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Madness and Creativity

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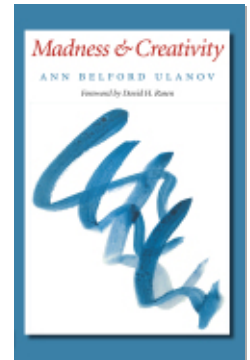
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CHAPTER 2



Collective Madness

When our ruling principle and formations of the good, of God, of reality break down, and when we find we must develop the least developed part of us, we find at the bottom of that lowest point evil looking at us coldly, dragging our light into the abyss. Clinical experience bears this out. When we break down personally, we fall into a space beneath the principles and images on which we have relied, away from what used to work in us, what functioned in us in a developed, superior way. All that proves of no use anymore. It no longer works. That leaves us disoriented and frightened. What can I rely on to see me through life? The personal opens to the collective threat of nothing there.

Disorientation

Seeing that our ruling principles are not ultimate truth but at best our constructions of truth, not to be equated with truth, that our images of God are images, not God, throws us into a gap that opens between order and what is beyond order. We do not feel this as an opportunity to explore the ultimate beyond our designs for it, but instead look into an abyss into which fall all our axioms and belief systems.

In personal terms we feel madness because we lose our container of meaning, what guides us as reference point. We feel madness because we have lost our sense of meaning—that we have meaning, that we can make meaning out of what happens to us, that we share containers of meaning with others in our culture. We feel we alone live outside systems of meaning others share; worse, we question whether meaning exists at all.

In collective terms we feel disoriented that whole patterns of meaning have broken up, proved fallible, not firm. No shared container of meaning holds us as a culture, a nation, a world. This feels mad. As Jung says, we feel that “the spirit of the times”—what we know, are accustomed to, take as moral compass—is overcome by the “spirit of the depths,” and “if you enter the world of the soul, you are like a madman.”¹

To perceive this makes us dizzy. Are we right in thinking this way? Or have we just missed some basic point that will explain what is happening? Are we just projecting our dis-ease of craziness out onto the culture, the world? Or have we gained an access point to the stress in our culture through its small version in ourselves? Culture does not exist outside us. We live in it as a fish in water, and it flows through us offering us images, laws, customs, personages in comic books, songs, novels, paintings to enhance and explore our identities as well as ways even to think and guide such reflections on self and world. When these guidelines disband into a jumble without a unitary interpretation, or even words to explain what is happening, we feel lost, without foundation. Jung writes in *The Red Book*, “The word is protective magic against the daimons of the unending.”²

We live in a time when invisible, basic patterns of orientation that sketch a map, a locale, a surround we hardly named or knew existed now rise into mind because they break up. We grab this shard, that pith of content and try to re-form, reinstitute what was. But we are not able to restore this persona of order and meaning. At best it is like a placard, a bunch of platitudes, an enforced way of thinking to revivify worn-out interpretations. It does not feed the soul.

This collective disorientation goes deeper: we lose not just the container of meaning but also our accustomed ways of thinking and feel-

ing about meaning. Myths of meaning that have sustained us dissolve. We try to reduce the chaos to a sure linear explanation. We look for a neat causality to explain what feels like cultural madness. We spy a source of this breakup, fasten on it to blame the other group. Such blaming reassures us there is logic to this disorientation; it is not destruction of meaning but the others' fault, and it can be corrected and we can get back on course.

But examples of disorientation and our conflicting experiences of them leave us in confusion about what has happened and what to do. For some it feels like liberation from old restrictive, coercive patterns; for others it feels like ruinous loss of dearest ideals, undoing of dependable foundations. Together we suffer cultural collapse. The symbols that bound us in shared existence pale, grow weak, do not maintain space for commerce between self and others, between here and now and what transcends it and lasts, between individual invention and enduring truth.

Just as in personal madness when we veer toward rigid holding on to what we knew, no matter what, or when we feel scattered to the winds, so in cultural collapse we split between entrenchment in fundamentals and prescribed ways of thinking about them, with banishment from the group if one disagrees and acceptance of a randomness of standards, as if letting go to the winds of change where nothing abides. Each group blames the other for the cultural crisis.

Examples themselves are problematic, seemingly more anecdotal than legitimate data, because all we have are experiences of breakup, breakdown. There is a generalized suffering in the absence of a shared moral compass to hold us all in freedom and unity, with room to differ without repudiating, to differentiate new views without exiling, to craft identities without legislating them.

Examples

Examples abound of losing the meaning we live in. As I am writing this, a bombing occurs in Oslo, Norway, and a massacre on one of its islands hosting a youth camp. Many have been shot dead—young people. In Norway of the Nobel Peace Prize! How to grasp this madness? How to

understand its happening? What could cause it? An arrest is made, and the perpetrator is described as a right-wing religious extremist, an example of identifying one's viewpoint with the truth, hence, in madness, justifying killing as imperative to make that truth known.

The United States Gulf oil spill not only brought disaster to sea and land creatures, including humans who lost their homes and jobs, but also despoiled faith in a sustaining structure of industry and government to do right by the victims. Like personal trauma that not just eclipses but outright obliterates the existence of the person, the right to be a subject with rights, in national collective tragedy fueled by human mistakes that are denied and passed around as blame to others, the move on the checkerboard is the same. Individual and community safety is eclipsed by profit margins, liability and blame assignment. Particular individuals and neighborhoods, small societies within society, go unrecognized, nor do they receive adequate retributive justice for their suffering of being all but annihilated by poisoning of habitat and erasing of livelihood. No collective mourning happens for loss of beauty of land and sea, no shared remorse for harming earthly resources given so abundantly and now in grave question of continuing. Will there be oil for our way of life? Should there be oil? There is no mourning together for neglect of priceless human caution and for lack of enforcing safety measures out of respect for the sheer force of potential disastrous explosion. No shared mourning recognizes these losses.

In Japan with the earthquake and then the tsunami roiling into nuclear power plants built near an earth fault, the physical upheaval of earth and sea, of towns, homes, highways, pets, and people, a catastrophe fueled in part by ignorance and overreliance on inadequate safety measures not pressed to the limit by imagination of what could happen, for many bankrupts faith in nuclear energy throughout the world. Should all nuclear plants be closed? In New Mexico when wild-fires threaten to come near nuclear facilities, the possibility of such a collision is now imagined, safety rules notwithstanding, spreading fear like an emotional pollution. Our faith in our precautions shows fissures. Anxiety seeps from those cracks: What if this or that happens? Danger of the unexpected, the unplanned, now haunts our collective consciousness.

On a symbolic level we worry about energy from the depths of nature erupting, spewing poison into air, water, and soil. Is it retaliation for our exploiting the earth—for ignoring its realities and the creaturely life it supports because of our greed for more and more power, for convenience, for ease of us humans alone? Now we know it can happen. How do we respond? Philemon, Jung's guide in *The Red Book*, accuses the dead who come back because they failed to live their own animal part of never doing penance for "the velvet eyes of the ox" and "for the shiney ore."³ How prescient!

I think of a personal tragedy also based on collective ignorance. A mother is haunted for decades by guilt for the effects of her postpartum depression on her child. She feels she failed her infant then by falling into an inability to trust the care she was giving her daughter. But she learns years later that her depression was chemically driven by total loss of estrogen before and during birth. No one tested for estrogen depletion then, even though she had a most difficult pregnancy. It was not in the collective medical consciousness to monitor estrogen levels as a crucial factor. Differentiating personal and cultural factors now makes precious space between her and her guilt, to see this impersonal effect that fell upon her body and psyche and then fell upon her infant. This perception, even years later, restores the cultural space where we can inquire into the weight of culture pressing down on an individual.

Jung in *The Red Book* says that we must make such an impersonal event that assaults us personal, to find our way to its meaning even though we did not cause its happening.⁴ We thus accept the blow of impersonal events that happen to us and in that acceptance work an alchemy that transforms the outer into an inner event that caught us up, wounded us. By restoring our personal life in that space, space is made in the culture itself for self and symbol to be refound or found for the first time. The mother and her infant suffered this rupture in their beginning. What is the meaning for each of them and for them together? How might she, and later her child, respond and make deep sense out of what happened to them?

Breakup of reliable patterns orienting economic life is happening across the globe. Economic recession, threat of default on loans,

rise of interest rates, refusal of loans by banks across nations, decline of the housing market, joblessness, all like a row of dominos tumble one after the other. This toppling feels like an impersonal happening directly affecting the economic stability of individual citizens across many countries and the countries themselves as collective entities. Does the international financial market grow so nervous that investing shrinks, risk-taking stalls, and the circulation of money, like oxygen for nations' monetary health, begins to fail? Or does the market fluctuate so wildly between highs and lows that individuals cannot devise sensible patterns of investment? Who is to blame? How did this happen? Will the European Union break apart? How can an international union thrive if we feel robbed by other members? And what will happen if everyone refuses to pay more? Where is a just, flexible, durable financial pattern of orienting meaning that contains all of us?

In America, our government cannot come together to reach shared decisions about what threatens our country's health: our debt, joblessness, health care and social security costs. Instead of working together for the good of the American people, we hear daily on the news how each political side digs in its heels, does not yield, insists that the other side move off their position toward what our side says must be. The accusatory rancor displays the bankruptcy of our tradition of congressional debate and compromise. We lose sure grip on principles of order and debate in government, of trust in social goodwill and fairness, of just use but not abuse of collective power. How do we reach an encompassing pattern of meaning to hold us all in a livable rhythm of earning and spending, investing and economizing? No collective myth of meaning unites us, out of which specific effective policies can be generated.

Even countries that boast an expanding economy, such as China, make us ask, yes, but at what cost? Shanghai's transformation into a modern city also leaves many citizens homeless. Their homes and stores are razed to make room for skyscrapers. Evicted citizens bitterly complain of little compensation.

The Hartford, Connecticut, chief of police in a radio interview tries to explain the doubling of murders in his city from the same date the previous year. We need a holistic response, he says, not only

from police, but also from families, religions, economic opportunities. We need for these men something bigger to which they feel they belong. These men are in their twenties, not teenagers in gangs, and the murders happen between persons who know each other. They are not random nor results of robbery. They are intensely personal: you disrespect me, I shoot you. The core issue, I suggest, is feeling annihilated. The police chief recognizes the tremendous boon of technology, but says, nonetheless, these men are living in their daily lives the same way they use the Internet. On the Internet they can act without rules, saying whatever they please anonymously and in any language, living for the moment, with no sense of consequences or of a bigger community to which they owe something. They live for the moment with the click of a button. They are victims of a lifestyle. They shoot without thinking about it. The chief says they need opportunities to get involved, to belong to something bigger than themselves. Nothing intervenes to make a space between feeling disrespected, made to feel they are nothing, and retaliating to annihilate the other. In that gap of pain, no space exists between what is fantasized and acting on it.⁵

A Chicago group in a documentary film called *The Interrupters of Violence* shows how space can be made. One woman, Amina Matthews, herself with authority on the streets from having surmounted her own criminal background, quickly pulls a man away from the group when he is hit by a thrown brick and says to him, I know you do not want to strike back; you want to take care of your family, not return to prison. That is the gangster in you—a major sign of respect but turned inside out to communicate the strength to rule what one feels instead of be ruled by it.⁶

Breakup of a meaningful moral compass shows even in technological advances that are wondrous in what they also achieve. Facebook potentially connects every person with every other person in a vast, sprawling community throughout cultures and the globe. The facility of communication thus provided plays an essential role in the Arab Spring that toppled two long-established family dictator governments and ignited at least two more attempts to do so. A huge change of pattern in communication sends shockwaves across oceans, across lands, across histories of entrenched political rule that prove no match for

the swelling tide of the people communicating with each other, making a group en masse demonstrating for the people, for the subjectness of everyone in the mass.

Yet another side of Facebook and related technologies is total lack of privacy, the invasion of personal space by mechanisms to track purchases, places visited, fantasies sought, in order to increase market value, to sell, to profit. Grimmer still is technological capacity to hack into telephone privacy to garner confidential facts of children's illnesses, grief over a murdered daughter, suffering from loss of loved ones in terrorist attacks, or personal matters of psychological, political, and medical events for gossip to raise sales of newspapers. Already, exposure of such hacking has forced closure of a gigantic newspaper that costs multiple jobs, arrest of its CEO, and resignation of the chief of Scotland Yard. At the bottom of "the lowest in you," our "incapacity," Jung says in *The Red Book*, is evil, an abyss. Here we meet the "worm" of corruption and must come to terms with it.⁷

Even our profoundest beliefs are subject to this "worm." Corruption that gets in everywhere is part of life. We remember with fresh grief the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in America and all the other terrorist bombings in cities, shops, airplanes around the world. Terrorism on that scale requires a group and a sense of the transcendent to convince individuals that they are serving a greater cause. Only that makes possible transmutation of suicide into a weapon to murder as many others as possible, billed as noble sacrifice serving the whole group.⁸ Just as personal madness bleeds into cultural life, so fear about loss of common cultural meaning exacerbates our personal fears. Think of the violence erupting at Columbine and Virginia Tech, the looting riots in Britain, the subway attacks in Japan, genocide, wars and their aftermath of crippling civilians as well as soldiers, floods of refugees with their children dying of hunger and disease. We are afraid there is no durable, dependable meaning holding us together in one world.

A Dot of Light, Healing

But perceiving this is just where a dot of light appears. To see the intersection of personal and collective madness bequeaths a small spot

of insight that radiates healing. Jung finds we get release from the humiliation of being caught in our repeated madness and the isolation our shame about it imposes on us, when we discover that our personal problem turns out to be also part of the collective problem bedeviling our time and place in culture. Some problems may even go farther, Jung opines, to connect with problems of the whole human family across cultures and historical times. Even further, our personal madness may be a tiny version of God's problems.⁹

Surrendering to being caught, held fast, demanded of by this problem, unable to solve it from our ego resources, opens us to what Jung calls the compensating work of the psyche we share at the archetypal level. Primordial images involved in this particular problem balance our being caught; they bring otherness—an other point of view, an other source of energy, an other way into the depth of the tangle entrapping us. The conversation that results between our ego and this other viewpoint yields a way through it that we could never have found or imagined. We feel then God, or something bigger, whatever we call it, has intervened.¹⁰

In addition problems of our time, we can see where something other than the ultimate captures all our devotion.¹¹ We are held fast to a work schedule, a particular food, prayer formula, parental style that must not be breached, spellbound that this is the truth and we must not stray from it. Maybe our problem with compulsion also vexes the Holy? Is God lamenting, What am I to do with these humans who rush after their idols away from me? I flood them, I infest them with locusts, I suffer in their place, and still they run away from life with me at their center.

Acknowledging evil, at the bottom of our own madness and in our collective life together, takes us to the extreme edge of what we can bear. Shocked to discover that I am complicit in an evil I deplore, that I have done something or not done something that I never believed I could do, that I shunned as bad, I feel madness engulfs me. To see this is to sacrifice self-image, self-knowledge, self-confidence. We sacrifice our ideas of good and evil when we discover, I abet the bad I abhor. Dick Diver in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *Tender Is the Night* believes he is loving and rescuing his wife, his former patient in a mental hos-

pital. Horrified, he discovers she locks herself in the bathroom to get away from him. That is the only place she can secure privacy from his intrusive “goodness.”

Examples abound, some unexpected. We may sink into what used to be called sloth—a letting go of our ownmost self. We slide away from finding our path, facing our problems, our creative hopes for a life that feels real and authentic. We know that we could give thought and feeling to living with meaning, but oh, not now, let me rest, let me first finish this bit of business, let me, in effect, lose my soul, as Jung did his. We betray what matters instead of living what we have not lived and could live. We want to see ourselves as kind, but we do not stop to help the motorist stranded on the highway—not enough time, we say, too dangerous, we fear, but we do not telephone for help on his behalf. We rail against a welfare system but fail to look into our financial support of our addicted son. We glimpse that we, too, are the mother who emotionally eats her children or the mother who insists on her own needs in aging over her child’s need to follow his destiny. Whatever the issue, we all have one bedeviling us. In chapter 3 we look into the major complex haunting our life, which will not cease compelling our actions until we intervene. The complex, with its fanciful reiterating drama, keeps attacking as if to insist we change it before we die.

Facing Evil

Jung’s *Red Book* takes us further into our madness, leading us to see exactly where we each face evil and must find the place of destructiveness in life. In doing so we contribute to the community in finding our own creative path.

I have written elsewhere how our particular temptation acts like a trapdoor hinge that opens, and we fall through it into collective evil. If we are compelled to shop, for example, and experience it as creative and life-giving, it may also harbor a secret greed or a secret insistence we must be the fairest of them all with the latest fashion. Through that hinge of overbuying we are pivoted into the morass of greed itself, having to grab more than we can use, afford, make our own. And

to get it we will step on our neighbor to seize the bargain, even cheat other customers by taking the skirt in one size that fits us and the matching blouse from another size, leaving the next customer with a mismatched pair. A small incident? Yes, but it implies a disregarding of the subjectness of others while gulping down all the goodies. Or shopping may be our hold on a creative life, without which we would fall into depression. If shopping keeps us from despair, where we live bereft of any beauty or creative combining of elements, we fall into the ruthlessness of survival instinct. I am ready to push you aside in order to live. Even if this greedy gobbling stems from being starved for love, itself a grievous suffering, nonetheless the other person is still run over, discounted. The aggressiveness asserts itself in spying the creative combinations put together in shopping. The result: a mixture of good and evil; creativity and destructiveness.

Remember, Jung learns in *The Red Book* that facing the lowest in us, we must give up the distinction of even the knowledge of good and evil: “You can no longer separate good and evil conclusively, neither through feeling nor through knowledge. . . . You can discern the direction of growth only from the below to above.” This means that in our growing from the lowest point of ourselves, our incapacity, good and evil are joined, and in no other way. Once we stop growing they fall apart again into warring opposites that we project onto others to the hazard of us all: “But as soon as growth stops, what was united in growth falls apart and once more you recognize good and evil.” Living our own particular paths individually and together sponsors our growth, and our growth offers some protection against evil split off from good. This astounding insight directs us to live our ownmost life that no one else can live, what Jung calls our way that we must follow.¹²

I have also written elsewhere about the necessity to “succumb in part,” as Jung puts it, to such evil.¹³ If we fall in entirely, we are swept into its current. If we stay high and dry, do not succumb at all, we go on unconsciously acting out our particular evil against our neighbor, claiming our innocence, and do not know anything about it. We, in effect, lie, for example, about why our group splits from your group. We do not admit it is that you hurt me, but dress up our leaving as

serving a better cause. But the spite, the bitterness, the intent to exile and never speak again speaks loudly of a jumble of hurting and being hurt under the rug between us, now built into an impenetrable wall. That kind of emotional lying we must recognize and accept in part, but not in whole, to understand our hurt, and then our hate for being hurt, then our lie as protection. These recognitions make room for mercy on how much we are hurt and want to hurt in return. Then that impulse to revenge is tempered, not acted upon. We accept the violence in ourselves, as Jung insistently urges, and do not kill our brother.

By succumbing but only in part, not being swept away by destructiveness, we give something to our community. We discover that our problem reflects the problem of the whole culture in which we live: the destructiveness facing us personally is “that voice that makes us conscious of the evil from which the whole community is suffering . . . and brings evil before us in order to make us succumb.”¹⁴ For example, our personal problem intertwines with a cultural view of the feminine as less than the masculine, a negative view that allows men to be caught in discriminating against women in sexual attitudes, payment for work, and promotions and allows women to discriminate against themselves through self-doubt and attack on their body shape. We face personal and collective shadow qualities. Yet facing the shadow also brings us the very undeveloped archaic energy of shadow contents of emerging ideas, urgent desires, instinctual insistentcies to force them into consciousness. That archaic force allows us not to adapt to collective needs and values. Although we fear this *massa confusa* as madness, threatening spiritual visions and rational assumptions, the new comes in, and we need the help of the undeveloped and to feel insisted upon to become aware of it.

Behind shadow is another force, the image of *anthropos*, the whole man [sic], the whole human self in its totality, forcing its expansion on our low self-esteem, our fears, even our grandiosity.¹⁵ All the parts, good and evil, developed and undeveloped, must come in to seats at the table, the whole of the wholeness. Our ability to withstand this influx of energy depends in large part on the anchoring of evil in something as hard as stone at the basis of us, our foundation, to see it

is part of our growing. What happens to Jung in his *Red Book* proves helpful here.

In growing we are protected from the full blast of destructiveness, because good and evil are united. This means even in darkest moments, goodness has not vanished; it is as much a part of growing as is destructiveness: “In dealing with darkness, you have got to cling to the Good, otherwise the devil devours you.” Facing the destructive in us means also simultaneously holding on to the good that we know and that others give us within our culture. We thus strengthen the good’s holding of us and gather into consciousness what we have been given to be.¹⁶

We may be surprised by unexpected goodness appearing in the midst of awful void. One analysand, caught in what she calls nothingness, looks into it and is startled by a stirring of color. She says, I see something new: a fuzz of greenness at the edges of the nothing, like trees before they bud. The analyst is able to say, The beginning of a beginning. Another example is the loss of what we believed in as an ideal, worked hard for. Utter disillusionment when others defeat it exposes us to danger of self-attack on top of loss—I should not have idealized this goal; I failed to withdraw my projection. Protecting against that attack, we may see that of course this goal failed because it is finite, a sort of God-image, an image of the good, our finite picture of the infinite. Inevitably it will wear out, not work, even if others had accepted it. It brought us this far and is not the good in itself, so of course it will decline. Can we risk a new question? What opens to show itself where this lost good object once was?

These two things—the hinge and succumbing in part—are important, true, helpful. But now something more startling comes on the scene that addresses the place of destructiveness in life and responds to our ever renewed question, Where to put the bad? Our complex confronts us with the bad we do not know where to put. And its hinge makes us fall into evil itself.

Sacrifice

Two routes lead Jung to his answer of where to put the bad. The first is to go to the lowest in himself and for all of us to go into our own

private Hell, where we are small, inferior, groping from stone to stone. There the soul lies, and salvation springs up from the discarded. We are the least among us who need a cup of water in our thirst for meaning, need clothing to protect our vulnerability. Jung's soul shows him another half of the world he has ignored, and he falls into meaninglessness, unending chaos that scatters him or sucks him into the dark abyss. Hence all his formations of the good, all that he formed as superior and best, with which he falls into identification, are mistaken. He has taken the part for the whole. He has left out meaninglessness, multiple interpretations, conflicting departure points for the sake of the one truth; he has excluded what is inferior in himself, left "at the mercy of decay" because undeveloped in himself.¹⁷

Step by step Jung faces each of these facts. He is not a hero; his ambition to be a prophet or a shepherd of others is self-seeking; his privileging of Logos leaves Eros in the rubble spawning secret and open vices; his relying on superiority of rational logical thinking bankrupts his feeling that presents itself at first in horrific images—mad, blood-thirsty Salome, murderer of the Holy One, and a murdered, beheaded small girl, a piece of whose flesh he is commanded to eat as an act of atonement. This is the second route to finding the place of evil in life.

It is a sacrifice imposed on us to take in, to accept that evil is something in which we collude. It forces us to recognize we collaborate with evil and to submit to the shock and revulsion this causes us. We see the injustice of our justice systems, the vice accompanying our virtue, the oppression of those excluded from our images of the good and of God.

Atonement for what? Jung knows. Even though horrified and refusing, he finally submits to the command to atone. He cuts a piece of the small girl's liver and ingests it. He knows he did not murder her, that other men did, but that he, a man, could have; he could be one of them; he could collude in the worst evil acts of humanity: "I learned that I am a party to all the horror of human nature." The one who commands this sacrifice is a shrouded woman who insists against Jung's outrage at this murder and his protest, why should he do as commanded? The figure answers, because this outrage happens every day and because "I am the soul of this child." Jung submits to the

order to atone and takes in and digests the flesh. Then the shrouded figure throws off her disguise and says, "I am your soul."¹⁸

This act effects in Jung the destruction of all the formations he had constructed. He disidentifies from his pictures of the good, indeed of the God. And in this seeming caricature of the Christian Eucharist, he takes in the God-image, which here is flesh of the suffering degraded feminine in its most vulnerable guise of a small girl, helpless before the depredations of men. That is the state of Jung's soul, his mangled Eros, his feeling modality; that is what his formation of God modeled on Logos, of empirical linear reasoning, left out. Eros is an equal force in life and knowledge and of feeling in his personal life that Jung must recover. The scrap of detail that it is a small girl, not a boy, and that she is beheaded indicates his lowest is the neglected feminine and that the power to think has been cut off, when in fact the thinking of so-called feeling types is profound.¹⁹

That evil act of neglect and viciousness toward Eros is not only the lowest point in himself but the place evil stares at him coldly. What happens as a result? All the energy that went into his formations that he identified with and that he identified with the truth—all these are sacrificed in the repellent act of taking in, making part of his flesh, this lowest undeveloped incapacity in himself, represented by the small, murdered, beheaded girl.

The Assistance of Evil

Even more astounding is Jung's recognition that he could not do this atoning act by himself. He could not eat a piece of the girl's liver: it is too abhorrent. He could not destroy his identification with the forms of life he constructed; he is helpless to do so: "Man cannot accomplish this act solely by himself, but is assisted by evil, which does it instead of man."²⁰ But it happens. Our formations are destroyed, not thrown on the ash heap never to be seen or used again. No. They are destroyed as the sole truth with which he is identified and which are identified with the ultimate, indeed as his images for God. They are destroyed as the "one" meaning. They have meaning but are not the only one. Whatever meaning comes in their place must now include disorder

and meaninglessness to make up a whole picture, a unity that gives a place to destructiveness in life. How does this happen?

Jung says evil does it for us, and thus we see we collude with it: we must “recognize our complicity in the act of evil; . . . the evil that I wanted performed, the infamous deed, seemingly without me and yet with me.” Evil cuts the cord of identification with what we have formed as the meaning of life. Evil does it. We are helpless to do that because, I think, it feels as if we would go out of our minds. And often in *The Red Book* Jung feels loony, crazed, not knowing, not understanding. He goes to the edge of what is bearable in that book. And remember, the time of his erupting fantasies was 160 days (November 1913–April 1914); of his writing the narrative, from 1913 to 1916; and of his crafting the paintings, to 1927.²¹

Sacrificing the ruling principle, all those constructs of meaning Jung held, is done by evil. Evil is needed to call back to us all the energy we put into formations of God and devil outside us, robbing us of this creative energy. Yet “the creation of a God is a creative act of the highest love,” an act of the Above. But to reclaim his lost soul, we must restore all this energy to our human life, “an act of the Below.” Those powers were in Jung’s soul all along but lay dormant and projected out of him to make his ruling principle, his science, his faith in Logos over Eros, his image of God. Once the cord of identification with those ruling ideas is cut, and they are no longer equated with God and with meaning, all that energy streams back into his psyche and is now alive in him: “They become part of a living pattern . . . no longer dormant . . . and irradiate my soul with their divine working.”²²

His soul now gains those powers alive in him, and we will see in chapter 4 where they go (into personal life and God-making capacity). He is the site of transformation now; it happens in his psyche, not in a God outside him who grants salvation or a devil outside him by whom he is seduced. God lives within us, in the hut, the house, the small residence of our particular life, “like glowing coals in you . . . inextinguishable fire.”²³

We do not become God; this is not a deification of the human. Rather, “You are its tool . . . there is no escape. . . . You come to know what a real God is. The fire burns right through you. That which

guides you forces you on to the way.” Another lives in us, intimately involved with us, but not identified with us. Jung objects: “The God wants my life. . . . The divine appears to me as irrational craziness. I hate it as absurd disturbance of my meaningful human activity.”²⁴ Yet in Jung’s view, we also need evil to help us do the unthinkable, the unbearable that we are helpless to do by ourselves. Something else forces us to find the way for us, a way we easily choose to avoid because it is unknown or, if known dimly, it is too much, frightening, so different from our plot for our lives.

Think of your good rules and that they must be destroyed in order to tell what really happened: he came in the night and did things to me. All the family denies it, but it is true. Something in me makes me tell what happened. I destroy my image of family harmony, his image as friendly, as landing on his feet, able to walk away; I expose his thoughtless annihilation of the other that he will not let himself know. A woman entirely devoted to her husband’s schedule begins to wake up to her own preferences, as if from a long sleep, and to refuse the craziness of his diminished life, to insist on more intimacy, conversation, relaxation together. Another wife breaks out of her husband’s tantrums and ultimatums, able to take them less personally, to see he is gripped by something she does not understand. Against her impulse to comfort, reason, help, grows her stand against his outbursts and for some truth buried in his anguish and anger that he must find.

A woman decides against further treatment for her cancer, choosing to make her way to live as much as she can before the terminal prognosis comes to pass. She acts against, destroys, the conventional medical view to follow some nudge into a direction that feels more true to what she has suffered physically and psychologically. For suicide has repeatedly beckoned her through her life because of lack of meaning and joy in life. Yet now, with “sure” prognosis, she feels she comes alive for the first time in a fuller way. She finds energy to move her household to another state to be near friends; she arranges her affairs and helpers in relation to her dwindling finances. She feels alive and goes on living.

A man still deeply amazed for the love found with his partner,

discovers he must speak up to his partner's occasional mocking, that they must discuss these incidents that cannot be ignored despite his dread that this may rock the boat of their whole relationship. He must name the evil with the good, Jung says, "For if you aspire only to the good and denied the evil that you committed nevertheless and failed to accept, your roots no longer suckled the dark nourishment of the depths and your tree became sick and withered."²⁵

Forging Evil

But one more decisive event occurs. Jung forges evil into the foundation stone of his life. After nearly falling for the pizzazz the devil claims for himself, saying, I am "the fizz of new thoughts and action," Jung sees that is a lie. That is the seduction from the seducer of nations. The devil is the personification of all that is reprehensible in us, "pure negation without convincing force," of meaningless surging back and forth in Hell and meaningless building up and tearing down on earth. Nothing comes of it, nothing created or lasting. Jung sees the devil is the personification of evil, a "thieving abyss." Having no force of his own, he tries to steal the golden egg of the gods. But Jung smashes the lump of manure the devil hides in, rescuing the egg and then forging the devil in human form. Jung says to the devil this pivotal phrase: "You shall fit into our form, you thief of the divine marvel . . . who stuff your body with the egg of the Gods, and thereby make yourself weighty."²⁶

The decisive act fits evil into human form, not us into destructiveness. Evil, though a real force in existence, is insubstantial; it seeks to acquire substance through theft and insinuation. Evil is not abolished but anchored. Where does Jung anchor it? He casts about in a vastness looking for the stone as foundation for a new beginning. He wants something graspable, not webs of confusion. He puts Satan into the stone, symbol of what lasts, is fixed and unalterable, of indestructible material, a central object in devotion. He forges the devil in the foundation stone of his (Jung's) life on which he will now stand and not fall back.²⁷

What might this mean for us? It means what people discover who

work through really hard experiences in their life to a livable conclusion. They still suffer effects from that tough experience, but it no longer rules their life. The death has been made part of the living; they do not lose their life to malignant mourning. The trauma is part of them; they are not hostage to it. They accept they are a recovering addict; that scar marks them, belongs to them, but they are relieved from acting on their addiction; they are more than that scar, not identified with it. The wrong our perpetrating self did in acts of fraud or lying or cheating or even murder, and the ignorance that led to it, the venality, the bad wishing, belongs to us but does not define us; we carry it but are not locked up in it.

To free ourselves from “the old curse of the knowledge of good and evil”²⁸ means we hold no absolute faith in our plans for debt release, for peace, for amicable divorce but recognize the lowest, the disordered, always belongs to the whole picture and may break in and must be included in our solution. Such acknowledgment subdues our wish to make our good a fixed, mandatory certainty. It means the trauma we suffer is not erased, but we are not imprisoned in it; it lives in us, we suffer its effects, but it does not rule our life.

Over decades of clinical work I have seen this shift again and again, and it is hard to pinpoint what causes it. It is not what I have done or said, not what the analyst decides, not what we craft together; it is all of those things and none of them. Through them something emerges and summons our consent. Accepting disorientation as belonging to the whole of us gives us a booster shot to living, for behind chaos is death. To feel death’s daily presence urges living to the fullest. We only have this day, even if it is the day before our death. This takes us to the second part of this book, Creativity.