt, *The Ramayana and the Mahabharata: Condensed into English Verse* (London: Dent and Sons, 1910), 2.

3 Jung, "Answer to Job," in *Psychology and Religion*, *CW* 11.620.

Viṣṇu agrees, nevertheless, to solve the king's problem supernaturally by incarnating as his son Rāma—while three other sons are conceived by the king's wives in a miraculous multiple conception. Since three wives give birth to four sons, the number symbolism of "Three and the Fourth" appears again. Thus, we know that the story contains some issue of wholeness that will have to be resolved. At the same time—in the background and functioning as a sort of "archetypal commentary" on what is really going on—the gods are complaining that demons are interrupting the sacrifices that forest ascetics are trying to send their way as food. The demons are not *asuras* but a type called *rākṣasas* (ROCK-shuh-suhs, "night wanderers, ogres"). Viṣṇu agrees to solve that problem, too, since Rāma will grow up to slay *rākṣasas*.

Although there is much fighting in this epic, it is love—rather than power—that is the motivating force behind the story. And the theme is signaled not only by the king's "love problem" but by the fact that Viṣṇu's beloved wife Lakṣmī also incarnates to become Rāma's "perfect" wife Sītā (see-TAAH). Her name means "furrow," since she was born miraculously from the Earth when her father, a king, ploughed a field in a royal rite. Rāma wins her hand in a contest of strength, stringing a bow that a thousand suitors could not bend and breaking it, a feat that not only astounded the crowds but may symbolize the "breaking" of the power complex, at least partially. We do know that, oddly, Rāma meets Paraśurāma on one of his journeys. The sixth incarnation of Viṣṇu challenges the seventh who proves himself superior without a fight—whereupon the violent one returns to heaven.

The "Coniunctio" Marriage

The ensuing marriage of the "Royal Couple" has become one of the best loved images in Indian literature. Indeed, all the brothers marry relatives of Sītā at the same time, so that a fourfold union ensues—a particularly rich expression of what Jung, following the alchemists, called the "Coniunctio," i.e., a resolution of the many conflicts within the soul. As we might expect, Nature responds with flowers, celestial musicians, and divine nymphs:

> And a rain of flowers descended from the sky serene and fair,
> And a soft celestial music filled the fresh and fragrant air,
> Bright Gandharvas skilled in music waked the sweet celestial song,
> Fair Apsaras in their beauty on the greensward tripped along!
> As the flowery rain descended and the music rose in pride,
> Thrice around the lighted altar every bridegroom led his bride.[4]

Thus begin high hopes for a future *rāmarājya* (RAW-muh-RAW-jyuh), a "Kingdom of Rāma," which even today in India means something like a biblical "Kingdom of God" on earth.

Mahātma Gandhi used the Sanskrit term to refer to a day when the English and the Indian, the Hindu and the Muslim, would live in peace—the "lion and lamb" lying down together. It is a wonderful image, inspiring hope and bold social action. But this "union of opposites" that the world desperately needs cannot be approached by action alone. It will require a great deal of psychological

[4] Dutt, *Ramayana*, 11.

development, including awareness of one's shadow and the subsequent withdrawal of projecting one's own shortcomings onto others. That issue actually appears in the story of Rāma and Sītā.

Perfection Challenged

We learn from the *Rāmāyaṇa* that the goal is much more easily imagined than achieved. When Rāma's father was about to name his favorite son heir, a second wife reminded him that he had promised her two boons for saving his life. Claiming them now, she first chose that her own son, Bharata, be named crown prince instead. Second, she demanded that Rāma be sent to the forest for fourteen years—during which time the people, she expected, would forget about him.

Despite the setback, the Kingdom maintains its high standards. And in a remarkable confluence of "perfect Dharma," the king keeps his vow as he must, Rāma agrees to exile as he should, and Sītā insists upon following him into a life of hardship out of loyalty and love. When the father dies from heartbreak, all the players keep their places, and Bharata rules reluctantly—consulting his brother's sandals that he has placed upon the throne—until their owner returns to fill them as the people deserve. Just as millions of Indians have dipped into sacred rivers drawing strength for daily living, so as many Indian egos have dipped into this story of paradigmatic behavior to feel strength to make the right decisions—to rule well, yes, but to marry and love well in any status, to endure unexpected hardships and to be patient—until all is "resolved." Episodes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* have even lent themselves to bedtime stories as children are admonished, "Be like Rāma! Be more like Sītā!"

Forest Evils

The *Rāmāyaṇa* is an epic, however, revealing the deepest and most difficult reaches of the Indian soul. Therefore, we would be surprised if it had settled for this straightforward solution of bright honesty and bravery. Indeed, a dark sexual theme that is not at all childlike begins to assert itself during exile in the forest inhabited by ascetics, by monkeys, and demons. We sense that the story is unfolding in a spiral, circling some core issue about "Eros" that dwells in the Indian psyche. Put differently, the opening of the *Rāmāyaṇa* seems too "solar," too good and predictable. It is as if India has lost and needs to recover something of the darkness or, at least, the ambiguity of that "moon" psychology we witnessed at her foundation in the Indus Valley.

We learn that a female *rākṣasī* falls in love with Rāma in the forest. Or, perhaps, it is just lust. One version says she was ugly and red-haired, another that she had used her *māyā* to transform her actual ugly self into a beautiful seductive woman. Rāma suspects what lies behind the beauty and declines her advances, reminding her politely that he is already married and does not wish a second wife. But, then, he famously toys with her passion, suggests she try her luck with his half-brother, Lakṣmaṇa, who accompanied him into exile (himself an incarnation of Viṣṇu's cosmic Serpent).

The brother is likewise amused and sends her back to Rāma—whereupon the *rākṣasī* detects that she is being mocked and responds with the "wrath of unrequited passion." Rāma worries: "Brother, we have acted wrong, for those of savage breed, / Word in jest is courting danger."[5] Indeed,

[5] Ibid., 79.

the demoness tries to kill the genuinely beautiful Sītā. So, Rāma instructs his brother to attack this female suitor from the woods—leaving her with a chopped off nose and no ears, a disfigurement her *māyā* apparently cannot repair.

Abduction and Search for the Beloved

Thus, Viṣṇu—disguised as the "perfect husband" Rāma—appears to have solved another "love problem," except for the strange fact that the lustful one is allowed to live and to drive the story into murkier waters. She hastens to tell Rāvaṇa (RAW-vuh-nuh) her demon brother and king of all ogres. She recounts not so much her humiliation as Sītā's extraordinary loveliness. This fires her brother's desire as he sets out to seduce the "perfect wife." He is unsuccessful, of course, and is forced to carry her off physically, dragging her by the hair to his palace on the fabulous island of Laṅkā (modern Ceylon or Sri Lanka): "By his left hand tremor-shaken, Ravan held her streaming hair, / By his right the ruthless Raksha lifted up the fainting fair!"[6]

The remainder of the story is taken up with Rāma's longing for Sītā, his search to find and rescue his own lost love after a terrible battle with demons. Birardeau alerts us that the hero's wanderings move south, in the opposite direction of Ayodhyā in the north and symbolically for Hinduism in the direction of "hell."[7] We would say that Rāma must journey "south" into the unconscious psyche to confront an issue about love that is not the least amusing. For he has lost his soul.

The Lost Feminine

Just as Rāma could see through the surface appearance of the demoness, so we can see beneath the surface of this story to the archetypal motif of the "lost Feminine." For the Greeks of the epic *Iliad*, it was the lost Helen; for mythic Orpheus, it was Eurydice who ran from a rapist only to end up in the underworld. The Gnostic version seems particularly relevant since there it is the feminine "Wisdom" of God—in Indian terms, God's *śakti*, his Lakṣmī—who has fallen into matter and gets lost. Simon Magus finds her trapped in a brothel, in sexual immorality. Rāma's wife has just been carried off by force, one of the meanings of rape, and is now considered by the *Laws of Manu* to be corrupt.

As in any archetypal story—a fairy tale, legend, or myth—the hero's immediate task is to rescue his missing wife. It will be an act of love, of course, but also psychologically an act to save himself. For it is usually the case that a man's unconscious—with which his ego needs a relationship to feel vital and worthy—is projected onto the wife whose "loss" (physically or emotionally) is a very serious matter. The feelings stirred in a man can lead to bravery, to violence, to suicide—and, occasionally, to a major transformation of personality.

Rāma steels himself as a *kṣatriya* to do what needs to be done and "crosses the water" to Laṅkā. He and the army he has built on his journey engage and defeat Rāvaṇa and his hordes in furious battle (Figure 9.1). He rescues his love from the clutches of the evil one. But, to our surprise, there is to be no easy fairy-tale repair of the "Coniunctio."

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6 Dutt, *Ramayana*., 87.

7 Madeleine Biardeau, "The Rāmāyaṇa," in *Mythologies*, 2:834.

Figure 9.1 Rāma Atop Hanumān Battles Rāvaṇa

A Paradoxical God-Image

For the following excerpt, I have chosen a prose version by O'Flaherty since the verse translations—attempting to be true to Sanskrit *śloka*—sound sentimental in English. There is nothing sentimental in what follows:

> When Rāma saw Maithilī [i.e., Sītā who is from the city of Mithilā] standing humbly by his side, he spoke with anger deep in his heart: "I have won you, fair lady, by conquering my enemy in battle; I have accomplished what was to be done through manliness. Now I have satisfied my jealousy and wiped out the insult. . . . But let it be known, if you please, that this great battle effort accomplished by means of the heroism of my friends was not undertaken by me for your sake. I protected my own reputation and expunged completely the scandal and degradation which had been cast upon my own famous family line. But as you stand before me, doubts have arisen about your behavior, so that you are as deeply offensive to me as a lamp to one whose eyes are diseased. Go then wherever you wish, in any direction, with my permission, daughter of Janaka. I can have nothing to do with you, good lady. What man of energy, born into a good family, could take back a woman who had lived in the house of another man, simply because his mind was so tortured by longing for her? Looking with a jaundiced eye upon you who have been degraded upon the lap of Rāvaṇa, how can I take you back when I boast of such an exalted family line? . . . For when Rāvaṇa saw your captivating, divine body, he would not have held back for long when you were dwelling in his own house."[8]

How extraordinary: "I don't really love you, I did this only to clear my name; and, anyway, what was it that happened between you and Rāvaṇa? I think I already know." On the other hand, how ordinary, because these are the typical (i.e., archetypally patterned) responses of someone who feels deeply wounded by adultery. O'Flaherty finds Rāma merely "cruel, selfish, pompous." Another translator, an Indian, confides about this dark revelation, "I must say, my heart rebels against it."[9]

But everybody knows now that Rāma is not really "perfect." Indeed, we can say that this is one of the purposes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, as if the story of the forest *rākṣasas* were a dream from the unconscious—intent upon disclosing the truth for the sake of greater self-awareness. Jung writes:

> The unconscious is always the fly in the ointment, the skeleton in the cupboard of perfection, the painful lie given to all idealistic pronouncements, the earthliness that clings to our human nature and sadly clouds the crystal clarity we long for. . . . which at bottom only says that there is no light without shadow and no psychic wholeness without imperfection. To round itself out, life calls not for

[8] O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths*, 199-200.

[9] Ibid., 197. C. Rajagopalachari, trans., *Ramayana* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1971), 311.

> perfection but for completeness: and for this the "thorn in the flesh" is needed, the suffering of defects without which there is no progress and no ascent.[10]

If Indian culture is to "progress and ascend," it is being asked by the epic to consider the implications of knowing that Rāma is projecting onto Sītā his *own* lustful unfaithfulness. The clue lies in his certain knowledge that Rāvaṇa "would not have held back for long." But the demon did hold back, inexplicably not wanting the woman sexually if he could not have her emotionally. It is another of those strange mixtures in Indian mythology, like the "pious demon." It is Rāma, therefore, who would not have held back for long.

It follows that the seventh manifestation of Viṣṇu is both "loving and lustful," "loyal and unfaithful," "submissive to the Dharma and regardless of the Law." His conscious feeling life is expressed by the perfect wife but its darker unconscious side is expressed by the red-haired demoness who has tried to seduce him into a deeper, darker understanding of his own nature. The name of the seductress is Śūrpaṇakā, "having fingernails like winnowing fans," which probably alludes to dangerous phallic fingernails like those of our own Western "witches." But the "winnowing" nuance suggests the sorting of wheat from the chaff, of good from bad, of one thing from another. Unfortunately, this capacity to discriminate is lost on Rāma. And it scarcely dawns on him that it is more honest, if not more comfortable, to be "whole" than to be "perfect." Furthermore, there can be no resolution of the problem of "good and evil" unless both sides are seen where they actually reside.

A Feminine Response

It is the woman Sītā who has this larger view and who can make the necessary distinctions. There is something truly chthonic about her response, worthy of her birth from a "furrow":

> When Maithilā, who deserved to hear pleasant words, heard this unpleasant speech from her beloved after such a long time, she burst into tears and trembled violently like a clinging vine torn down by the trunk of a great elephant. . . . Then she wiped her face that was wet with tears and spoke to her husband in gentle and faltering words, saying, "Why do you speak such rough words, cruel to the ears, inappropriate to me, O hero, like a common man to a common woman? I am not such as you believe, great-armed one. Have confidence in me; I swear to you that I have behaved properly. Because of the conduct of other individual women, you distrust the whole sex; but abandon this doubt, since you have tested me. If my limbs were touched, it was by force, my lord; I did not desire to do it, but fate brought about this offence. My heart, which is under my control, is ever attached to you; not being mistress of the situation, what could I do about my limbs which were in the control of someone else?

She, too, has been deeply wounded by her ordeal, and now even moreso by her husband's thoughtlessness. But she expresses her hurt openly, honestly, with tears—without that defensive

[10] Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, *CW* 12, pars. 207-208.

"manliness" that is so unattractive in Rāma. For all that, Sītā is not weak. She sees clearly that Rāma's words are "inappropriate" and says so. She asserts her individual circumstance—not a "common" or collective one, not that of "other" women. She seems to know that this man is reacting not to her but to an image he has of her.

It is true, nevertheless, that another male has touched her, and that Sītā has been living in the house of another man, albeit a demon—breaking the traditional *Laws of Manu*. But she was physically forced into "corruption," and it was only her limbs and not her feelings that were compromised. Other Hindu versions of the story have tried to "clean up" the situation by saying that the *rākṣasa* never actually touched her during the abduction or touched an unreal docetic double of Sītā. But these attempts remain bogged down, like Rāma, in the physical and are incapable of the Upaniṣadic distinction between the body and the psyche.

Furthermore, von Franz explains that issues of Eros can never be solved by laws—even the sacred Laws of Manu—but must be open to some new, unexpected outcome that collective opinion cannot anticipate. She writes: "Whatever is decided sociologically, collectively, can only be wrong. If there is a solution it can only be unique, from individual to individual, from one woman to one man. Eros is in its essence only meaningful if it is completely, uniquely individual."[11]

Indeed, Sītā follows her own feelings and shifts—like a darkening "moon"—into an unexpected, more challenging, even sarcastic tone:

> O hero, why did you not discard me when you sent the hero Hanūmat to look for me when I was on Laṅkā? I would have abandoned my life as soon as I heard the monkey deliver your message that you had discarded me. Then you would not have wasted all this effort, risking your life, nor would your friends have exhausted themselves fruitlessly like this. Tiger among men, by giving way to anger like a trivial man you have made womankind preferable. Though I derive my name from Janaka, my birth was from the surface of the earth; you who understand conduct have not honored my great conduct.

These are powerful words, and one hears behind them the divine Animus coming to a female ego's rescue—or perhaps it is the *śakti* or archetypal "power" of the divine Lakṣmī whose human form she is.

Yet the archetypal drama gets the better of Sītā, too, as she succumbs to a negative inflation and can think only of suicide. Fortunately, her funeral pyre becomes a classic "ordeal by fire" (See Figure 9.2). It is a "test" of truth whereby Agni, the Vedic god of fire, refuses to take her, even to singe the flowers she is wearing: "Pure is she in thought and action, pure and stainless, true and meek, / I, the witness of all actions, thus my sacred mandate speak."[12] Rāma claims he knew it all along. They are reconciled, return to the north, and are finally crowned together as India's ideal "Royal Couple."

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[11] Marie-Louise von Franz, *An Interpretation of Apuleius' Golden Ass* (Irving: Spring Publications, 1980), 189.

[12] Dutt, *Ramayana and the Mahabharata*, 139.

Another Attempt at Resolution

The epic has returned to "purity" once more. But that is, surely, not the goal of Indian culture. Thus, it is not entirely surprising—although it is disturbing—to learn that Rāma cannot quite forget events in the south that well up again. For they include contents not yet integrated within himself. Thus, he doubts again his wife's sexual fidelity and sends her away from court, back into the forest alone, now pregnant with his own twin sons! Yes, the libido eventually swings the other way. Rāma relents and invites her back, even admits fault: "Help me, Gods, to wipe this error and this deed of sinful pride."

But he trips over the requirement that she "prove her virtue" publicly once more. She is probably being asked to take an "oath of truth" on the order of, "May I die, if I have committed adultery." Heart-broken, Sītā turns the test around:

> If unstained in thought and action I have lived from day of birth,
> Spare a daughter's shame and anguish and receive her, Mother Earth!
> If in duty and devotion I have labored undefiled,
> Mother Earth! who bore this woman, once again receive thy child![13]

Figure 9.2 Sītā's Ordeal by Fire

[13] Ibid., 151.

The divine Mother Earth opened up at her feet, a golden throne supported by serpents rose from the depths, and Sītā disappeared upon it into the "furrow" from which she came. It is a warning to us all that opportunities to become better related to the Feminine principle of life are not forever available.

Hanumān

There is in the Indian version of this great but sad drama a figure who may represent the missing "third thing" that almost held together the clashing opposites of Masculine and Feminine, Logos and Eros, Rāma and Sītā, god and demon, asceticism and instinct, perfection and wholeness. And that is Hanumān, a monkey, who is a hairy denizen of the forest like the *rākṣasas* but, at the same time, rather human in appearance. Rāma needed help to find Sītā; he needed an army of his own to vanquish the army of demons guarding her. Thus, he strategically made friends with the forest's "warrior" monkeys. He even fought a battle on behalf of the monkey king, to whom Hanumān was at the time chief advisor and second in command. It was then that Hanumān became Rāma's advisor—and, according to Hinduism, the "perfect devotee"—serving the hero's goal but serving Sītā's goal as well.

The monkey seems curiously happy being "second" in an epic troubled by battles for supremacy. It is as if he knows instinctually—as the archetypal "helpful Animal"—that this more subordinate attitude of service is what the story needs to bring the opposites together. It is as if he were himself an image of the "Feminine instinct" for mediation. And one thinks of the mediating role of the "Cat" in the fairy tale study by von Franz.[14] It is Hanumān, after all, who first locates the lost Sītā by leaping "across the water" in a single bound and he who delivers the message of hope for her rescue from brutality. Supernaturally powerful, he does not make the rescue himself—as the story says he could—but steps aside to allow Rāma that glory. When the battle against Rāvaṇa is not going well, it is this monkey who flies off to find rejuvenating herbs. He brings an entire mountain of herbs for Rāma's army and proves himself to be a great physician.

But this healer had once been healed himself. "Hanumān" means "he with the jaw," alluding to the story of his infancy when he attempted to eat the sun by mistake and was stopped by a bolt of Indra's lightning to the chin. Brahmā subsequently healed him and gave him the boon of eloquence.[15] The motif suggests that a certain kind of "defect" can lead to unexpected creativity. We are reminded of Moses who burned his lips as a child yet composed, according to Hebrew tradition, the first five books of the Bible. According to Hindu tradition, Hanumān actually composed the *Rāmāyaṇa* but—true to character—threw it into the ocean so that Vālmīki's later version would become famous instead. The reader will recall figures not just from myth but in history who have excelled despite or really because of their defects. I think here of Louis I. Kahn, the American architect, who was burned as a child while playing with coals. Yet he rediscovered the "archetypal forms" of architecture sufficiently to be asked by the government of Bangladesh to design their extraordinary capitol.

There are temples all over India today dedicated to the "monkey god" as paradigm of devotion to Rāma, seventh *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. But he seems to be more than that, devoted not so much to

[14] Von Franz, *Cat*.

[15] Velcheru Narayana Rao, "Hanumān," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 6:194-195.

Rāma as to Rāma's "Union" with Sītā, a true servant of the Coniunctio (Figure 9.3). As a "uniting image," then, Hanumān even symbolizes the goal itself but does so in the background, giving us a hint where we might best serve that principle today. We have already learned from the Indus Valley that "smaller is better." Here we learn the extraordinary merit of being "second best."

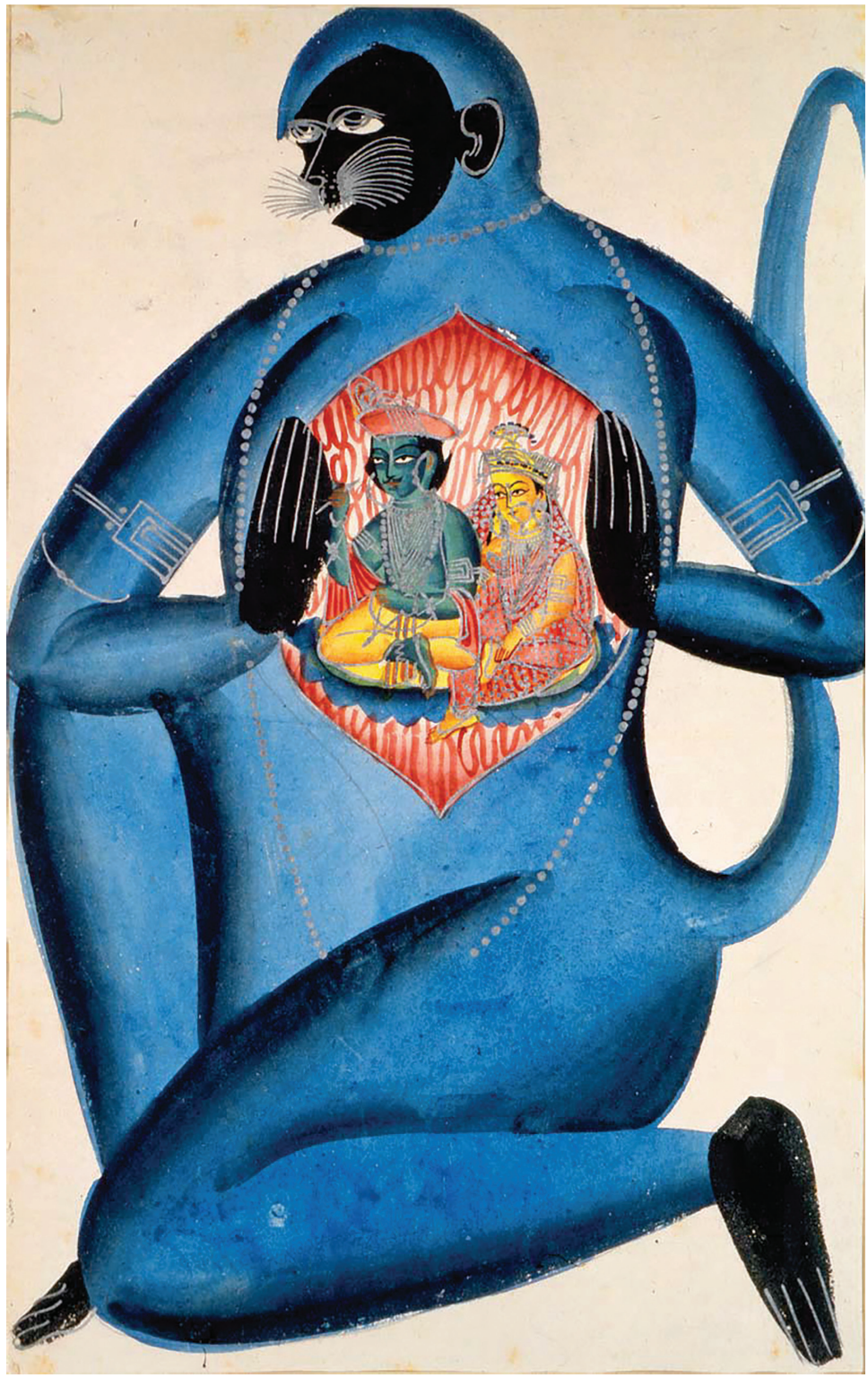
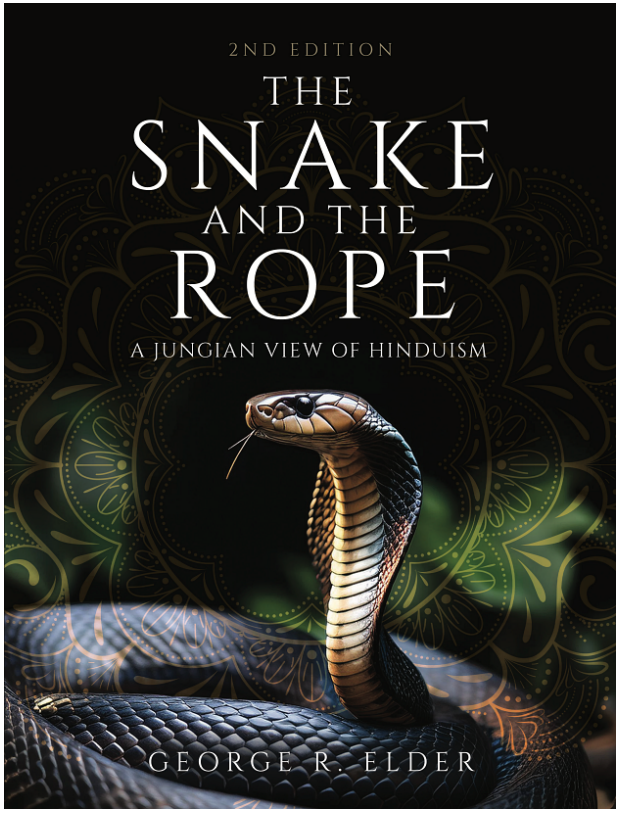


Figure 9.3 Hanumān Reveals Rāma and Sītā Within his Heart



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