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The Struggle Between the Self and Not-Self : The Influence of Zen Buddhism and the Upanishads in Yeats's Later Poetry

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The Struggle Between the Self and Not-Self: The Influence of Zen Buddhism and the Upanishads in Yeats's Later Poetry

By

William Paul Kadar

A Master's Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Montclair State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

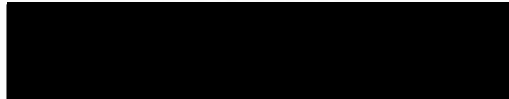
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Abstract

This thesis will examine questions about how William Butler Yeats was influenced by his exposure to eastern philosophical thinking. Yeats's work prior to 1927, before his significant and rather esoteric tome A Vision, could classify him as a proto-Romantic, but it was his work after this where we see the influence of an eastern way of thinking. Specifically, this thesis will focus on Yeats's poetry from 1927 on, with references to some of his earlier work to demonstrate how Yeats had already discovered some of the basic tenets of eastern thinking without having studied it. The initial analysis will focus on the contributions Zen Buddhism and the Indian Upanishads and how Yeats developed his poetic philosophy around these contributions.

Outlined in A Vision is Yeats's rather esoteric artistic philosophy, detailing how one struggles between what one is and what one wants to be. Yeats's later poetry, written during his later years, takes up the challenge of trying to reconcile the Self and the not-Self. Following the initial analysis will be the integration of the philosophies of Zen Buddhism and the Upanishads in Yeats's later poetry, specifically poems that feature a speaker in conflict with himself. Poems such as "Ego Dominus Tuus," "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," as well as poems featuring a speaker on some kind of spiritual journey, such as "Sailing to Byzantium," and "Byzantium."

The development of this poetic philosophy and its application will also be explored, as it suggests an approach that enhances the more common analysis under a Western philosophical tradition. The benefit an Eastern philosophical approach is that we can see a poet struggling with the conflicting natures of the Self and the Soul, and who turns towards Eastern philosophy to reveal a system that facilitates a poetic philosophy that views death and life as mostly illusory, a poetic philosophy that echoes the Romantic movement that called for an awakening of the Soul. In his introduction to the never-published Scribner's Sons "Dublin Edition," Yeats tells us that

the first principle for a poet is that he is “part of his own phantasmagoria and we adore him because nature has grown intelligible, and by so doing a part of our creative power” (Essays 204). He goes on to explain: “‘When mind is lost in the light of the Self,’ says the Prashna Upanishad, ‘It dreams no more; still in the body it is lost in happiness.’ ‘A wise man seeks in Self, says the Chādōgya Upanishad, ‘those that are alive and those that are dead and gets what the world cannot give’.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE SELF AND NOT-SELF: THE INFLUENCE OF
ZEN BUDDHISM AND THE UPANISHADS IN YEATS'S LATER POETRY

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Table of Contents:

Chapter One: A Biographical Context

Chapter Two: Buddhist Influence and the Conflicted Self in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” and “Ego Dominus Tuus”

Chapter Three: The Upanishadic Influence and A Vision

Chapter Four: Eastern Philosophical underpinnings

Chapter Five: Eastern Philosophy in Application

Chapter Six: Awareness

Chapter Seven: The Buddhist Influence

Chapter Eight: The Upanishadic Influence

Chapter Nine: Yeats the Artist

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

The Struggle Between the Self and Not-Self: The Influence of Zen Buddhism and the
Upanishads in Yeats's Later Poetry

Chapter One: Biographical Context

Though it is tempting to examine William Butler Yeats's poetry solely from a Western philosophical standpoint, much can be said about an approach from an Eastern philosophical view. As an artist Yeats owes much to this approach, for it lends itself to the circular and intertwined nature of his poetic philosophy he outlined in A Vision. What is perhaps most seductive about an Eastern approach is that it dwells in contrary but complimentary natures. For Yeats, who desired an artistic system relying on a circular symbolism, and additionally address the distinction he made between the perfection of a man who is in combat with himself from a person who is in combat with circumstance, Eastern philosophy met his needs and provided some artistic concepts that worked to develop some skeletal framework for his poetry (A Vision B 8).

Before any exploration into the philosophical influences of Yeats's poetry, an understanding of his personal history is helpful. In early October of 1927 Yeats drew up a statement for Maud Gonne "of what I believe to be the ancient doctrine—which must soon be modern doctrine also—of the effects of hate and love. The whole mystical philosophy seems to be a deduction from this thought." Following the theories of Plotinus and Berkeley that things only exist in being perceived, Yeats held that the eternal realities are thoughts and emotions which remain in existence through the Anima Mundi, and passion or hatred can be exorcised only when "people who are in the mystic sense of the word "Victims"... dissolve that passion into the totality of mind by an act of sanctification (Foster 345). It was Yeats's belief that "those who hate receive the influx of hate,

subjecting themselves as old writers believe to streams of disaster, those who love receive the influx of love, human and divine” (Foster 345).

The casting out of hatreds and tensions through sanctification relies upon an introspective approach that Zen Buddhism encourages. Yeats’s introspective approach was facilitated in part by flu and a hemorrhage he suffered early in 1928. To his shock, Yeats’s doctor told him he might never return to youthful health and vigor. Yeats considered it a staggering blow, and obsessively referred to it as a sentence of death, “and the depression which he had boasted of avoiding now descended in earnest” (Foster 355). The shock of the doctor’s pronouncement helped Yeats realize how little in his life mattered besides his work. His first serious illness reverberated in his subsequent writing, and marks his later experiments in politics, love, and philosophy (356).

Since 1926, Yeats had been reading modern Italian philosophy, notably Croce, who according to Carritt was: “a real humanist, ready and sometimes over-ready to apply his philosophical analysis to religion, morality, political theory and, above all, art, as well as to logic,” revising A Vision in the light of Italian thought, and excitedly relating the ideas he encountered to those of Plato, Plotinus, and Berkeley (Carritt 452). In Rapallo, a little seaside town placed on the Ligurian coast near Portofino, his mood lightened. In a letter to Olivia Shakespear, Yeats wrote:

We shall live much more cheaply & this change of place & climate at my time of life is a great adventure one longed for many a time. Once out of the Senate—my time is up in September—& in obedience to the doctors out of all public work there is no reason for more than 3 months of Dublin—where the Abbey [theater] is the one work I cannot wholly abandon. Once out of Irish bitterness I can find some

measure of sweetness, and of light, as benefits old age—already new poems are floating in my head, bird songs, of an old man. Joy in the passing moment, emotion without the bitterness of memory. (Foster 359)

As Yeats recovered, he sensed a revival of a desire to shape his life into a new adventure. After leaving his tower, he published the book bearing its name and immortalized the image. With “Sailing to Byzantium,” for instance, Yeats was setting sail towards new shores, driven by an impulse to create art that would defy mortality, a common artistic ambition. In mid-October 1931 Yeats claimed to be in search of a new theme. The theme was provided by an acquaintance, Sturge Moore. Moore told Yeats of an Indian inspiration, the monk Shri Purohit Swami, who had written a spiritual autobiography that was to be revised for an English audience. Yeats’s excitement echoed earlier infatuations with Tagore and Mohini Chatterjee. In some ways, the winter of 1931-32 was a reprise of themes from his past (Foster 427).

From Foster’s biography, we learn that Yeats’s collaboration with Shri Purohit Swami on translating mystical Hindu writings was not a sudden passion. His introduction to the swami’s autobiography, and still more to “The Holy Mountain” show that his long-held fascination with India had survived the many vicissitudes of his philosophical journeying. The poems “Vacillation” and “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” strike a strong chord with the best-known passages from the Upanishads, and some themes in A Vision (notably the Four Faculties) similarly echo Indian mystic writings. The swami also inspired and nurtured literary ambitions, but his appeal to Yeats was as a spiritual guide. The swami also represented the integrated and distinctly unpuritan life, whose spirituality fused with “bantering humour, physical enjoyment, good looks, a spontaneous,

extravagant manner, and a cultivated attractiveness to women. He also represented the 'suspension of thought' that Yeats extolled in his "Introduction to the Mandukya Upanishad," and had been exploring in his Yogic studies since meeting the swami in 1931 (Foster 536-37).

According to Foster, "The Introduction to An Indian Monk," completed in September 1932, just before Yeats left for America, catches Yeats at the high point of his infatuation for a book that "seems to me something I have waited for since I was seventeen years old;" it also suggests that he was drawn to the swami because the monk's life-experience recalled the discovery of the magical in the everyday, which Yeats discovered through his collaboration with Lady Gregory (461). Yeats's infatuation with the swami also echoed his youthful inclination towards the exotic in Spenser, Coleridge, and Shelley (461). By now, the swami had also introduced Yeats to a spiritual autobiography by his master Bhagwan Shri Hamsa, The Holy Mountain—a story of traveling asceticism, transcendence, and an ascent to the icy caves of Mount Kailas, there to find wisdom in the loss of self (462). In the summer of 1933, while Yeats was exploring Indian philosophy with the swami, he was also writing his introduction to Horace Reynolds's collection of his early journalism. In Foster's words:

Compressed, ironic, sharply detailed, in two short pages it both analyzed the aesthetic preoccupations of his Bedford Park apprenticeship and etched a portrait of his youthful self with a painful edge: it suggests that his state of mind that July was in some ways as restless, dissatisfied, and frustrated as the lost self he so vividly and angrily remembers. (463)

The image of a spiritual journey stayed with him: the pilgrimage to the holy mountain, advancing above the snow line, menaced by wild beasts, sleeping in caves, and hoping to arrive at the state of sanyasa, or complete renunciation, and thus achieve wisdom. His poetry from this period of time reflects the journey he was on: poetry that relies on a spiritual push and pull, the conflict between the Self and Not-Self.

The study of Yeats's poetry reveals a significant time in the poet's development of his artistic philosophy, particularly in the later part of the 1920s and into the 1930s. Though many critical approaches to his work reveal an undisputed influence of a western Neo-Platonic philosophy, what is less revealed is the influence of Yeats's encounters with Zen Buddhism and the Indian Upanishads (literally "At the feet of," meaning thereby "At the feet of some master") the doctrine of the Vedas. The problem to consider is how much and in what ways Yeats's poetry is informed by his exposure to Eastern thinking, particularly his later work, more specifically from the year 1928 onward. Yeats drew from his study of the Upanishads and Zen Buddhism with a not-so-insignificant contribution by Ezra Pound, and the challenge is to discover if Yeats came to any conclusions about the nature of the inner conflicts revealed to him. There are traces of the seductive Eastern way of thinking in his earlier work, and within Yeats's later lyrics we find a speaker struggling to find a balance between the Self and the Not-Self, and due to this balance, a casting out of remorse and desire, reminiscent of a Buddhist philosophy.

Yeats draws from the image of the gyres—or what he calls the "principal symbol":

If we think of the vortex attributed to Discord as formed by circles diminishing until they are nothing, and of the opposing sphere attributed to Concord as forming from itself an opposing vortex, the apex of each vortex in the middle of

each other's base, we have the fundamental symbol of my instructors [...] I can see that the gyre of "Concord" diminishes as that of "Discord" increases, and can imagine after that the gyre of "Concord" increasing while that of "Discord" diminishes, and so on, one gyre within the other always. Here the thought of Heraclitus dominates all: "Dying each other's life, living each other's death." (A Vision A 68)

Following the image of the gyres, in both of the Asian "Yin and Yang" are two aspects of the same being that rely on each other for existence: in each is a figure trying to achieve a dynamic unity, a unity that depends on the contrarities he identifies and within which he finds conflict. The struggle for perfection in his work reveals a poet who finds an impediment in the struggle to achieve perfection in the soul, and therefore his art. The conflict exists in the struggle to be content with the physical life and to be content in the abstract, or spiritual. Yeats's later work is an articulation of the journey he was making.

The influence of Eastern thought is apparent in Yeats's version of a Zen Buddhist expression, one designed to shock a student into a state of awareness found in "Before the World Was Made:"

If I make the lashes dark
 And the eyes more bright
 And the lips more scarlet,
 Or ask if all be right
 From mirror after mirror,
 No vanity's displayed:
 I'm looking for the face I had

Before the world was made. (270)

The “face I had before the world was made” is the face representing the mind in its original purity, perfectly one with itself, and perfectly at one with what it perceives. The recognition of Eastern philosophical thought in Yeats’s later works challenges the more common approach to his work, an approach that relies on a Western, neo-Platonic tradition. According to Wilson, “...for Yeats himself this influence is less an abrupt break with the past than a culmination of the quest for selfhood that extends throughout his work” (29). To recognize the significance and scope of Eastern philosophical influence in Yeats’s later work, particularly in poems such as “Vacillation,” “Ego Dominus Tuus,” and others, one must understand the nature of the quest for selfhood, a “Buddhist” quest Yeats expresses in terms of a discovery, or acceptance, of a role or mask.

Chapter Two: Buddhist Influence and the Conflicted Self in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” and “Ego Dominus Tuus”

The quest for selfhood can be traced to the contribution of Yeats's study of Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism is a way of life that does not belong to formal categories of Western thought. It is not a religion or philosophy; it is not a psychology or type of science. In India and China, it is known as a “way of liberation” from the conflict between the Self and the not-Self. Liberation, as it applies to the study of Yeats's poetry, involves an understanding of “self” that takes a prominent role in his later works, particularly in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” from his 1933 collection The Winding Stair and Other Poems. “Dialogue” draws its inspiration from a gift of a katana (the Japanese samurai's sword, long regarded as the “soul” of the samurai) given him by Junzo Sato, a young Japanese devotee of Yeats's poetry. Much like the tower at Ballylee, it became for Yeats an emblem of continuity, ancestry, and noble austerity (Foster 167).

Since “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” relies on the reciprocating nature of the “conversation,” it speaks to Yeats's search for the dynamic unity. The poem opens with an allusion to the gyres: “I summon to the winding ancient stair; / Set all your mind upon the steep ascent” symbolizes the journey upon which one needs to embark, keeping in tune with the Buddhist notion that life is a journey, or path. Additionally, the Soul calls for the listener to “Set all your mind upon the steep ascent, / Upon the broken, crumbling battlement,” a metaphor for the crumbling body or spirit, which would be appropriate for a poet seeking some solace in the face of a growing inner conflict and diminishing physical prowess. The speaker in stanza one, the Soul, is the internal voice of the poet, as the Self is occupied with the contemplation of Sato's “consecrated blade.” The Soul is

occupied with “the quarter where all thought is done” and with the question: “Who can distinguish darkness from the soul?”

The katana inspires contemplation and moves the Soul to ask:

“Why should the imagination of a man

Long past his prime remember things that are emblematical of love and war?

Think of ancestral night that can,

If but imagination scorn the earth

And intellect its wandering

To this and that and t’other thing,

Deliver from the crime of death and birth. (235)

The “crime” of death and birth indicates a Buddhist influence, an influence that calls to mind ideas of reincarnation and the notion that the Buddhist is interested in achieving perfection by following a path that will lead to an enlightened state. Though he is looking to be delivered from the crime of death and birth, he finds in the katana emblems “of the day against the tower” and “emblematical of the night” as well as a “charter to commit the crime once more,” knowing that he has yet to achieve a satisfactory state of being.

Stanza five finds the Soul in a state of such fullness in “that quarter where all thought is done” that it overflows:

And falls into the basin of the mind

That man is stricken deaf and dumb and blind,

For intellect no longer knows

Is from Ought, or Knower from the Known—

That is to say, ascends to Heaven;

Only the dead can be forgiven;

But when I think of that my tongue's a stone. (235)

The "fullness of the mind" stems from the initial summons to the winding stair, and from fixing "every wandering thought" is fixed upon that quarter where all thought is done, which is reminiscent of the idea of *mushin-no-mushin*. Though not specifically a Buddhist notion, *mushin-no-mushin* lends itself to the philosophical aspects of a Buddhist practice, a practice that calls for a clearing of the mind, or more accurately, a mind of no-mind. To have a "mind of no-mind" means literally to fix thought upon a thing, at the same time shut out all competing or distracting thoughts.

If Yeats is a poet in search of a dynamic state, and whose art depends on the struggle between Self and Soul, and who is searching for a dynamic unity rather than some un-attainable "perfection," then part two of the poem, in which we hear from only the Self, is emblematic of that struggle. We hear from the Self:

What matter if I live it all once more?

Endure that toil of growing up;

The ignominy of boyhood; the distress

Of boyhood changing into man;

The unfinished man and his pain

Brought face to face with his own clumsiness; (236)

As the Self seems to have now come to terms with impossibility of achieving some form of "perfection," so the aging poet is coming to terms with the source of artistic inspiration:

The finished man among his enemies?—

How in the name of Heaven can he escape
 That defiling and disfigured shape
 The mirror of malicious eyes
 Casts upon his eyes until at last
 He thinks that shape must be his shape?
 And what's the good of an escape
 If honour find him in the wintry blast?

 I am content to live it all again
 And yet again, if it be life to pitch
 Into the frog-spawn of a blind man's ditch
 A blind man battering blind men;
 Or into that most fecund ditch of all,
 The folly that man does
 Or must suffer, if he woos
 A proud woman not kindred of his soul.

While the Self is content to live it all again, he is also:

...content to follow to its source
 Every event in action or in thought;
 Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot!
 When such as I cast out remorse
 So great a sweetness flows into the breast
 We must laugh and we must sing,

We are blest by everything,

Everything we look on is blest. (234-36)

The casting out of remorse is an important notion and deserving of further exploration, as it calls to mind a Buddhist call to cast out from oneself all desires, remorse, and even love as a part of the pathway to enlightenment. "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" exemplifies this view, showing how important it is to a Buddhist view to cast out remorse as the necessary first step on the journey to perfection. While "A Dialogue" is busy showing this, "Ego Dominus Tuus," though an earlier poem, locates Yeats's awareness of a more Eastern way of thinking.

A further exploration into the Zen (conceptual) "role" reveals the conventional character of roles. A sum of roles is an inadequate description of the man himself, even though it may place him in a general classification. According to Watts, in The Way of Zen:

We learn, very thoroughly though far less explicitly, to identify ourselves with an equally conventional view of "myself." For the conventional "self" or "person" is composed mainly of a history consisting of selected memories, and beginning from a moment of parturition... For what I am seems so fleeting and intangible, but what I was is fixed and final. (6)

Furthermore, "It is the firm basis for predictions of what I will be in the future, and so it comes about that I am more closely identified with what no longer exists than with what actually is!" (Watts 6). This notion is valuable to a study of Yeats's later work in that the struggle for Self-identity, particularly in his later works, is a conflict Yeats employs to signal what he called the "Primary" or "Antithetical" man. One can see, in "Ego Dominus

Tuus,” the notion that there exists the struggle between the Self and the Other. Reminiscent of the earlier “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” and in alternating stanzas, each voiced by a speaker for the Hic (“this man”) and for the Ille (“that man”), Yeats develops an internal dialogue reaching into ideas of despair and contentment, leading to a realization of what the speaker seeks: “an image.” While the dual voices in the poem echo an Eastern philosophy, the “Hic” and “Ille” speakers are unmistakably Platonic-Aristotelian; the two figures are not simply “Eastern,” and they reinforce the more common Western philosophic traditions. However, the lines do reveal a poet who is sensitive to the dynamics of an Eastern philosophical way, and thus adds to the discussion of Yeats’s poetic foundations.

The structure of the poem develops the sensation of a man in conflict with himself. Stanza one features a speaker “On the grey sand beside the shallow stream / Under your old wind-beaten tower” and “Enthralled by the unconquerable delusion.” The responding voice in the poem, Ille, calls to its “own opposite” and summons “all that I have handled least, least looked upon,” to which Hic replies, “And I would find myself and not an image.” The image of which he speaks is that of the artist, and “whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush, / We are but critics, or but half-create, / Timid, entangled, empty and abashed, / Lacking the countenance of our friends” (160). The “friends” to whom Yeats refers include other artists who also seek an identity, and as Yeats asks, “And did he find himself / Or was the hunger that had made it hollow / A hunger for the apple on the bough / Most out of reach?” That his contentment is out of reach echoes the Buddhist notions of the quest or “hunger” for selfhood and contentment and that the quest is seemingly never-ending.

Out of the uncertainty comes the voice of the Hic, whose contribution to the dialogue brings but little comfort. When Hic begins to question Ille's position, he argues:

Yet surely there are men who have made their art
 Out of no tragic war, lovers of life,
 Impulsive men that look for happiness
 And sing when they find it.

To which Ille replies:

No, not sing,
 For those that love the world serve it in action,
 Grow rich, popular and full of influence,
 And should they paint or write, still it is in action:
 The struggle of the fly in marmalade.
 The rhetorician would deceive his neighbors,
 The sentimentalist himself; while art
 Is but a vision of reality.
 What portion of the world can the artist have
 Who has awakened from the common dream
 But dissipation and despair? (161)

Dissipation and despair as portions in the world destined for the artist indicate the kind of emotional or spiritual weight that the Buddhist yearns to release or to avoid. For Yeats as artist, however, the struggle under this kind of weight suggests another duality, between art and life. For a pillar supporting his art, the weight is necessary.

Dissatisfaction lies in the way of the Buddhist quest to understand and ultimately accept his role or mask. Here Yeats draws from the Romantic poets, specifically Keats, in whom Yeats finds a kindred spirit, one who was “born with that thirst for luxury common to many at the outset of the Romantic Movement, and not able... to slake it with beautiful and strange objects” (“Per Amica” 6). When Yeats alludes to Keats, he understands that “no one denies to Keats love of the world; / Remember his deliberate happiness.” For happiness to be “deliberate” in the Buddhist model there must exist a considerable measure of discontent or suffering, or else the struggle would be irrelevant. Yeats, in “Per Amica Silentia Lunae” recalls a moment when:

...Thirty years ago I read a prose allegory...and remember or seem to remember a sentence, ‘ a hollow image of fulfilled desire’. All happy art seems to me that hollow image, but when its lineaments express also the poverty or the exasperation that set its maker to the work, we call it tragic art. Keats but gave us his dream of luxury; but while reading Dante we never long escape the conflict, partly because the verses are at moments a mirror of his history, and yet more because that history is so clear and simple that it has the quality of art. (7)

Furthermore, Yeats says this about Dante’s work: “...but because he [Dante] had to struggle in his own heart with his unjust anger and his lust; while unlike those of the great poets, who are at peace with the world and at war with themselves, he fought a double war” (7). For more on how the Buddhist influence takes its shape in Yeats’s work, one needs to look further into Yeats’s “Per Amica”:

We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry. Unlike the rhetoricians, who get a confident voice from

remembering the crowd they have won or may win, we sing amid our uncertainty; and, smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty by the knowledge of our solitude, our rhythm shudders. I think, too, that no fine poet, no matter how disordered his life, has ever, even in his mere life, had pleasure for his end... Nor has any poet I have read of or met with been a sentimentalist. The other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality (8).

Yeats's later pieces reveal a struggle within himself, between what he is and what he wants to be, between the physical state and the abstract.

Returning to the dialogue between Hic and the Ille, we are led to understand that to take on the Buddhist philosophical approach means to seek in Yeats-as-artist's drive or motivation. Yeats seeks "an image, not a book," because

Those men that in their writings are most wise
 Own nothing but their blind, stupefied hearts.
 I call to the mysterious one who yet
 Shall walk the wet sands by the edge of the stream
 And look most like me, being indeed my double,
 And prove of all imaginable things
 The most unlike, being my anti-self,
 And standing by these characters disclose
 All that I seek; and whisper it as though
 He were afraid the birds, who cry aloud
 Their momentary cries before it is dawn,

Would carry it away to blasphemous men. (162)

Chapter Three: The Upanishadic Influence and A Vision

Yeats also drew from a study of the Indian Upanishads, enhanced by his work with Shri Purohit Swāmi in the mid-1930s, more specifically their work to translate the Upanishads, which led him to believe in a “single mind, a single energy” and that there is a self, beyond all form, pervading all form. His belief in a single state is betrayed by another belief: that we are all living behind a “mask,” that one exists in a state of constant struggle with one’s opposites. Looking at Yeats’s earlier work, particularly A Vision, it becomes clear why Yeats was attracted to the Upanishads, as their teachings very much help to validate his developing poetic philosophy. By way of explanation, Yeats argues, in a chapter from his 1927 version of A Vision, (also known as version “A”) his rather esoteric tome outlining his poetic philosophy:

Incarnate man has Four Faculties which constitute the Tinctures – the Will, the Creative Mind, the Body of Fate, and the Mask. The Will and Mask are predominately Lunar or antithetical, the Creative Mind and the Body of Fate predominately Solar or primary.

He goes on to explain that:

By Will is understood feeling that has not become desire because there is no object to desire; a bias by which the soul is classified and its phase fixed but which as yet is without result in action; an energy as yet uninfluenced by thought, action, or emotion; the first matter of a certain personality–choice. (15)

The “desires” to which Yeats refers are in keeping with the Upanishadic/Buddhist thinking that one should eliminate all desires if he seeks to perfect the Self. However, to have a complete understanding of Yeats’s model, one needs to understand:

By Mask is understood the image of what we wish to become, or of that to which we give our reverence. Under certain circumstances, it is called the Image. By Creative Mind is meant intellect, as intellect was understood before the close of the seventeenth century—all the mind that is consciously constructive. By Body of Fate is understood the physical and mental environment, the changing human body, the stream of Phenomena as this affects a particular individual, all that is forced upon us from without, Time as it affects sensation. The Will when represented in the diagram is always opposite the Mask, the Creative Mind always opposite the Body of Fate (A Vision A 15).

To become able to use his instincts was to become, in his own terminology, an "antithetical" man, his own temperamental opposite, and in the process, to become a complete personality, emotionally as well as intellectually. Yeats argued:

When the life of man is growing more predestined, there is something within the depth of his being that resists, that desires the exact contrary—and as his life is growing more fated it desires the exact opposite of that also. As those contraries grow more intense, sharper in their contrast, as they pull farther apart—consciousness grows more intense – for consciousness is choice (A Vision A 105-06).

This mask is both drawn to and from the opposite side of the wheel. Yeats is opposed to all that is primary, as it is in this phase when and where people are too selfish to leave anything of any lasting import on the world. As Yeats finds himself in his later years, he struggles with exactly this. His collection The Tower provides examples of this, particularly "Sailing to Byzantium" and "Byzantium," as well as "The Tower," which all

owe their depth and breadth to the search for a unified man. As an old man, he was certain he had developed the integrated personality he had desired. A month before he died, he told a friend: "My whole mind has changed. It is more sensitive, more emotional" ("Letters" 921). In The Tower, Yeats's sense of drama was allied to a passionately personal testimony and an acceptance of his divided self, and it also is a record of the upheavals and obsessions, both personal and political, that plagued and inspired him since 1917.

The emotional content in both is worthy of attention. "Sailing to Byzantium" features a speaker who, faced with his decrepit and aging body, is struggling to come to terms with his own place in the world. When he exclaims, "That is no country for old men" (193), he is expressing his (near) disdain for the country of younger folk. His intellectual superiority in this and succeeding lines reveal that he is ready and anxious to leave this all behind, to escape to a more fertile ground for his creative soul. He declares, with some measure of disdain for the mortal state with, "Once out of nature I shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing," As if to suggest that it is the mortal state, the physical body, that has denied his potential for imagination, particularly now that he has reached an advanced age (mid-sixties). The release from "natural" things, from that "paltry body" is at once an expiration and inspiration for this speaker. His spirit is now free from the earth, and is now resting on the "golden bough" after having been given form from the "Grecian goldsmiths" who, after having summoned their powers of creative genius, can grant the speaker a means to express "To lords and ladies of Byzantium / Of what is past, or passing, or to come."

The powerful emotional content arises from the symbolism on which the poem “Sailing to Byzantium” turns, that of the poem’s namesake—Byzantium itself, Yeats’s image of an ideal city where “religious, aesthetic, and practical life were one” (A Vision A 279). Yeats’s speaker is in a philosophical state in these opening lines:

That is no country for old men. The young
 In one another’s arms, birds in the trees
 - Those dying generations-at their song,
 The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
 Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
 Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
 Caught in that sensual music all neglect
 Monuments of unageing intellect. (193)

While he considers his physical state, he casts his thoughts beyond the merely physical. Present is a crisis of self-identity. Determining that his body, a mere vessel for the soul, is not only “aged” but also a “paltry thing,” the speaker sets his mind (so to speak) on the sailing ship. This suggests a final departure from the physical plane to the meta-physical. Perhaps a more accurate description is that of an “intellectual escape.”

Stanza one begins with a realization, in a rather defeated tone, that “That is no country for old men.” In this stanza, the speaker understands the finality of life and the youthful dependence on those sensual pursuits that will complicate the higher intellect. The images of the fish, flesh, and fowl all function as indicators of the more earth-bound and mortal creatures, of which he is one. Even the mention of the “young / In one another’s arms” is indicative of more worldly pleasure, and equally indicative of an

understandable youthful avoidance of the notion that youth itself is transient. Observing that all these creatures are “neglectful” of the “unageing intellect,” the speaker reveals his need for an escape. According to Stauffer:

Symbols are crucial in the best known of his great poems, “Sailing to Byzantium.” Here, after he has used water imagery for youth and life, he turns to fire, stone, and metal imagery for age and intellect and art, seeing himself standing in the great church of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople, with its mosaic saints on the walls (240):

O sages standing in God's holy fire
 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
 And be the singing-masters of my soul. (193)

The value in this observation rests on the idea that Yeats's speaker has turned away from the softer, more formless elements of youth to the more permanent elements of the spiritual nature that he seeks.

In the second stanza, the speaker further identifies the soul/body relationship, not necessarily mutually beneficial, for if the soul does not “clap its hands and sing” the body becomes a “paltry thing, / a tattered coat upon a stick.” The speaker here undergoes a transformation, from a physical to a more spiritual being, from an earth-bound to a universal soul/spirit, a soul in search of some form of monument to its own intellect. This search leads the speaker to begin his “intellectual escape” to Byzantium. His escape is not equated with exile, for he does not reveal any need for a fading away into a vast

nothingness, but rather a re-forming. This metaphoric re-forming is grounded in the speaker's (Yeats's) desire to leave behind a legacy:

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
 A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
 Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
 For every tatter in its mortal dress,
 Nor is there singing school but studying
 Monuments of its own magnificence;
 And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
 To the holy city of Byzantium. (193)

The "monument" of which he speaks is well represented by the tower from which Yeats composed these poems and from which Yeats's speaker casts his gaze toward Byzantium. For a poet contemplative and concerned about the legacy he leaves behind, the message could not be stronger.

Stanza three begins with an appeal to those "sages" who have the ability to become the "singing-masters" of the soul. Furthermore, the speaker's physical body becomes nothing more than a "dying animal" to which his soul, yearning for an escape, is "fastened." Also revealed is the identity crisis in which the speaker is embroiled. The speaker is making an appeal for his soul to become part of the artifice of eternity, with a permanent placement in an eternal "monument":

O sages standing in God's holy fire
 As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
 Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,

And be the singing-masters of my soul.
 Consume my heart away; sick with desire
 And fastened to a dying animal
 It knows not what it is; and gather me
 Into the artifice of eternity. (193)

The imperative verb use in this stanza reinforces the speaker's want for an escape. Now he is directly addressing those "forces" that have the power to effect such a change, for he has lost any ability himself. The tone shifts to one more desperate, a resignation of spirit along with the "sick desire" he has to belong to something more permanent.

After his "intellectual journey," stanza four's speaker has arrived at a place where he can finally and confidently shed his mortal shell, his "tattered coat," and take his place in a world reminiscent of the ancient Greek artisans. The symbolic strength of this stanza rests in its imagery of the Grecian gold-work: the bird upon a golden bough evokes a sense of ceasing to be earth-bound. Now that he is, effectively, of a greater universal "being" or "essence," he is free to become more of an oracle or philosopher of a greater consciousness. Another strength in this stanza lies in the speaker's declaration that he "shall never take / My bodily form from any natural thing," revealing that the form he will now take is that of a metaphysical being, something beyond the merely physical, which releases him to be the creative force he longs to be:

Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling

To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come. (194)

Pruitt argues that “Sailing to Byzantium” delineates the pursuit of an intellectual or spiritual passion to efface the physical infirmities of old age. “The price of transcending the physical world is the suppression of the emotions associated with the heart” (Pruitt 3). The price to become a part of the “monument” is a high price, but then the product is worth so much more. The poem’s wistful, almost longing tone is the effect of Yeats’s deliberate word choices. His bitter, regretful tone indicates awareness of self, and of accomplishments not yet realized. He understands that he has achieved all that may become a man here in this time and place.

Turning attention to the second poem in the collection The Tower is the poem sharing the title of the collection. Yeats’s tower is an appropriate location for these poems. A tower facilitates the speaker’s need to escape a more earth-bound experience (at least as far as one can in a mortal existence). The actual tower, Thoor Ballylee, is more than a physical structure. It becomes more than a “summer home” for Yeats; rather, it becomes a writing place, a conduit to his imaginative powers. It is important to consider the design of the structure itself. Mention of a tower conjures images of a stony stillness, a lonely structure from which one may launch an inspirational assault on the mind.

The tone of this stanza provides again a wistful and contemplative speaker, who, under the “day’s declining beam,” is able to call out to memories and images from his

past, for questions still remain. Part one of "The Tower" reveals a speaker who is, like the speaker in "Sailing to Byzantium," an old troubled man aware of the ending of his days and the limitations of his body. Yeats's speaker, dealing with his "absurdity" and "troubled heart," is faced with a sobering truth—that he has more to offer artistically now than he had ever before. Now is when he needs the Muse to guide him, lest he wither and die without a sound.

What shall I do with this absurdity-
 O heart, O troubled heart-this caricature,
 Decrepit age that has been tied to me
 As to a dog's tail?
 Never had I more
 Excited, passionate, fantastical
 Imagination, nor an ear and eye
 That more expected the impossible-
 No, not in boyhood when with rod and fly,
 Or the humbler worm, I climbed Ben Bulbin's back
 And had the livelong summer day to spend.
 It seems that I must bid the Muse go pack,
 Choose Plato and Plotinus for a friend
 Until imagination, ear and eye,
 Can be content with argument and deal
 In abstract things; or be derided by
 A sort of battered kettle at the heel. (194)

Here, as in “Sailing to Byzantium,” the speaker is longing for an intellectual escape. Continuing the theme and tone of the poem, the speaker in the second stanza becomes a more active participant, more of an accomplice in his escape from his necessary, yet constricting, tower of isolation.

Part two of “The Tower” presents the speaker pacing on the battlements, staring into the distance, sending forth his soul, the same “soul” that left the speaker in “Sailing to Byzantium.” The similarities are clear: as the speaker in both poems is seeking an intellectual as well as a spiritual escape, an escape that the physical structure of the tower provides, to some degree, he is able to lift himself, i.e., cease to be earth-bound. What the speaker in part two accomplishes is a final will and testament. The characters and artists to whom he addresses in this part become those with the answers to his questions:

Did all old men and women [question], rich and poor,

Who trod upon these rocks or passed this door,

Whether in public or in secret rage

As I do now against old age?

And further...

Does the imagination dwell the most

Upon a woman won or woman lost? (197)

These questions are understandably those that this speaker would ask, for having arrived near the end of his time, he finds himself concerned with what is to be left behind, or what has never been realized or accomplished:

If on the lost, admit you turned aside

From a great labyrinth out of pride,

Cowardice, some silly over-subtle thought
 Or anything called conscience once;
 And that if memory recur, the sun's
 Under eclipse and the day blotted out. (197)

The rest of this stanza turns on the imperative “admit.” Here the speaker-reader connection becomes more obvious, and reflective of the dialogue structure of the Self-Soul, as Yeats’s speaker draws the reader into his heretofore-private reverie upon the tower. What is significant about this observation is the notion that while Yeats’s speaker is seemingly alone on his tower, pacing the battlements, he is part of a greater collection of souls, that the reader too is encouraged, if not directed, to contemplate the realities facing the aged.

The tone in part three of “The Tower” is characterized by its short, terse diction. In these lines, the speaker finally declares this to be his will:

It is time that I wrote my will;
 I choose upstanding men
 That climb the streams until
 The fountain leap, and at dawn
 Drop their cast at the side
 Of dripping stone; I declare
 They shall inherit my pride,
 The pride of people that were
 Bound neither to Cause nor to State. (198)

The terse language is due to the speaker's submission to his loss of "pride," to the pride he lost to his "cause" or "state":

pride, like that of the morn,
 When the headlong light is loose,
 Or that of the fabulous horn,
 Or that of the sudden shower
 When all streams are dry,
 Or that of the hour
 When the swan must fix his eye
 Upon a fading gleam,
 Float out upon a long
 Last reach of glittering stream
 And there sing his last song.

What is the reason for his lost pride? To what has he given his spirit and thought only to have them barren and directionless? How does Yeats, in "Sailing to Byzantium" and "The Tower," address his questions about old age and art? Old age and legacy? These questions are the speaker's and probably Yeats's true motives for the construction of the works:

Old lecher with a love on every wind,
 Bring up out of that deep considering mind
 All that you have discovered in the grave,
 For it is certain that you have
 Reckoned up every unforeknown, unseeing

plunge, lured by a softening eye,

Or by a touch or a sigh,

Into the labyrinth of another's being; (197)

The "old lecher" is the speaker himself, who, after a considerable and perhaps painful confrontation with his decaying and decrepit body, has conceivably regained some semblance of pride and strength of character. Arguably, the speaker is Yeats himself, who, after career as a poet, is concerned about the future for himself and his legacy.

This next segment of the poem reflects Yeats's penchant for bird imagery. While Yeats relies on bird imagery in other poems, here it takes on a central role. The mother bird in these lines is metaphorical for the creative genius's effort(s). Pruitt reminds us:

Yeats said: "Emotion . . . grows intoxicating and delightful after it has been enriched with the memory of old emotions, with all the uncounted flavors of old experience, and it is necessarily some antiquity of thought and emotions that have been deepened by the experiences of many men of genius, that distinguishes the cultivated man." The mother bird is Yeats, or, more generally, the artist of the present, who warms the old symbols, those "images, in the Great Memory stored," into new life (154-55).

Yeats writes,

As at the loophole there

The daws chatter and scream,

And drop twigs layer upon layer.

When they have mounted up,

The mother bird will rest

On their hollow top,
 And so warm her wild nest. (199)

Here Yeats's "mother bird" is also Yeats's speaker, if not Yeats himself, and the chattering "daws" are his ideas and works, over which he will brood, ensuring that they will have a future in the world. What is uncertain with any brooding parent, however, and what is troubling Yeats's speaker in this piece, is that ensuring a future is much different than ensuring the future he wants.

Yeats discovered that there is a destiny or role that one must fill to understand innocence and selfhood. For Yeats-as-artist, the quest is for the ultimate refinement, for the nature of artistry. In "Ego Dominus Tuus" Ille states:

That is our modern hope and by its light
 We have lit upon the gentle, sensitive mind
 And lost the old nonchalance of the hand;
 Whether we have chosen chisel, pen or brush,
 We are but critics, or but half create,
 Timid, entangled, empty and abashed,
 Lacking the countenance of friends. (160)

The "modern hope" is that calling to the gentle and sensitive mind. The criticism he levels at artists stems from the "half-create [d], timid, entangled, empty and abashed" works that are created when the artist cannot conquer the "unconquerable delusion." As Wilson argues, "The "long-standing concerns with the nature of artistry, the soul's progress in the afterlife, and the moment of revelation in this life are all manifestations of

a deeper quest to delineate the self, which finds its satisfaction in what Yeats learns of Eastern philosophy” (Wilson 30).

Wilson further argues: “the new elements which appear in his work in the 1920s and 1930s, which are fully intelligible only if we understand Yeats’s turn to the East, clarify and resolve earlier, seemingly disparate concerns, not only for Yeats himself but also for the reader of his work” (30). Considering how much, and in what ways Yeats’s later poetry draws from the eastern sources reveals the challenge to discover if Yeats came to any conclusions about the nature of the very conflicts he identified.

Chapter Four: Eastern Philosophical underpinnings

In A Vision Yeats argues: "We may come to think that nothing exists but a stream of souls, that all knowledge is biography, and with Plotinus that every soul is unique; that these souls, these eternal archetypes, combine into greater units as days into nights into months, months into years, and at last into the final unit that differs in nothing from that which they were at the beginning." To become able to utilize his instincts was to become, in his own terminology, an "antithetical" man, his own temperamental opposite, and in the process, to become a complete personality, emotionally as well as intellectually. We may be certain that the integrated personality he mentions is little more than a coexistence of the conflicting opposites.

From Buddhism and Upanishadic thinking, we find two "philosophical" traditions and complementary parts, Confucianism and Taoism (Watts 19). Generally speaking, the former concerns itself with the linguistic, ethical, legal, and ritual conventions that provide the society with its system of communication. Confucianism, in other words, occupies itself with conventional knowledge, and under its auspices, children are brought up so that their originally wayward and whimsical natures are made to fit the Procrustean (producing conformity by familial or arbitrary means).

From the Indian or Upanishadic tradition, as Watts argues, we gain a viewpoint that complements the Buddhist tradition:

Fundamental to the life and thought of India from the very earliest times is the great mythological theme of atma-yajna—the act of "self-sacrifice" whereby God gives birth to the world, and whereby men, following the divine pattern, reintegrate themselves with God. The act by which the world is created is the

same act by which it is consummated—the giving up of one’s life—as if the whole process of the universe were the type of game in which it is necessary to pass the ball as soon as it is received. (Watts 32)

The basic myth of Hinduism is that the world is God playing hide-and-seek with himself. As Prajapati, Vishnu, or Brahma, the Lord under many names creates the world by an act of self-dismemberment or self-forgetting, whereby the One becomes Many, and the single Actor plays innumerable parts. In the end, he comes to himself only to begin the play once more—the One dying into the Many, and the Many dying into the One (Watts 32).

From Yeats’s “Introduction to the Mandukya Upanishad” we learn of Bhagwān Shri Hamsa, who, at the end of a journey, heard a spiritual voice singing melodious music from the west. The music lasted half an hour, and then it ceased. The incident began to trouble him, and he began to wonder about the meaning behind the chanting of the Mandukya Upanishad:

Two days later a naked ascetic in a cavern claimed to have been present, singing, in his spiritual body. That shortest and the most comprehensive of the Upanishads examines the sacred syllables: “the word ‘Aum’ is the imperishable Spirit. This universe is the manifestation. The past, the present, the future, everything, is ‘Aum,’ and whatever transcends this division of time, that too is ‘Aum.’” Then the short paragraphs describe the letters; ‘A’ is the physical or waking state; ‘U’ the dream state, where only mental substances appear; ‘M’ is deep sleep, where man ‘feels no desire, creates no dream’, yet in this sleep called ‘conscious’ because he is now united to sleepless Self, creator of all, source of all,

unknowable, unthinkable, ungraspable, a union with its sole proof of its existence. The Self, whereto man is now united, expressed by our articulation of the whole word, is the fourth state [...] in its fourth state symbolical of or relevant to the Self, the mind can enter any of the previous states at will; joyous, unobstructed, it can transform itself, dissolve itself, create itself. It has found conscious Samādhi, passed beyond generation that is rooted always in the unconscious, found seedless Samādhi. It is the old theme of philosophy, the union of Self and Not-Self, but in the conflagration of that union there is, as in the biblical vision, 'the form of the fourth.' (Yeats, Essays 157-58).

What is taken away from this is that the becoming of "Self" is also a realization of destiny, or a fulfillment of a purpose. The discovery of Selfhood is shaped in part by the Buddhist idea that the inner and outer worlds are part of the same mind. Furthermore, by way of understanding more of the Zen Buddhist approach, one must recognize that the Zen student does not really understand Zen unless he finds it out for himself (Watts 163). Moreover, the perfection of Zen is to be perfectly and simply human. The difference of the adept in Zen from the ordinary run of men is that the latter are, in one way or another, at odds with their own humanity, and are attempting to be angels or demons.

The angels and demons imagery is drawn from the Buddhist symbol of the bhavachakra, or the Wheel Becoming. The angels and demons occupy the highest and lowest positions, the positions of perfect happiness and perfect frustrations. These positions lie on the opposite sides of a circle because they lead to one another. The relationship to Yeats's circle(s) is apparent here, as well as its relevancy, all grounded in A Vision. Yeats's symbol of The Great Wheel places the Primary man on one side, and

the Antithetical man on the other. Yeats develops the metaphor by using symbols representing the lunar phases, and then by arguing:

all possible human types can be classified under one or other of these twenty-eight phases. Their number is that of the Arabic Mansions of the Moon but they are used merely as a method of classification and for simplicity of classification their symbols are composed in an entirely arbitrary way. As the lunar circle narrows to a crescent and as the crescent narrows to a still narrower crescent, the Moon approaches the Sun, falls as it were under his influence; and for this reason the Sun and Moon are considered to be imposed one upon another (A Vision A 13).

Yeats further extends the wheel metaphor: "The Sun is objective man and the Moon subjective man, or more properly the Sun is primary and the Moon antithetical man," and that "all that is presented to consciousness as opposed to consciousness of self, that is the object of perception or thought, the non-ego" (14). He also argues that, "objective, when dealing with works of art means dealing with or laying stress upon that which is external to the mind, treating of outward things and events rather than inward thoughts" (14).

Chapter Five: Eastern Philosophy in Application

An exploration of the Self is a journey that begins (and ends) in the mind. For Yeats as an artist, the notion that the Self is on a spiritual journey helps to define his poetic philosophy. There needs to be a sense of refinement or a sense of struggle to be content, that finds its way from the more Eastern philosophical traditions rather than from a more Western, neo-Platonic approach. In “A Prayer for my Daughter” Yeats insists:

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
 The soul recovers radical innocence
 And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
 Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
 And that its own sweet will is Heaven’s will;
 She can, though every face should scowl
 And every windy quarter howl
 Or bellows burst, be happy still.
 And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
 Where all’s accustomed, ceremonious;
 For arrogance and hatred are the wares
 Peddled in the thoroughfares.
 How but in custom and in ceremony
 Are innocence and beauty born?
 Ceremony’s a name for the rich horn,
 And custom for the spreading laurel tree. (189-90)

The realization of destiny is also an understanding of the Self through role, and is life's equivalent of the soul's ultimate refinement in the afterlife, an idea that finds its roots in the Buddhist and Indian traditions. There is a call for the soul to cast out remorse or hatred and to bless life and everything that has happened to it, imagined in "A Prayer for my Daughter" as the "radical innocence" with which, "all hatred driven hence" it "learns at last that it is self-delighting." Thus these long-standing concerns with the nature of artistry, the soul's progress in the afterlife, and the moment of revelation in this life are all manifestations of a deeper quest to delineate the self, which finds its satisfaction in what Yeats learns of Eastern philosophy (Wilson 30).

In section VI of "Per Amica Silentia Lunae" Yeats considers the soul more deeply, after understanding that "I know much that I could never have known had I not learnt to consider in the after life what, there as here, is rough and disjointed" (Essays 20). Furthermore:

All souls have a vehicle or body, and when one has said that, with More and the Platonists, one has escaped from the abstract schools who seek always the power of some church or institution, and found oneself with great poetry, and superstition which is but popular poetry, in a pleasant dangerous world. Beauty is indeed but bodily life in some ideal condition. The vehicle of the human soul is what used to be called the animal spirits, and Henry More quotes from Hippocrates this sentence: "The mind of man is...not nourished from meats and drinks from the belly, but by a clear luminous substance that rebounds by separation from the blood." (Essays 20)

To separate the soul from the body is an epiphany for which Yeats calls. Much of this separation involves a crucial loss of hatred, remorse, or discontent. However, if Yeats's later work depends on such a struggle with this discontentment, for the poet, as Yeats conceives of him, relies on this. He goes on further to add: "The soul has a plastic power, and can after death, or during life, should the vehicle leave the body for a while, mould it to any shape it will by an act of imagination, thought the more unlike to the habitual that shape is, the greater the effort." (*Essays* 20)

In "Per Amica Silentia Lunae," Yeats envisions the revelation of ultimate destiny, or identity, and as an artist who sees his destiny through alluring images. He argues:

...It is not permitted to a man who takes up pen or chisel, to seek originality, for passion is his only business, and he cannot but mould or sing after a new fashion because no disaster is like another. He is like those phantom lovers in the Japanese play [i.e. Noh theatre] who, compelled to wander side by side and never mingle, cry: "we neither wake nor sleep and passing our nights in a sorrow which is in the end a vision, what are these springs to us?" If when we have found a mask we fancy that it will not match our mood till we have touched with gold the cheek, we do it furtively, and only where the oaks of Dodona cast their deepest shadow, for could he see our handiwork the Daemon [poetic genius or inspiration] would fling himself out, being our enemy. (14)

The traces of Yeats's notion of two aspects of the Self are in constant flux, a dynamic state. The Self finds itself wearing a mask, always trying to discover itself. The reality he seeks can be traced to his involvement in Eastern philosophy, a very non-Platonic approach to life and his work.

With the realization that, if recognized as such, one's everyday mind is the mind of God (Matthew 25:1–13), Yeats will assert in his "A Prayer for Old Age" that "he sings a lasting song / Thinks in a marrow bone" (282), and that he will embrace, in "The Circus Animals' Desertion" that "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart" (347) an earlier thought he rejected. Yeats's 1912 poem, "The Cold Heaven" features a speaker who perceives the unchangeable differences between the Self and the "cold and rook-delighting heaven" results in his remorse and why he "took all the blame out of all sense and reason, / Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro, / Riddled with light." The speaker is searching for some kind of consummation that is at once desired and feared: "Confusion over the death-bed over; / is it sent / out of the naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken / By the injustice of the skies for punishment?" The tension, even though it may seem eased to some degree, is reminiscent of the tension Yeats identifies at the end of "Per Amica" when he remembers "that Shelley calls our minds 'mirrors of the fire for which all thirst', I cannot but ask the question all have asked, 'what or who has cracked the mirror?' I begin to study the only self I know, myself, and to wind the thread upon the perne again" (*Essays* 31).

The tension that Yeats found is marked by its opposite:

At certain moments, always unforeseen, I become happy, most commonly when I have opened some book of verse... perhaps I am sitting in some crowded restaurant, the open book beside me, or closed, my excitement having overbrimmed the page. I look at the strangers near as if I had known them all my life, and it seems strange that I cannot speak to them: everything fills me with affection, I no longer have any fears or needs; I do not even remember that this

happy mood must come to an end. It seems as if the vehicle had suddenly grown pure and far extended and so luminous that the images out of Anima Mundi, embodied there and drunk with that sweetness would, like a country drunkard who has thrown a wisp into his own thatch, burn up time. ("Per Amica" 31)

This awareness comes at the moment he ceases to hate, as hatred is "the common condition of our life"; although it helps him to love, its nature is not that of love, as Yeats says, "for we may love unhappily," but that of innocence (Wilson 34). For a soul on a journey, there must be some kind of a goal or destination. From his essay, "Aphorisms of Yoga" Yeats tells us:

Somewhere in this Sophistic period came Patanjali and his Aphorisms. Unlike Buddha, he turned away from ordinary men; he sought truth not by the logic or the moral precepts that draw the crowd, but by methods of meditation and contemplation that purify the soul. The truth cannot be found by argument, the soul itself is truth, it is that Self praised by Yādnyawalkya which is all Selves.

(Essays 177)

Chapter Six: Awareness

Under the influence of the Indian philosophy, and what speaks to the notion of contentment in soul and body, Yeats finds:

Through states analogous to self-induced hypnotic sleep the devotee attains a final state of complete wakefulness called, now conscious Samādhi, now Tureeyā, where the soul, purified of all that is not itself, comes into possession of its own timelessness. Matter, or the soul's relation to time has disappeared; souls that have found like freedom in the remote past, or will find it in the future, enter into it or are entered by it at will, nor is bound to any part of space, nor to any process, it depends only upon itself, is Spirit, that which has value in itself. (Essays 177)

The purification of the soul or Self depends upon discovering or becoming aware of those impediments restricting it from attaining its goal. Part of a Buddhist's approach is to understand that attachments to worldly things are responsible for sorrow or despair. For the artist, however, art depends on such attachments. In "A Prayer for my Daughter" the "radical innocence" that the soul recovers changes into "self-delighting, / Self-appeasing, self-affrighting, / And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will" and that "She can... be happy still." Being in harmony with the external world requires that one be in harmony with oneself, with a soul or self that has learned to stop judging itself. For Yeats, this is represented by a struggle to cast out remorse and (self-) hatred, as these are both impurities.

A soul's awareness of freedom is not bound to any space or time, nor is it bound to any process. "It depends upon itself, is Spirit, that which has value in itself" ("Aphorisms of Yoga" 177). According to Wilson, "He [Yeats] will repeatedly mention

the ghost character of a Noh play who is 'set afire by a fantastic scruple, and though a Buddhist priest explains that the fire would go out of itself if the ghost but ceased to believe in it, it cannot cease to believe' to characterize the divided consciousness that the remorseful soul attempts to overcome by relieving its life on earth, tracing every "event to its cause until all are related and understood, turned into knowledge, made a part of itself" (Wilson 35). Yeats tells us:

That experience, accessible to all who adopt a traditional technique and habit of life, has become the central experience of Indian civilization, perhaps of all Far-Eastern civilization, that wherein all thoughts and emotions expect their satisfaction and rest... In the Upanishads and in Patanjali the Self and One are reality. There are other books, Indian or Chinese, where the Self or the Not-Self, the One and the Many, are alike and illusion. Whatever is known to the logical intellect is this and that, here and not there, before and not after, or confined to one wing or another of some antinomy. It became no longer possible to identify the One and the Self with reality, the method of meditation had to be changed.

("Aphorisms" 177-78)

Yeats sought "in vain" for such a method in encyclopedias and histories, and it "certainly prepared an escape from all that intellect holds true, and that escape, as described in the Scriptures and legends of Zen Buddhism, is precipitated by shock, often produced artificially by the teacher" (178). As Yeats exclaims in "A First Confession," "I long for truth, and yet / I cannot say from that / My better self disowns, / For a man's attention / Brings such satisfaction / To the craving in my bones." The craving in his bones speaks

to his desire for escape, or else face endless dissatisfaction, which in other words can be considered a craving for “freedom.”

Some criticism of Yeats’s works stems from a more Western philosophical approach, specifically a philosophical approach dictated primarily by Hegel.

For Hegel, everyday life was—at least in the developed Hegelian state—the universal life of freedom, according to the will of the Geist and reason. However, Hegel did not mean “freedom” as we might define it, the ability to do as one pleases at any time. Hegel defined it differently, as “...the will completely with itself, because it has reference only to itself.” Hence, that which is meant by freedom in the normal usage—the fulfillment of desires—is not true freedom in Hegel’s account, which is more ascetic: true freedom was also the freedom from the desires and passions of the body. Free action is therefore action in which persons ignore all external pressures, and concentrate on the rational will of the mind [...] It was a system which was both subjective, in that actions were the result of the individual’s own powers of reason, and objective, in that being reasonable they were universal and therefore applicable to everyone (Hawthorne 4).

However compelling Hegel’s philosophical approach might be, Yeats’s turn to the more Eastern philosophical approach echoes his notion that “people who lean on logic and philosophy and rational exposition end by starving the best part of the mind.” Or, as he argues in his essay “Bishop Berkeley”:

Only where the mind partakes of a pure activity can art or life attain swiftness, volume, unity; that contemplation lost we picture some slow-moving event, turn

the mind's eye from everything else that we may experience to the full our own passivity, our personal tragedy; or like the spider in Swift's parable mistake for great possessions what we spit out of our guts and deride the bee that has nothing in him but its hum and its wings, its wax and its honey, its sweetness and light.

(Essays 111)

If the best parts of the mind are emotions, then characterizing the later Yeatsian speaker as emotionally charged would be accurate. In his later lyrics, we find an evolving vision of selfhood, a vision that reveals the polarization of the self that has left him in a constant struggle with himself. In his "Prayer for Old Age," Yeats will proclaim in his old age that he "sings a lasting song / Thinks in a marrow-bone," and that he will embrace, in "The Circus Animals' Desertion," "The foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart." Most significant in the realization is that the same polarization that is responsible for his struggle is necessary for his artistic philosophy. With the perception of a struggle is also a perception that there should have been an earlier understanding. Though an earlier poem, "The Cold Heaven" reveals Yeats's early seduction with what is now considered an Eastern way of thinking. The speaker in "The Cold Heaven" comes to this realization:

Suddenly I saw the cold and rook-delighting heaven
 That seemed as though ice burned and was but the more ice,
 And thereupon imagination and heart were driven
 So wild that every casual thought of that and this
 Vanished, and left but memories, that should be out of season
 With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;
 And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,

Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro,
Riddled with light. Ah! When the ghost begins to quicken,
Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent / out naked onto the roads, as the books
say, and stricken

By the injustice of the skies for punishment? (125)

The speaker's sudden understanding of the unalterable differences between himself and the "cold and rook delighting heaven" leads him, filled with remorse, to take "all the blame out of sense and reason." Furthermore, once the speaker has discovered where to cast the blame, on himself, he "cries and trembles" while he rocks "to and fro, riddled with light" (the light of understanding), and this understanding leads to his feeling of being sent out "naked on the roads" and stricken with punishment.

Chapter Seven: The Buddhist Influence

The spontaneous or sudden realization is not unusual according to a Buddhist perspective. Found in both the life and art of the Far East is the appreciation of spontaneity or naturalness, known as tzu-jan. According to Watts:

This is the unmistakable tone of sincerity marking the action which is not studied or contrived. For a man rings like a cracked bell when he thinks and acts with a split mind—one part standing aside to interfere with the other, to control, to condemn, or to admire. But the mind, or the true nature, of man cannot actually be split. According to a Zenrin poem, it is

Like a sword that cuts, but cannot cut itself;

Like an eye that sees, but cannot see itself.

And from another Zenrin poem:

Sitting quietly, doing nothing,

Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself.

The illusion of the split comes from the mind's attempt to be both itself and the idea of itself, from a fatal confusion of fact with symbol (134).

For a practitioner of Zen, the view of spontaneous action is a marvelous activity. It is part of the genius of the human mind that it can stand aside from life and itself and reflect upon it. What Yeats does with this notion is to have the speaker, in a state of reflection and self-awareness, stricken by remorse and vanished joy.

When the solitary speaker in "Vacillation" looks up from his book in the crowded London shop and gazes upon the shop and street, he tells how his "body of a sudden

blazed” and he seemed “blessed and could bless.” This all comes after his understanding that it is:

Between extremities
 Man runs his course;
 A brand, or flaming breath,
 Comes to destroy all those antinomies
 Of day and night;
 The body calls it death,
 The heart remorse.
 But if these be right
 What is joy? (249-50)

A similar effect is reached in “Stream and Sun at Glendalough,” as the speaker’s contemplation of the landscape is ruined by the repentance that keeps his heart impure, and worrying about the battle with desires:

Through intricate motions ran
 Stream and gliding sun
 And all my heart seemed gay:
 Some stupid thing that I had done
 Made my attention stray

 Repentance keeps my heart impure
 But what am I that dare
 Fancy that I can

Better conduct myself or have more
Sense than a common man?

What motion of the sun or stream
Or eyelid shot the gleam
That pierced my body through?
What made me live like these that seem
Self-born, born anew? (255)

And again, in "A Dialogue of Self and Soul" as the Self is content "to live it all again /
and yet again"

To follow to its source
Every event in action or in thought;
Measure the lot; forgive myself the lot! (236)

Expressed in these lines is the notion that the Self, divided against itself by remorse or hatred or uncertainty, is yearning for a higher state of being, which it cannot attain except through some kind of unity. Batchelor argues:

All life is in ceaseless mutation: emerging, modifying, disappearing. The relative constancy of still, centered attention is simply a steady adjustment to the flux of what is observed. Nothing can be relied upon for security. As soon as you grasp something, it is gone. Anguish emerges from craving for life to be other than what it is. It is the symptom of flight from birth and death, from the pulse of the present. It is the gnawing mood of unease that haunts the clinging to "me" and "mine" (25).

The divided Self that figures so prominently in Yeats's later pieces, a Self so divided because of the anguish over trying to be something it is not, or as he laments in "Vacillation" over "Things said or done long years ago, / Or things I did not do or say / But thought that I might say or do, / Weigh me down, and not a day / But something is recalled, / My conscience or my vanity appalled," is also the Self who cries, like the "great lord of Chou," or "some conqueror" to "let all things pass away" (251-52). Instead:

a coherent personality that stretches back in an unbroken line to a first memory and looks forward to an indefinite future, we discover a self ridden with gaps and ambiguities. Who "I am" appears coherent because of the monologue we keep repeating, editing, censoring, and embellishing in our heads. The present moment hovers between past and future just as life hovers between birth and death. We respond to both in similar ways. Just as we flee from the awesome encounter of a manageable world, so we flee from the pulse of the present to a fantasy world.

Flight is a reluctance to face change and the anguish it implies (Batchelor 24-25).

What the "flight" and "anguish" notions mean for Yeats's poems is apparent when the lyrics are examined with an eye towards a longing for happiness or contentment. Wilson has argued:

Teachings of Zen Buddhism, Yeats writes in 1926, "liberate us from all manner of abstractions and... create at once a joyous artistic life;" for rather than asking what or who has cracked the mirror, Zen counters Buddhism's traditional admonition to keep one's mirror perfectly polished with the iconoclastic, anti-dualistic command to smash the mirror. (Wilson 36)

Perhaps, by way of example, we should look to the dual voices found at the beginning of Yeats's A Vision, "Aherne" and "Robartes," the voices Yeats puts to use to give life to his struggle,

ROBARTES

Because all dark, like those that are all light,
 They are cast beyond the verge, and in a cloud,
 Crying to one another like the bats;
 And having no desire they cannot tell
 What's good or bad, or what it is to triumph
 At the perfection of one's own obedience;
 And yet they speak what's blown into the mind;
 Deformed beyond deformity, unformed,
 Insipid as the dough before it is baked,
 They change their bodies at a word.

AHERNE

And then?

ROBARTES

When all the dough has been so kneaded up
 That it can take what form cook Nature fancy
 The first thin crescent is wheeled round once more. (7-8)

In terms of a Zen experience, Yeats explains the characteristics as the ultimate reality of, what Wilson calls, "Pure act, the actor and the thing acted upon, the puncher and the punching ball consumed away" as "the central experience of Indian civilization, perhaps

of all Far Eastern civilization, that wherein all thoughts and all emotions expect their satisfaction and rest.” There is a link between Zen’s teaching of the mind’s perceiving its identity with the world around it to the Vedic teaching of the self recognizing itself as Self (Wilson 36). What Yeats finds in Eastern philosophy is “an alliance between body and soul that our [Western or Christian] theology rejects” and “the mind’s direct apprehension of the truth, beyond all antinomies.”

Chapter Eight: The Upanishadic Influence

We find more of Yeats's development of the notions of the Self and awareness in his introduction to the "Mandukya Upanishad." A defining characteristic of Eastern philosophy comes in the form of a contemplation of the subjective and objective selves, with an attempt to reconcile or merge the two. Yeats outlines man in a series of four stages or states; the end result of these stages is to become a unified Self. He tells us that:

In its fourth state symbolical of or relevant to the Self, the mind can enter all or any of the previous states at will; joyous, unobstructed, it can transform itself, create itself. It has found conscious Samādhi, passed beyond generation that is rooted always in the unconscious, found seedless Samādhi. It is the old theme of philosophy, the union of Self and Not-Self, but in the conflagration of that union there is, as in the biblical vision, "the form of the fourth." (*Essays* 158)

The unified Self is what Yeats seeks, and what he describes in phase fifteen, one of the lunar phases he brings from A Vision, one of the phases through which one must pass. The journey to find the unified Self is a ceaseless journey, giving Yeats the basis for his poetic philosophy, a philosophy symbolized by the gyres or the pern. According to Stauffer, "Many of Yeats's thoughts cluster around tradition, ceremony, custom, the great memory of the past. Moments of intense passion and significance live on, or recur. The transmigration of a soul through many lives is possible. Human history is a great, ever-returning pattern, a formal dance" (Stauffer 238). Instead of a linear movement, Yeats relies on a circular movement, one reminiscent of the Eastern yin / yang image, an image depicted as two entities that are constantly moving toward each other, yet never meeting. "In his own personal thought, Yeats needed a symbol for introspection, for the mind

turning upon itself. Here again, the image of the spinning gyres, the humming sleeping top, might prove effective” (238). Furthermore, as a respector of the past, binding each of his days “each to each by natural piety” (Wordsworth), he found what he needed.

With his symbols in place, Yeats has the underpinnings of a poetic philosophy that depends on a ceaseless spinning, the never-ending struggle to delineate the Self from the Not-Self, and perhaps to drive closer to that phase he thought the most important and beautiful, phase fifteen:

Body of fate and Mask are now identical; and Will and Creative Mind identical; or rather the Creative Mind is dissolved in the Will and the Body of Fate in the Mask. Thought and Will are indistinguishable; and this is the consummation of a slow process; nothing is apparent but dreaming Will and the Image that it dreams. Since phase twelve all images, and cadences of the mind, have been satisfying to that mind just in so far as they have expressed this converging of will and thought, effort and attainment...thought has been pursued, not as a means but as an end – the poem, the painting, has been sufficient of itself (A Vision B 135).

The struggle to find a “pure” personality echoes the influence of a Zen Buddhist’s practice of a Zen koan when the roshi (master) instructs the student to discover his “original face” or “aspect,” that is, his basic nature, as it was before his father and mother conceived him. He is told to return when he has discovered it, and to give some proof of discovery. “Pondering the problem of his ‘original face’ he therefore tries and tries to imagine what he was before he was born, or for that matter, what he now is at the very center of his being, what is the basic reality of his existence apart from his extension in time and space” (Watts 165).

By way of example, Yeats's "Long-legged Fly" reveals a manifestation of mushin (no-mind), a poverty of spirit that depends on a suspension of the conscious mind and a dualistic, judging self and a recovery of a pure Self, a Self that is ego-less. It is helpful to consider that anything difficult must be done without any seeming effort, as effort is really a state of mind, which reminds one of the Caesar in the poem:

That civilization may not sink
 Its great battle lost,
 Quiet the dog, tether the pony
 To a distant post.
 Our master Caesar is in the tent
 Where the maps are spread,
 His eyes fixed upon nothing,
 A hand under his head.

Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
 His mind moves upon the silence.

With his eyes "fixed upon nothing," we see the appreciation of the Japanese concept or practice of mushin. In addition to Caesar, is also a woman who

...thinks, part woman, three parts a child,
 That nobody looks; her feet
 Practise a tinker shuffle
 Picked up on the street.

Like a long-legged fly upon the stream

Her mind moves upon the silence.

Her movement echoes Caesar's "mind of no-mind," the conscious non-thinking that allows her to shuffle on the street as if no one is watching. His final image in the poem is that of Michelangelo:

That girls at puberty may find

The first Adam in their thought,

Shut the door of the Pope's chapel,

Keep those children out.

There on the scaffolding reclines

Michael Angelo.

With no more sound than the mice make

His hand moves to and fro.

Like a long-legged fly upon the stream

His mind moves upon silence. (339)

From Wilson we learn that "we can indeed see the identity of the reality that Zen art attempts to awaken in its perceiver with a state of mind that is needed to create that art when the great haiku master Bashō tells poets to become one with the subjects they wish to portray, to go "to the bamboo to learn about the bamboo"" (Wilson 40). Failing to follow Bashō's advice will lead to poetry that will be, however beautifully phrased, victim to an unnatural feeling, a poetry that is not true poetry but counterfeit.

Chapter Nine: Yeats the Artist

To delve further into the role of Yeats-as-artist, one can appreciate Yeats's relationship to earlier Romantic writers and draw a similarity in Wordsworth. If the philosophy of the Age of Enlightenment disallowed the organic relationship between the inner and outer worlds, the Romantic philosophy championed it. Wordsworth's "Preface to Lyrical Ballads," an explanation of Wordsworth's poetic philosophy, and a significant cornerstone for the Romantic movement, outlines his definition of a poet:

He is a man speaking to men: a man it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the universe.

("Preface" 165)

Yeats, an inheritor of the Zen Buddhist's philosophy, and caretaker of an Eastern philosophical approach to thinking and to life, echoes Aristotle's sentiment of poetry, that it is "the most philosophic of all writing" and that it is, according to Wordsworth, "carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives strength and divinity to the to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal" ("Preface").

For Yeats-as-poet, a poet concerned with the development and application of his poetic philosophy, imaginative labor will define his work. In fact, "Sailing to Byzantium" relates the creation of art to the discovery of Selfhood, the search for which Yeats

devoted so much energy and attention. When the soul is seeking refinement of itself in the afterlife, it calls out trying to reconcile itself with the Not-Self, keeping with that aspect of Yeats's poetic philosophy wherein he is relying on precisely the struggle that keeps him from achieving satisfaction. Instead, it will gather him "into the artifice of eternity," or an ultimate refinement of self. While the Buddhist may try for an earthly equivalent of the same refinement of self, a refinement dependent on the casting out of desire and remorse, for Yeats the struggle is absolutely vital to his poetry. He calls to the sages who have successfully changed into the artwork to help him discover who he is, and when:

Once out of nature I shall never take
 My bodily form from any natural thing,
 But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
 Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
 To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
 Or set upon a golden bough to sing
 To lords and ladies of Byzantium
 Of what is past, or passing, or to come. (194)

In "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," the Self either "makes everything a part of itself, upon which the great sweetness "flows into the breast," or remains on the dualistic plane of hatred and remorse, fixated upon quite another mirror image" (Wilson 41):

That defiling and disfigured shape
 The mirror of malicious eyes
 Casts upon his eyes until at last

He thinks that shape must be his shape. (Yeats 236)

The sensibilities of an Eastern philosophy, particularly its attention on a reincarnated self, is apparent here, as Davenport has revealed:

Certainly, he appears to have absorbed into his imagination some doctrines and images from the Upanishads, and especially from the Brihadâranyaka Upanishad.

In Adhyâya 4, Brâhmana 4 of that Upanishad we read:

“And as a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another, newer and more beautiful in shape, so does the Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, make unto himself another, newer and more beautiful shape...”

In the Katha Upanishad, ii. 5.6-7 we learn that this shape need not be animate:

After reaching death, some enter the womb in order to have a body, as organic beings, others go into inorganic matter (Davenport 56).

However, the speaker in “Sailing to Byzantium” who explains what will happen “when once out of nature,” even while owing the imagery to the Upanishads, is still attached to desires. The souls who have been able to cast off their forms are able to take on new forms.

If the speaker in “Sailing to Byzantium” is unable to release desires and remorse, then what is found is yet another relevant Upanishadic doctrine: “According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does one become...but people say: ‘A person is made [not of acts, but] of desires only” (Davenport 57). The poet, who desires to create works of art, will follow where his desires lead. He can become the crafted bird of gold “set upon a golden bough to sing” but he cannot be released from it, he cannot be

delivered “from the crime of death and birth” and he must be “content to live it all again” for he has no other choice.

The dilemma Yeats encounters lies embedded in that the artist must depend on the physical world and the heart’s passions for his raw materials, for his art must depend on them. If the doctrines of the Upanishads and the sensibilities of the Zen Buddhists require that one must seek the ascent of the soul by way of a relinquishment of the same desires and remorse, then the artist is working equally hard to prevent the ascension of the soul. Yeats, in “The Choice,” faces this dilemma and while considering understands:

The intellect of man is forced to choose
 Perfection of the life, or of the work,
 And if it take the second must refuse
 A heavenly mansion, ranging in the dark.
 When all that story’s finished, what’s the news?
 In luck or out of the toil has left its mark:
 That old perplexity an empty purse,
 Or the day’s vanity, the night’s remorse. (246-47)

According to Davenport, the Mundaka Upanishad (i.2. 8-10) says of those who choose to perfect their work:

Manifoldly living in ignorance,
 They think to themselves, childishly: “We have accomplished our aim!”
 Since doers of deeds (karmin) do not understand, because of passion (rāga),
 Therefore, when their worlds are exhausted, they sink down wretched.
 Thinking sacrifice and merit is the chiefest thing,

Nought better do they know – deluded!

Having enjoyment on the top of the heaven won by good works,

They re-enter this world, or a lower.

Those who choose to “perfect the life” by purging the soul of all desires “depart passionless through the door of the sun to where is that immortal person, e’en the imperishable spirit.” Yeats explores this dilemma further in “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” and in “Vacillation,” particularly in section seven:

The Soul. Seek out reality, leave things that seem.

The Heart. What, be a singer born and lack a theme?

The Soul. Isaiah’s coal, what more can man desire?

The Heart. Struck dumb in the simplicity of fire?

The Soul. Look on that fire, salvation walks within.

The Heart. What theme had Homer but original sin?

The soul must realize the identity of itself before it can attain the highest state of being. Only then will the soul be able to sink into its own delight. Choosing to perfect the work rather than the self is merely an ideal, and will only lead to darkness, or as it has been presented in the Upanishads, the unreleased soul goes to the moon and then returns. From the Upanishadic viewpoint, the pursuits of knowledge lower than the highest knowledge leads to a greater darkness than the darkness awaiting the ignorant. In this light, it is understandable that Yeats speaks of the soul as “ranging in the dark” and that his imagination developed the Byzantium of the golden bird, floating as an image while:

The unpurged images of the day recede;

The Emperor’s drunken soldiery are abed;

Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song

After great cathedral gong:

A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains

All that man is,

All mere complexities,

The fury and the mire of human veins. (248)

In another passage, from "The Tower" Yeats declares his faith:

Death and life were not

Till man made up the whole,

Made lock, stock and barrel

Out of his bitter soul,

Aye, sun and moon and star, all,

And further add to that

That, being dead, we rise,

Dream and so create

Translunar Paradise.

I have prepared my peace

With learned Italian things

And the proud stones of Greece,

Poet's imaginings

And memories of love,

Memories of the words of women,

All those things whereof

Chapter Ten: Conclusion

For a poet struggling with the conflicting natures of the Self and the Soul, the turn towards Eastern philosophy reveals a system that facilitates a poetic philosophy that views death and life as mostly illusory, a poetic philosophy that echoes the Romantic movement that called for an awakening of the Soul. In his introduction to the never-published Scribner's Sons "Dublin Edition," Yeats tells us that the first principle for a poet is that he is "part of his own phantasmagoria and we adore him because nature has grown intelligible, and by so doing a part of our creative power" (*Essays* 204). He goes on to explain: "'When mind is lost in the light of the Self,' says the Prashna Upanishad, 'It dreams no more; still in the body it is lost in happiness.' 'A wise man seeks in Self, says the Chādōgya Upanishad, 'those that are alive and those that are dead and gets what the world cannot give'. The world, according to Yeats, 'knows nothing because it has made nothing, we know everything because we have made everything'" (205).

Yeats's introductions to the swami's autobiography, and to *The Holy Mountain* show his long-held fascination with Indian thought and writing. Poems like "Vacillation" and "A Dialogue of Self and Soul," as well as the major themes in *A Vision*, echo many of the Indian mystical themes. Furthermore, Yeats's later works reveal the chords struck by a Zen Buddhist's approach to life and thought. Though Yeats was no Indian swami, nor was he a Zen Buddhist, he certainly wears those colors, and his poetic philosophy owes a great deal to these two approaches. Drawing upon the ideas found in *A Vision*, his poetic philosophy recalls Shelley, who "calls our minds 'mirrors of the fire for which all thirst,'" which left Yeats to ask "who or what has cracked the mirror?" Yeats began to study "the only self that I can know, myself, and to wind the string upon the perne again"

("Per Amica" 21). So, while we look to Yeats and readily see the influence of a Western philosophic tradition, a tradition that draws from the Platonic or Neo-Platonic views, one should not overlook the profound influence brought about by the Eastern approach. What it has allowed was a means for Yeats to articulate the divided Self and all the desires and remorse that accompany it, and this in turn allowed for Yeats to develop a system of symbol and imagery that lyrically draws out the same questions that happen in the mind. Yet all the while we remember that the questions do not, and perhaps should not, reveal satisfactory answers, for the uncertainty and ambiguities that Yeats finds breathe life into his poetry. Satisfaction and clear answers are not the *sine qua non* of Yeats's work; desire, remorse, dissatisfaction, a constant struggle with opposites and uncertainties are. For Yeats, to achieve unity of the self would have meant a surrendering of his poetic soul, which would have meant the destruction of his work. His art demanded his discontent:

Have I, that put it into words,

Spoilt what old loins have sent?

Eyes spiritualized by death can judge,

I cannot, but I am not content. ("Are You Content" 321)

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