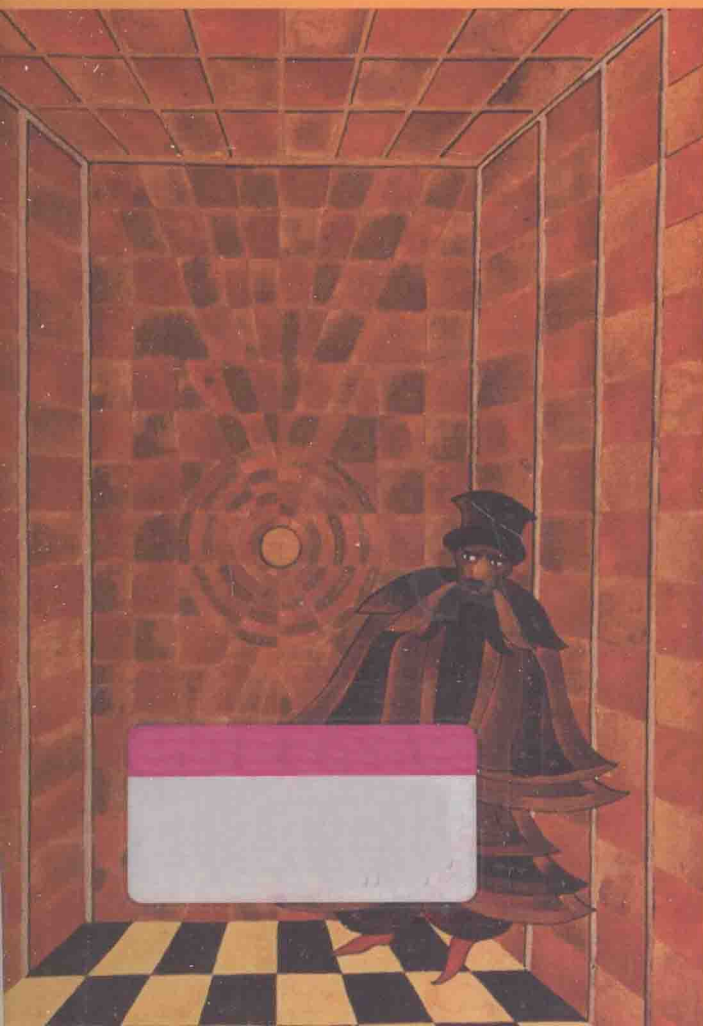


# ENCOUNTERING *Jung*

## *Jung* *on* | **EVIL**



Selected and  
Introduced by  
Murray Stein

ENCOUNTERING

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**J U N G**

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O N E V I L

**SELECTED AND INTRODUCED BY MURRAY STEIN**

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# Introduction

We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself. He is the great danger, and we are pitifully unaware of it. We know nothing of man, far too little. His psyche should be studied, because we are the origin of all coming evil.

(Jung 1977: 436)

The problem of evil is a perennial one. Theodicies abound throughout history, explaining God's purposes in tolerating evil and allowing it to exist. Mythological and theological dualisms try to explain evil by asserting its metaphysical status and grounding and the eternal conflict between evil and good. More psychological theories locate evil in humanity and in psychopathology. Probably humans have forever wrestled with questions like these: Who is responsible for evil? Where does evil come from? Why does evil exist? Or they have denied its reality in the hope, perhaps, of diminishing its force in human affairs.

The fact of evil's existence and discussions about it have certainly not been absent from our own century. In fact, one could argue that despite all the technical progress of the last several thousand years, moral progress has been absent, and that, if anything, evil is a greater problem in the twentieth century than in most. Certainly all serious thinkers of this century have had to consider the problem of evil, and in some sense it could be considered the dominant historical and intellectual theme of our now fast closing century.

More than most other intellectual giants of this century, Jung confronted the problem of evil in his daily work as a practicing psychiatrist and in his many published writings. He wrote a great deal about evil, even if not systematically or especially consistently. The theme of evil is heavily larded throughout the entire body of his works, and particularly so in the major pieces of his later years. A constant preoccupation that would not leave him alone, the subject of evil intrudes again and again into his writings, formal and informal. In this sense, he was truly a man of this century.

As indicated by the quotation given above, which occurs in his famous BBC interview with John Freeman in 1959, two years before he died, Jung was passionately concerned with the survival of the human race. This depended, in his view, upon grasping more firmly the human potential for

evil and destruction. No topic could be more relevant or crucial for modern men and women to engage and understand.

While Jung wrote a great deal about evil, it would be deceptive to try to make him look more systematic and consistent on this than he actually was. His published writings, which include nineteen volumes of the *Collected Works* (hereafter referred to as *CW*), the three volumes of letters, the four volumes of seminars, the autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, and the collection of interviews and casual writings in *C. G. Jung Speaking*, reveal a rich complexity of reflections on the subject of evil. To straighten these thoughts out and try to make a tight theory out of them would be not only deceptive but foolhardy and contrary to the spirit of Jung's work as a whole.

It does seem appropriate, however, to introduce this selection of writings from Jung's oeuvre by posing some questions whose answers will indicate at least the main outlines of Jung's thought about the problem of evil. I hope, too, that this approach will prepare the reader to enter more deeply into the texts that follow and to watch Jung as he struggles with the problem of evil, also to engage personally the issue of evil, and finally to grapple with Jung critically. If this happens, this volume's purpose will be well served. Jung would be pleased, too, I believe.

While it is true that Jung says many things about evil, and that what he says is not always consistent with what he has already said elsewhere or will say later, it is also the case that he returns to several key concerns and themes time and time again. There is consistency in his choice of themes, and there is also considerable consistency in what he says about each theme. It is only when one tries to put it all together that contradictions and paradoxes appear and threaten to unravel the vision as a whole. We may agree with Henry Thoreau that consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds, but it is still necessary to register the exact nature of these contradictions in order to understand Jung's fundamental position. For he does take a position on evil. That is to say, he offers more than a methodology for studying the phenomenology of evil. He actually puts forward views on the subject of evil that show that he came to several conclusions about it.

It is also extremely important to understand what sorts of positions he was trying to avoid or to challenge. In doing so he may have fallen into logical inconsistency in order to retain a larger integrity.

To approach Jung's understanding of the problem of evil, I will ask four basic questions. In addressing them, I will, I hope, cover in a fashion all of his major points and concerns. By considering these questions I will cover the ground necessary to come to an understanding of Jung's main positions and to appreciate the most salient features of his conclusions. In the order taken up, these questions are:

- 1 Is the unconscious evil?
- 2 What is the source of evil?
- 3 What is the relation between good and evil?
- 4 How should human beings deal with evil?

These questions represent intellectual territory that Jung returns to repeatedly in his writings. The first is a question he had to grapple with because of his profession, psychiatry, and his early interest in investigating and working with the unconscious. The other three questions are familiar to all who have tried to think seriously about the subject of evil, be they intellectuals, politicians, or just plain folk whose fate has brought them up against the hard reality of evil.

## IS THE UNCONSCIOUS EVIL?

Jung spent much of his adult life investigating the bewildering contents and tempestuous energies of the unconscious mind. Among his earliest studies as a psychological researcher were his empirical investigations of the complexes (cf. Jung 1973), which he conceived of as energized and structured mental nuclei that reside beneath the threshold of conscious will and perception.

The complexes interfere with intentionality, and they often trip up the best laid plans of noble and base individuals and groups alike. One wants to offer a compliment and instead comes out with an insult. One does one's best to put an injury to one's self-esteem behind one and forget it, only to find that one has inadvertently paid back the insult with interest. The law of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (the talion law) seems to remain in control despite our best conscious efforts and intentions. Compulsions drive humans to do that which they would not do and not to do that which they would, to paraphrase St Paul.

The unconscious complexes appear to have wills of their own, which do not easily conform to the desires of the conscious person. Jung quickly exploited the obvious relation of these findings to psychopathology. With the theory of complexes, he could explain phenomena of mental illness that many others had observed but could only describe and categorize without understanding. These were Jung's first major discoveries about the unconscious, and they formed the intellectual basis for his relationship with Freud, who had made some startlingly similar observations about the unconscious.

Later in his researches and efforts to understand the psychic make-up of the severely disturbed patients in his care, Jung came upon even larger, more primitive, and deeper forces and structures of the psyche that can act like psychic magnets and pull the conscious mind into their orbits. These he named archetypes. They are distinguished from complexes by their innateness, their universality, and their impersonal nature. These, together with the instinct groups, make up the most basic and primitive elements of the psyche and constitute the sources of psychic energy.

Like the instincts, which Freud was investigating in his analysis of the vicissitudes of the sexual drive in the psychic life of the individual, the archetypes can overcome and possess people and create in them obsessions, compulsions, and psychotic states. Jung would call such mental states by their traditional term, "states of possession." An idea or image from the

unconscious takes over the individual's ego and conscious identity and creates a psychotic inflation or depression, which leads to temporary or chronic insanity. The fantasies and visions of Miss Miller, which formed the basis for Jung's treatise, *The Symbols and Transformations of Libido*, published in 1912–13 (later revised and published as 'Symbols of Transformation' in *CW*), offered a case in point. Here was a young woman being literally driven mad by her unconscious fantasies.

On the other hand, however, Jung was at times also caught up in a more romantic view of the unconscious as the repository of what he called, in a letter to Freud, the "holiness of an animal" (McGuire 1974: 294, see below). Freudian psychoanalysis promised to allow people to overcome inhibitions and repressions that had been created by religion and society, and thus to dismantle the complicated network of artificial barriers to the joy of living that inhibited so many modern people. Through analytic treatment the individual would be released from these constraints of civilization and once again be able to enjoy the blessings of natural instinctual life. The cultural task that Jung envisaged for psychoanalysis was to transform the dominant religion of the West, Christianity, into a more life-affirming program of action. "I imagine a far finer and more comprehensive task for psychoanalysis than alliance with an ethical fraternity," he wrote Freud, sounding more than a little like Nietzsche.

I think we must give it time to infiltrate into people from many centres, to revivify among intellectuals a feeling for symbol and myth, ever so gently to transform Christ back into the soothsaying god of the vine, which he was, and in this way to absorb those ecstatic instinctual forces of Christianity for the one purpose of making the cult and the sacred myth what they once were – a drunken feast of joy where man regained the ethos and holiness of an animal.

(McGuire 1974: 294)

So, while the contents of the unconscious – the complexes and archetypal images and instinct groups – can and do disturb consciousness and even in some cases lead to serious chronic mental illnesses, the release of the unconscious through undoing repression can also lead to psychological transformation and the affirmation of life. At least this is what Jung thought in 1910, when he wrote down these reflections as a young man of thirty-five and sent them to Freud, his senior and mentor who was, however, a good bit less optimistic and enthusiastic about the unconscious.

In its early years, psychoanalysis had not yet sorted out the contents of the unconscious, nor had culture sorted out its view of what psychoanalysis was all about and what it was proposing. Would this novel medical technique lift the lid on a Pandora's box of human pathology and release a new flood of misery into the world? Would it lead to sexual license in all social strata by analyzing away the inhibitions that keep fathers from raping their daughters and mothers from seducing their sons? Would returning Christ to a god of the



vine, in the spirit of Dionysus, lead to a religion that encouraged drunkenness and accepted alcoholism as a fine feature of the godly? What could one expect if one delved deeply into the unconscious and unleashed the forces hidden away and trapped there? Perhaps this would turn out to be a major new contributor to the ghastly amount of evil already loose in the world rather than what it purported to be, a remedy for human ills. Such were some of the anxieties about psychoanalysis in its early days at the turn of the century.

Is the unconscious good or evil? This was a basic question for the early psychoanalysts. Freud's later theory proposed an answer to the question of the nature of the unconscious – good or evil? – by viewing it as fundamentally driven by two instincts, Eros and Thanatos, the pleasure drive and the death wish. These summarized all unconscious motives for Freud, and of these the second could be considered destructive and therefore evil. Melanie Klein would follow Freud in this two-instinct theory and assign such emotions as innate envy to the death instinct. Eros, on the other hand, was not seen as essentially destructive, even if the drive's fulfillment might sometimes lead to destruction “accidentally,” as in *Romeo and Juliet* for instance.

From this Freudian theorizing it was not far to the over-simplification which holds that the id (i.e. the Freudian unconscious) is essentially made up of sex and aggression. Certainly from a Puritanical viewpoint this would look like a witch's brew out of which nothing much but evil could possibly come. The id had to be repressed and sublimated in order to make life tolerable and civil life possible. Philip Rieff would (much later) extol the superego and the civic value of repression!

If Freud saw his cultural task as unmasking human pretension and dealing a fatal blow to narcissistic self-evaluation, Jung would conceive of his work as an attempt to produce a reconciliation between the warring opposites within the human psyche. On the one hand, humans have noble aspirations and ideals, which are rendered palpable and visible in images like the dogmatic Christ symbol of the Christian religion. On the other hand, the same people who ascribe to these virtues and try to identify with such ideal figures commit atrocities great and small. In the name of religion countless wars have been fought and pogroms promulgated. The brighter the ideal, the baser seems to be the shadow. And it is this shadow feature of the personality, Jung felt, that Freud had fixed upon and dedicated himself to exposing. But is this the last word about the unconscious? Is the unconscious to be simply equated with the shadow and therefore with the precise contrary of the ego's ideals and finer aspirations? This would mean that the unconscious is to be regarded as essentially evil, or if not evil at least as pressing toward what one would judge as evil if enacted fully.

From his extensive investigations into the nature of the deeper levels of the unconscious psyche, which he called the collective unconscious, Jung concluded that the unconscious is duplicitous and dangerous, but not in and of itself essentially destructive or evil. Jung's deepest and most exhaustive research and reflection on the nature of the unconscious psyche were carried

out in the last thirty years of his life (he lived to eighty-six), after he had developed the theoretical framework he would use to sort and interpret his findings. These later works centered largely on cultural and religious themes, with particular reference to the Christian West and a special interest in the subject of alchemy and its relation to the structures of collective consciousness in the cultures where it sprang up and flourished. For Jung, alchemy was a treasure trove of information about the collective unconscious of the Western psyche. He treated the thoughts and images of the alchemists as projective materials, and he analyzed them with an eye to the archetypal images and structures revealed in them. He saw alchemy as a dream-like statement about the Christian culture in which it was practiced, representing the compensatory function of the unconscious in reaction to the dominant structures and images of collective consciousness (see Chapter 2).

One of the most fascinating figures in alchemy was, for Jung, Mercurius. As Jung interpreted this figure, Mercurius represented the essential spirit of the unconscious (see Chapter 3). In their meditations and projective thoughts about the mysteries of nature and matter and in the revelations they beheld in their alembic vessels, the alchemists described a spirit who controlled the work, who was present at its beginning and its end, and who functioned as the presiding and necessary presence throughout the work from start to finish. This was Mercurius. As Jung concluded, Mercurius represented the spirit of the unconscious psyche, and by investigating his attributes carefully and sensitively it would be possible to decide if the spirit of the unconscious is evil or of a nature more constructive and benign.

Mercurius certainly did show signs of destructive potential. He was a dangerous spirit, and he was also duplicitous and deceptive, sexually active and even promiscuous, dual in gender identity, and a sort of Luciferean ("light-bringer") figure. But, Jung also realized, Mercurius is not to be identified with the Christian devil, who represents the absolute contrary of goodness, who is evil personified. From this extensive research, Jung's conclusion was that although the unconscious is mercurial and tricky (cf. also "On the psychology of the trickster" *CW* 9/1, paras 456–88), liable to upset the apple-cart of the conscious person's intentions and wishes, and at times perverse and extremely volatile and difficult to contain, it is not essentially evil. Rather, it is compensatory to the conscious personality and to its normal Judeo-Christian attachment to ideals of righteousness and virtue. If Christ is the archetypal dominant of collective consciousness in the Christian West, Mercurius is the shadow brother of Christ, and as such he is compensatory and not an absolute opposite.

The unconscious is not evil, therefore. Its moral quality depends upon consciousness and stands in compensatory relation to it. The unconscious could therefore be taken as a resource for inspiration and transformation, but it also had to be handled with extreme care and regard. It was not seen by Jung as evil *per se*, but it could easily become volatile and turn against the ideals of goodness proposed by a one-sided ego position. Mercurius was the

yin to Christ's yang, the unconscious compliment to the Western dominant of consciousness, and as such should ideally be brought into relation with the Christ figure and held there (see Chapter 4).

## WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF EVIL?

If the unconscious is not the source of evil, then where does evil come from? Or perhaps evil is not real at all, and therefore this is a nonsensical question to begin with. Perhaps evil is only the absence of good, or merely the product of a point of view.

In response to the question of evil's actual existence, Jung would answer in the affirmative that, yes, evil is real and is not to be written off as the absence of good. In his long and rather tortured argument against the Christian doctrine of evil as *privatio boni* (the privation, or absence, of good), an argument that at times reaches a vituperative register and is to be found in many publishing writings but is most sharply stated in his correspondence with Father Victor White (see Chapter 5), Jung wanted to affirm the value of treating evil as "real," as a genuine force to be reckoned with in the world. He felt that a view like that espoused by traditional Christianity in its doctrine of *privatio boni* underestimated the problem of evil. Jung did not want to be soft on evil.

And yet, paradoxically, Jung did not want to see evil as an independent, self-standing and inherent part of nature, psychological, physical or metaphysical. This would lead to dualism. Evil is not quite, or not always, archetypal for Jung, and he did not write a paper on the archetype of evil as he did on the archetype of the mother or other similar themes. So he does end up being somewhat soft on evil after all.

Evil is for Jung most primarily a category of conscious thought, a judgment of the ego, and is therefore dependent for its existence upon consciousness (see Chapter 6).

With no human consciousness to reflect themselves in, good and evil simply happen, or rather, there is no good and evil, but only a sequence of neutral events, or what the Buddhists call the *Nidhanachain*, the uninterrupted causal concatenation leading to suffering, old age, sickness, and death.

(Jung 1975: 311)

This is a view often expressed in Jung's writings.

Yet evil is an essential adjective, an absolutely necessary category of human thought. Human consciousness cannot function qua human without utilizing this category of thought. But as a category of thought, evil is not a product of nature, psychical or physical or metaphysical; it is a product of consciousness. In a sense, evil comes into being only when someone makes the judgment that some act or thought is evil. Until that point, there exists only the "raw fact" and the pre-ethical perception of it.

Jung discusses the issue of types of “levels” of consciousness briefly in his essay on the spirit Mercurius (*‘Alchemical studies’*, *CW* 13, paras 247–8). At the most primitive level, which he calls participation mystique, using the terminology of the French anthropologist Levi-Bruhl, subject and object are wed in such a way that experience is possible but not any form of judgment about it. There is no distinction between an object and the psychic material a person is investing in it. At this level, for instance, there is an atrocity and there is one’s participation in it, but there is no judgment about it one way or another. For the primitive, Jung says, the tree and the spirit of the tree are one and the same, object and psyche are wed. This is raw, unreflective experience, practically not yet even conscious, certainly not reflectively so.

At the next stage of consciousness, a distinction can be made between subject and object, but there is still no moral judgment. Here the psychic aspect of an experience becomes somewhat separated from the event itself. A person feels some distance now from the event of an atrocity, say, and has some objectivity about the feelings and thoughts involved in it. It is possible to describe the event as separate from one’s involvement in it and to begin digesting it. The psychic content is still strongly associated with an object but is no longer identical with it. At this stage, Jung writes, the spirit lives in the tree but is no longer at one with it.

At the third stage, consciousness becomes capable of making a judgment about the psychic content. Here a person is able to find his or her participation in the atrocity reprehensible, or, conversely, morally defensible for certain reasons. Now, Jung writes, the spirit who lives in the tree is seen as a good spirit or a bad one. Here the possibility of evil enters the picture for the first time. At this stage of consciousness, we meet Adam and Eve wearing fig leaves, having achieved the knowledge of good and evil.

In early development, the first stage of consciousness is experienced by the infant as unity between self and mother. In this experience the actual mother and the projection of the mother archetype join seamlessly and become one thing. In the second stage, the developing child can make a distinction between the image of the mother and the mother herself and can retain an image even in the absence of the actual person. There is a dawning awareness that image and object are not the same. A gap opens up between subject and object. The infant can imagine the mother differently than she turns out to be when she arrives. In the third stage, the child can think of the mother, or of the mother’s parts, as good or bad. The “bad mother” or the “bad breast” does not suddenly begin to exist at that point, but a judgment about her behavior (she is absent, for instance) is registered and acted upon. Now the possibility of badness (i.e. evil) has entered the world.

This view of evil – that it is a judgment of consciousness, that it is a necessary category of thought, and that human consciousness depends upon having this category for its on-going functioning – generates many further important implications. One of them is that when this category of conscious discrimination is applied to the self, it creates a psychological entity that Jung

named the "shadow." The shadow is a portion of the natural whole self that the ego calls bad, or evil, for reasons of shame, social pressure, family and societal attitudes about certain aspects of human nature, etc. (see Chapter 7). Those aspects of the self that fall under this rubric are subjected to an ego-defensive operation that either suppresses them or represses them if suppression is unsuccessful. In short, one hides the shadow away and tries to become and remain unconscious of it. It is shameful and embarrassing.

Jung provides a striking illustration of discovering a piece of his own shadow in his account of traveling to Tunisia for the first time (see Chapter 8). From this experience he extracts the observation that the

rationalistic European finds much that is human alien to him, and he prides himself on this without realizing that his rationality is won at the expense of his vitality, and that the primitive part of his personality is consequently condemned to a more or less underground existence.

(Jung 1961: 245)

It is this piece of personality that the cultivated European typically bottles up in the shadow and condemns violently when it is located in others. The magnificent film *Passage to India* depicts such projection of shadow qualities with exquisite precision. Jung would experience the full force of shadow unawareness and projection in the Nazi period and in World War Two.

Because the human psyche is capable of projecting parts of itself into the environment and experiencing them as though they were percepts, the judgment that something is evil is psychologically problematic. The standpoint of the judge is all-important: Is the one making a judgment of evil perceiving clearly and without projection, or is the judge's perception clouded by personal interest and projection-enhanced spectacles? Since evil is a category of thought and conscious discernment, it can be misused, and in the hands of a relatively unconscious or unscrupulous person it can itself become the cause of ethics problems. Is the judge corrupt, or evil? This would require another judgment to be made by someone else, and this judgment could in turn be the subject of yet another judgment, ad infinitum. There is no Archimedean vertex from which a final, absolute judgment on good and evil can be made.

Despite staking out his ground here, which could easily lead to utter moral relativism, Jung did not move in that direction. Just because the categories of good and evil are the product and tool of consciousness does not mean that they are arbitrary and can be assigned to actions, persons, or parts of persons without heavy consequence. Ego discrimination is an essential aspect of adaptation and consequently is vital to survival itself. Ego consciousness must take responsibility for assigning such categories of judgment as good and evil accurately or they will lose their adaptive function. If the ego discriminates incorrectly for very long, reality will exact a high price.

In order for consciousness to perform its function of moral discrimination adaptively and accurately, it must increase awareness of personal and

collective shadow motivations, take back projections to the maximum extent possible, and test for validity. Time and time again Jung cries out for people to recognize their shadow parts. Questions of morals and ethics must become the subject of serious debate, of inner and outer consideration and argument, and of continual refinement. The conscious struggle to come to a moral decision is for Jung the prerequisite for what he calls ethics, the action of the whole person, the self (see Chapter 9). If this work is left undone, the individual and society as a whole will suffer.

As opposed to a theorist who would root the reality of good and evil in metaphysical nature itself and then rely on inspiration, intuition, or revelation to decide upon what is actually good and what is evil, Jung puts forward a theory that places the burden for making this judgment squarely upon ego consciousness itself. To be ethical is work, and it is the essential human task. Human beings cannot look "above" for what is right and wrong, good and evil; we must struggle with these questions and recognize that, while there are no clear answers, it is still crucial to continue probing further and refining our judgments more precisely. This is an endless process of moral reflection. And the price for getting it wrong can be catastrophic (see Chapter 11).

Because Jung considered this to be perhaps the central human task, he ventured even into the risky project of making such judgments about God Himself. Is God good or evil, or both? These are questions that Jung addresses in his impassioned engagement with the Biblical tradition, and especially in his late work 'Answer to Job' (see Chapter 10).

To ask if God is good or evil, or both, is for Jung the equivalent of asking this question about the nature of reality. Is reality good? Yes. Is it evil? Yes, it is evil as well. But this judgment rests upon the human, or perhaps even upon the individual, point of view. Nature, for example, is judged to be good when it is harmonious and stable and works in our (human) interest. But when it is tumultuous, when it produces and feeds our diseases, when its ways thwart the goals of human life and well-being, then we judge it to be evil. From a more disinterested vertex, however, it simply is what it is.

When humans adopt a more disinterested viewpoint, they transcend the categories of good and evil to an extent and view human life, human behavior, and human motivation from a vertex that sees it all as "just so." Human beings love each other, and we hate each other. We sacrifice for each other and destroy each other. We are noble and base. And all of this belongs to human nature. The judgments we make about good and evil are bound to be biased by our own interests and tilted in favor of our pet tendencies and traits.

This opens the door, then, to investigate in a more impartial way the sources of those trends in human affairs and character development that human beings would usually judge to be evil. Without giving up the categories of good and evil as tools of conscious discrimination and reflection, we can avoid the blindness of righteous indignation and moral outrage that might otherwise overwhelm consciousness. We can ask for explanations for behavior. Why do the Serbs rape and mutilate the Moslem

Bosnian women? Why did Hitler want to eliminate the Jews? Why did Herod slaughter the innocent children? Why do I commit atrocities, albeit on a lesser scale, in my personal life? Without in any way shrinking back from the judgment that these are instances of evil, one can go on to ask the questions of psychological and social motivation that lead up to and support the attitudes and behavior that we judge to be evil. Explanations do not exonerate the perpetrators, nor do they have any bearing whatsoever on the question of punishment or the consequences for evil acts. This is not rationalization or excuse-making, but investigation. Jung's position does provide an opening for exploring reasons and causes and therefore also for finding ways to prevent such acts in the future by understanding what brings them about.

It is a great advantage to be able to say that essential evil is not rooted in reality itself, for if it were then one could do nothing about it. In Jung's understanding, evil is a category of judgment that can lead to scientific investigation and political action. If evil were real in a more ontological sense – if Satan really did exist as a being apart from God and controlled human events – then the possibilities of human engagement and intervention would be much diminished. Jung's position also allows one to remain optimistic to a certain extent about the rehabilitation of perpetrators. If it is not the case that the perpetrator is intrinsically evil, then it follows that a spark of hope remains for change and for a reversal of the traits and qualities that led to the evil act. Criminals bear the weight of shadow projection for society, but in Jung's view the criminal remains a member of the human community and represents an aspect of everyone. Those traits one condemns in the perpetrator also belong to oneself, albeit usually in a less blatant form.

One of the goals of a personal psychological analysis is, in Jung's view, to make an inventory of psychic contents that includes shadow material. Once this is done and the shadow is acknowledged and felt as an inner fact of one's own personality, there is less chance of projection and greater likelihood that perception and judgment will be accurate. This does not eliminate making judgments about evil, for this category remains in consciousness as a tool for discriminating reality, but it does allow for less impulsive and emotionally charged, blind attribution of evil in cases where serious ambiguity exists.

Still, if evil is an adjective, applied by ego consciousness to actions and events in the course of discriminating and judging reality, this fails to explain the source of the behavior, the acts, and the thoughts that are judged to be evil. What is the source of the deed, the "raw fact," which one judges to be evil?

For example, war is a common human event that is often judged to be evil. Is war-making native to the human species? It would seem that war-making is intrinsic to part of human nature. There are mythological figures, both male and female, who represent the spirit of war and the human enthusiasm for it. Human beings seem to have a kind of aggressiveness toward one another and a tendency to seek domination over others, as well as a strong desire to protect their own possessions and families or their tribal integrity, which added



together lead inevitably to conflict and to war. Some would say that war is a natural condition of humanity as a species, and it would be hard to dispute this from the historical record. Is making war not archetypal? Does this not mean that evil is deeply woven into the fabric of human existence?

It is one thing to say that the tendency to go to war is endemic in human affairs, however, and another to say that evil is therefore also a part of human nature. War is an event, and each instance of it must be evaluated by consciousness in order to be condemned as evil. Conscious reflection upon warfare has found that some wars are evil and others not, or that some wars are more evil than others. Theologians have elaborated a theory of the just war. In itself war can be considered morally neutral, a tool that can be used for good or evil. So while it may be claimed that the source of the behavior that will later be condemned as evil is an inherent part of human nature, this still does not mean that evil is archetypal.

Going deeper, though, can we frame the question more precisely to tease out those aspects of human behavior that are universally condemned as evil and ask if they are inherent in human existence? Can it be shown that human beings naturally and inevitably commit acts that would universally be judged as evil? And if so, how are we to understand the source of these acts? How does the evil deed happen? For we know that evil does occur throughout human history and experience.

Jung's own major confrontation with evil on a large scale was Nazi Germany. Much that the Nazis did individually and collectively has been judged as evil. Jung was close enough to the center of this political phenomenon to observe it unfolding right before his eyes, to feel its energy and to know its threat personally. He was fascinated by the mythic dimensions of German Nazism and for a time by its energy. In the early 1930s he wrote things that show he believed that the collective unconscious in Germany was pregnant with a new future. Perhaps, he thought, some good could come out of it, perhaps the unconscious was giving birth to a new era that would lead humanity forward. Mercurius is ambiguous, and the products of the creative unconscious are sometimes bizarre in their first appearance. Jung most definitely underestimated at first the Nazis' potential for evil.

What he did observe by the mid-1930s, however, was a sort of collective psychosis taking hold in Germany, a society-wide state of psychic possession. In his essay on Wotan (*CW* 10, paras 371–99) he writes of this phenomenon. An archetypal image from ancient Germanic religion and myth, Wotan was stirring again in the German soul, and this was generating martial enthusiasm and battle-frenzy throughout the population. Wotan was a war god, and the German people were now showing the signs of irrational possession by battle-eagerness that is seen in warriors preparing for battle. This state of possession was disturbing normal ego consciousness among the Germans and their sympathizers to the point of clouding normal moral judgment. Under these conditions the psyche is ripe for releasing behavior that is primitive, irrationally driven, and highly charged with affect and emotion. Jung



predicted that the German people were getting ready to act out a Wotanic possession.

What had brought this archetypal constellation into historical reality? The enactment of the Wotanic fury in modern Germany needs to be explained by referring to historical events and patterns: Germany's humiliation after World War One, the national degradation and political and economic turmoil of the 1920s, the compensatory politics of arrogance and revenge espoused by the Nazi leaders and bought wholesale by the populace. The appearance of the Wotan archetype in the collective consciousness of the German nation could be interpreted as a psychological compensation for a national mood of humiliation and loss of self-worth, the archetypal basis for a sort of narcissistic rage reaction.

In Jung's psychological theory, the regression of psychic energy to primitive levels of the collective unconscious constellates a compensatory archetypal symbol, which galvanizes the will and brings about a new flow of energy into the system, along with a strong sense of meaning and purpose. But this is also often accompanied by ego inflation and identification with primitive energies and impulses. What is created is a "mana personality" (cf. 'Two essays on analytical psychology', *CW* 7, paras 374ff.). There are no guarantees that what this archetypal symbol and its derivative notions and energies stand for will bear careful ethical scrutiny and inquiry. The crusader spirit of someone identified with archetypal thoughts and values will argue fiercely that the ends justify the means and will overlook all countervailing considerations. This person may look like a moral leader when in fact what is being espoused is an abdication of moral reflection. The crusader for liberation or equality or moral rearmament may well be advocating at the same time *abaissement du niveau mental*.

A strong influx of archetypal energy and content from the unconscious shades the light of ego consciousness and interferes with a person's ability to make moral distinctions. Now ordinary moral categories and the ego's ethical attainments are easily over-ridden in the name of "higher" (certainly stronger) values. And when these dubious higher values have become the group norm, individual and collective shadows have found a secure playground. This is how evil is unleashed on a mass scale; it is individual shadow added to shadow and then raised to the square power by group consensus, permission and pressure (see Chapter 11).

Under conditions like this, which held sway in Germany and other Nazi-dominated areas of Europe between 1933 and 1945 (see Chapter 13), kinds of behavior that would ordinarily be suppressed and repressed become acceptable. Indeed acts like betrayal of friends, robbery of personal property, lying and cheating and public humiliation of others, which would normally be condemned in civil society, may suddenly become praiseworthy. Now it is allowed and indeed encouraged to murder neighbors, to plunder their property, to rape their women, to take revenge for past slights and present envies. Even if some level of discipline remains in the ranks on the collective