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THE CULTURAL COMPLEX: A STATEMENT OF THE THEORY AND ITS APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT *This article explores the concept of 'the cultural complex'. Grounded in the theory of analytical psychology, this concept originates with C. G. Jung's early work on complex theory and Joseph Henderson's later notion of the 'cultural unconscious'. Using these two basic ideas, the theory of cultural complexes emerges as a way of understanding the collective psyche as it expresses itself in group behavior and individual psychological experience. Common characteristics of 'cultural complexes' include their unconsciousness, their resistance to consciousness, their autonomous functioning, their repetitive occurrence in a group's experience from generation to generation, and their tendency to accumulate historical experiences and memory that validate their point of view. The conflict between 'the West' and 'Islam' is explored as an example of a cultural complex. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: cultural complex, cultural unconscious, word association test, collective psyche, analytical psychology, archetypal possession, shadow, affect-ego, affect-object, archetypal defense

INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the binary world view of conflicting global superpowers that it symbolized, an endless parade of ethnic, racial, religious, gender, national, and regional factions has emerged on the world stage with their long-simmering feuds bubbling over. Everywhere, disadvantaged and/or disenfranchized groups – whether representing a minority or a majority – have been crying out for justice, healing, or vengeance – or all three simultaneously. It seems as if peoples from every continent have been caught in a newly energized and endless round of conflicts that run the gamut from familial and tribal skirmishes to international hatreds. As these group conflicts flood relationships with highly charged emotions at every level of human exchange – from local to global – we seek explanations, understanding, and remedies. More often than not, such seeking leaves us feeling powerless in the face of the intractable nature of these feuds. Political theories, economic theories, sociological theories, religious theories, and psychological theories – all provide a partial glimpse of the truth as to what underlies and fuels these conflicts.

Over the past few years, I have been focusing on what I believe to be a core aspect of the psychological nature of conflicts between groups and cultures. This perspective is modeled on an old theory that I – along with my colleague and close collaborator, Sam Kimbles – have been applying more systematically in a new arena: Jung's theory of complexes, which he developed at the beginning of the twentieth century. The modern version and new application of Jung's old idea makes no special claim to having the answer to what causes – or might heal – group and cultural conflict, but it offers a point of view that may be useful to some as they ponder the forces that invariably seem to thwart most human attempts to bring a peaceful, collaborative spirit to the unending strife between groups of people.

In our ripe time or 'kairos' – as Reihold Niehbur liked to call it – when understanding both the uniqueness and commonality of cultures from around the world has become essential for the well-being of the global community itself, shedding more light on what tears us apart is an essential first step. Much of what tears us apart can be understood as the manifestation of autonomous processes in the collective and individual psyche that organize themselves as cultural or group complexes. Cultural complexes are every bit as real, every bit as formative, every bit as ubiquitous, and every bit as powerful in their emotional and behavioral impact on individuals and groups as are personal complexes. Indeed, cultural complexes may present the most difficult and resistant psychological challenge we face in our individual and collective life today.

To tackle this most important problem of placing cultural complexes in context, I want to give the reader:

- a clear sense of what is meant by the notion of a 'cultural complex'
- a clear sense of how the concept of a 'cultural complex' is a natural and evolutionary development of CG Jung's very earliest psychiatric researches into the theory of complexes (Jung, 1973)
- a simple sketch of a most virulent, contemporary example of a cultural complex.

Each 'Part' of this paper will present a step-by-step progression in which the building blocks of the concept and of the contemporary example are pieced together in a manner that shows how the concept of the 'cultural complex' has been constructed and how it takes on living reality in the psyches of groups and of individuals.

PART ONE: THE DEFINITION AND THEORY OF THE 'CULTURAL COMPLEX'

There are two essential threads of Jungian theory that get woven into the fabric of our current thinking about cultural complexers:

- Jung's original theory of complexes
- Joseph Henderson's theory of the cultural unconscious.

By weaving these two distinct threads together and then mixing in the threads of our contemporary perspectives and concerns, we have begun the work of extending complex theory into cultural life and conflicts.

Jung's original complex theory: its relationship to individuation and the life of groups

Jung's first papers on the 'Word Association Test' were published in 1902 and 1903. Out of those early experiments, based on timed responses to lists of words, was born Jung's idea of complexes. Interestingly, when the group which had formed around Jung in the

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1930s was considering a name separate from the founder's, Jung himself thought it should be called 'Complex Psychology.' For many analytical psychologists, Jung's theory of complexes remains the cornerstone of the day-to-day work of psychotherapy and analysis. Like the Freudian theory of defenses, Jung's notion of complexes provides a tool for understanding the nature of intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict.

Through a hundred years of clinical experience, we have come to know well and accept that complexes are a powerful force in the lives of individuals. Most simply, we define a complex as an emotionally charged group of ideas and images that cluster around an archetypal core. Jung (1977) wrote:

> The complex has a sort of body, a certain amount of its own physiology. It can upset the stomach. It upsets the breathing, it disturbs the heart – in short, it behaves like a partial personality. For instance, when you want to say or do something and unfortunately a complex interferes with this intention, then you say or do something different from what you intended. You are simply interrupted, and your best intention gets upset by the complex, exactly as if you had been interfered with by a human being or by circumstances from outside.

Today, we can say the same is true of a cultural complex when it possesses the psyche and soma of an individual or a group – it causes us to think and feel in ways that might be quite different from what we think we should feel or think, or, as Jung put it, 'We say or do something different from what we intended.' In other words, cultural complexes are not always 'politically correct,' although being 'politically correct' might itself be a cultural complex.

The basic premise of our work, then, is that another level of complexes exists within the psyche of the group (and within the individual at the group level of their psyche). We call these group complexes 'cultural complexes' and they, too, can be defined as emotionally charged aggregates of ideas and images that tend to cluster around an archetypal core and are shared by individuals within an identified collective.

The theory and analysis of complexes, as worked out by analytical psychologists over the last century, has for the most part been applied to the psyche of individuals. Indeed, the goal of Jungian analysis in its individuation process has been to make one's personal complexes more conscious and free up the energy contained within them to be more available for creative psychological development. Elizabeth Osterman, a senior Jungian analyst of an earlier generation, liked to say that she had learned that her complexes would never completely disappear, but a lifetime of struggling with them had resulted in their debilitating effects, including foul moods, lasting only five minutes at a time rather than decades at a time. Some of the cultural complexes that we are exploring have caused uninterrupted foul moods in cultures for centuries, if not millennia, at a time (Figure 1).

Although Jung certainly included a 'cultural level' in his schema of the psyche, his theory of complexes has never been systematically applied to the life of groups and to what Jung and his followers have been fond of calling the 'collective' (McGuire, 1989). I would say that the idea of a 'cultural complex' is implicit in Jung's work, but that he did not make it explicit, nor did he systematically develop such an idea. Among other things, he didn't put forth the idea of a 'cultural unconscious' in which to posit such 'cultural complexes.' It was Joseph Henderson's contribution to make the notion of a 'cultural unconscious' explicit in the Jungian tradition. Many readers may already be protesting that Jung and Jungians have always had a keen interest in 'the collective' and have actively explored diverse cultures,

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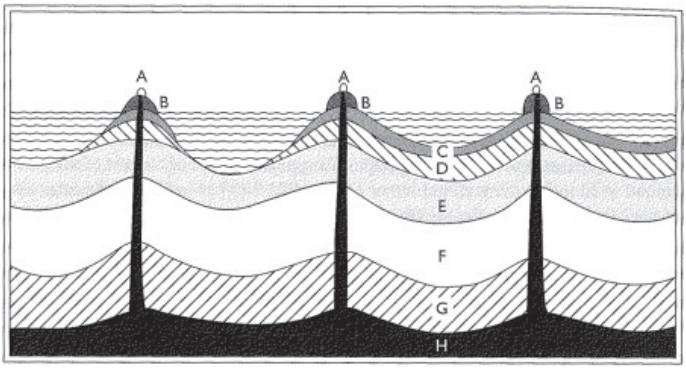

Figure 1. Diagram of the psyche as formulated by Jung.

making enormous contributions to understanding the role of the 'collective' in the psyche. Of course, this is true. But, when it came to understanding the psychopathology and emotional entanglements of groups, tribes, and nations, we maintain that Jung and Jungians have not taken full advantage of Jung's original theory of complexes and this has left a major gap in analytical psychology.

The Jungian attitude to 'the collective'

To understand collective psychology, Jung had an uncanny knack of going straight to the archetypal level of the psyche – often quite compellingly. For example, in his seminal 1936 essay *Wotan*, Jung warns of the primitive, mercurial god of lightning and destruction that was seizing the German psyche (Jung, 1936). But, by leaving the social, economic, and political level of the German psychological experience out of his analysis in *Wotan*, Jung opened himself up to profound misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Had he included a more careful analysis of the historical and cultural aspects of the German experience and perhaps been able to frame it in terms of the activation of a cultural complex in the German psyche, he may not have been subject to the accusations of anti-Semitism and intoxication with *Wotan* that naturally attached itself to him and his essay.

In the Jungian tradition, the theory of the complex with its archetypal core has been the foundation for understanding and analyzing individuals. But, when it has come to understanding and analyzing broader collective experience, analytical psychologists have relied on the theory of archetypes. Archetypal possession of the collective psyche is an all too real and dangerous psychic phenomenon, but there are a host of potent group phenomena (that seize the individual as well) that may be more fruitfully and accurately explored by thinking first in terms of cultural complexes and then perhaps moving to the archetypal level. This may also help avoid our tendency to archetypal reductionism that Jungian interpretations of group phenomena frequently suggest.

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As stated above, Jung was intensely curious about the differences between groups of people and their varying cultures. He was keenly attuned to what we now call the cultural unconscious or the cultural level of the psyche. He traveled to the Americas, to Africa, to Asia and he was constantly exploring the sacred traditions and *mores* of other peoples. Certainly, Jung and his followers have taken careful note of different cultural types which is evident, for example, in Jung's discussion of national personality characteristics (Jung, 1963). On the other hand, Jung was so suspicious of the life of groups and the danger of archetypal possession in collective life that he tended to divorce the development of the individual through the individuation process from the individual's life in groups.

Clearly, a substantial part of Jung's genius was his sensitivity to the perils of the individual's falling into the grips of collective life. Like all who lived through the twentieth century, Jung witnessed the terrible side of collectivity. Beginning with the deadening effect of collective religious life on his father's spirit, Jung went on in October 1913 – just prior to the Great War – to have vivid, anticipatory visions of Europe suffering massive destruction which he later reported as follows: 'I realized that a frightful catastrophe was in progress, towns and people were destroyed, and the wrecks and dead bodies were tossing about on the water. Then the whole sea turned to blood' (Jung, 1989). In the later part of his life, he shared in the nightmare horror of imagining nuclear holocaust. It is easy to see why Jung had such a dread of the individual and group psyche falling into possession by collective and archetypal forces.

For these very good reasons, collective life more often than not has fallen into the Jungian shadow – so much so that it is easy to feel within the Jungian tradition as if the life of the group and the individual's participation in it exists in a no man's land, suspended in the ether somewhere between the much more important and meaningful individual and/or archetypal realms. This tendency for collective life to fall into the Jungian shadow has done a great disservice to the tradition of analytical psychology and its potential to contribute to a better understanding of group forces in the psyche.

Jung's natural introversion (and his appeal to other introverts) and his fundamental focus on individuation had an unacknowledged tendency to set the individual up against or in opposition to the life of the group. In the Jungian tradition (as in the more general Western tradition), the individual has been given the heroic task of slaying the group's devouring hold on him or her. Individuation and wholehearted participation in the life of the group do not fit together easily or naturally. There is something in the tension between the individual and the group that is wholesome and natural, but the Jungian tradition has magnified that tension beyond perhaps what is healthy for either the individual or the group. Maybe this is, in fact, a 'cultural complex' of the Jungian tradition. Whether that is true or not, it is our hope that the notion of a 'cultural complex' will lead to an enhanced capacity to see the shadow of the group in its cultural complexes more objectively, rather than the Jungian tendency to see the group itself as the shadow.

We may even begin to become more aware of the positive value of living in the 'collective.' We may also begin to get better at differentiating cultural complexes from individual complexes. The point I want to make here, however, is that, although Jung and the analytical psychologists he trained spoke at length about the nature of the collective psyche, including discussions of different national, ethnic, and religious char-

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acteristics, Jung's theory of complexes was never systematically extended beyond its fundamental relevance in the development of individual psychology to include its application to group life or the study of how complexes shape collective experience. Complexes clustered around archetypal cores have been at the heart of our understanding of the individual psyche but only peripheral to our study of the collective psyche. A Jungian psychology of group complexes as distinct from, independent of, and yet interrelated with, personal complexes has not been elaborated. For this reason, our psychology has tended to collapse group experience between the archetypal and personal poles.

Joseph Henderson's theory of the cultural unconscious

Just as a level of group or cultural complexes was more implicit than explicit in Jung's psychology, so, too, the level of a cultural unconscious was more implicit than explicit in Jung's model of the psyche until Joseph Henderson really pointed to its separate sphere of influence. In his paper on 'The Cultural Unconscious' Henderson (1990) defined the cultural unconscious as:

> . . . an area of historical memory that lies between the collective unconscious and the manifest pattern of the culture. It may include both these modalities, conscious and unconscious, but it has some kind of identity arising from the archetypes of the collective unconscious, which assists in the formation of myth and ritual and also promotes the process of development in individuals.

Over a period of several decades, Joseph Henderson introduced the notion of a 'cultural level' of the psyche that he called 'the cultural unconscious.' He posited this realm as existing between the personal and collective unconscious. He further elaborated this idea in his book *Cultural Attitudes in Psychological Perspective* (Henderson, 1984). To many Jungians, Henderson's work opened the theoretical door on that vast realm of human experience which inhabits the psychic space between our most personal and our most archetypal levels of being in the world. Henderson's elaboration of the cultural level of the psyche has made greater space for the outer world of group life to find a home in the inner Jungian world and allowed those immersed in the Jungian inner world to recognize more fully the deep value the psyche actually accords to the outer world of collective cultural experience. However, the potential role of Jung's complex theory remained undeveloped in Henderson's discussions of the cultural unconscious. Extending Jung's theory of complexes into the territory of the 'cultural level of the psyche,' as first described by Joseph Henderson, is the work that Sam Kimbles and I have been addressing. We feel that it helps to specify how the cultural unconscious impinges on the psyche of individuals and groups through the development, transmission, and manifestation of cultural complexes (Singer and Kimbles, 2004).

The theory of cultural complexes: Jung's theory of complexes and Henderson's theory of the cultural unconscious

It is time to assemble the building blocks of Jung's theory of 'complexes' with Henderson's theory of the 'cultural unconscious' and make the 'cultural complex' addition to the ramshackle theoretical framework of analytical psychology. As personal complexes emerge out of the level of the personal unconscious in its interaction with deeper levels of the psyche, cultural complexes can be thought of as arising out of the cultural unconscious in its interaction with both the archetypal and personal realms of the psyche and with the broader outer world

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arena of schools, work and religious communities, media, and all the other forms of group life.

Characteristics of cultural complexes

Personal complexes and cultural complexes are not the same, although they can get all mixed up with one another. We suggest that personal and cultural complexes share the following characteristics.

- They express themselves in powerful moods and repetitive behaviors. Highly charged emotional or affective reactivity is their calling card.
- They resist our most heroic efforts at consciousness and remain, for the most part, unconscious.
- They accumulate experiences that validate their point of view and create a storehouse of self-affirming, ancestral memories.
- Personal and cultural complexes function in an involuntary, autonomous fashion and tend to affirm a simplistic point of view that replaces more everyday ambiguity and uncertainty with fixed, often self-righteous attitudes to the world.
- In addition, personal and cultural complexes both have archetypal cores; that is, they express typically human attitudes and are rooted in primordial ideas about what is meaningful, making them very hard to resist, reflect upon, and discriminate.

Attending to the personal, cultural, and archetypal levels of complexes requires respect for each of these realms without condensing or telescoping one into the other, as if one realm were more real, true, or fundamental than another. Cultural complexes are based on repetitive, historical experiences that have taken root in the collective psyche of a group and in the psyches of the individual members of a group, and they express archetypal values for the group. As such, cultural complexes can be thought of as the fundamental building blocks of an inner sociology. But this inner sociology does not claim to be objective or scientific in its description of different groups and classes of people. Rather, it is a description of groups and classes of people as filtered through the psyches of generations of ancestors. It contains an abundance of information and misinformation about the structures of societies – a truly, inner sociology – and its essential components are cultural complexes.

Cultural complexes/cultural identity/ national character

It is important to understand that 'cultural complexes' are not the same as either 'cultural identity' and/or what Jung called 'national character,' although there are times when cultural complexes, cultural identity, and national character can seem impossibly intertwined. For instance, those groups emerging out of long periods of oppression through political and economic struggle must define new identities for themselves which are often based on long-submerged traditions. This struggle for a new, group identity can get all mixed up with underlying potent cultural complexes which have accrued experience and memory over centuries of trauma and lie slumbering in the cultural unconscious, waiting to be awakened by the trigger of new trauma. In the fierce and legitimate protest for a group identity freed up from the shackles of oppression, it is very easy for groups and individuals within the groups to get caught up in cultural complexes. And for some people, their complexes – cultural and personal – are their identity. But, for many others, there is a healthy cultural identity (or 'cultural ego') that can clearly be seen as separate from the more negative and contaminating aspects of

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cultural complexes. Jung was getting at the idea of a cultural identity in his discussion of national character, but that notion took an ugly and controversial turn when the discussion of national character got confused with the controversy around Jung and anti-Semitism. One can see Jung struggling with this controversy in his March 2, 1934 letter to A. Pupato:

> The question I broached regarding the peculiarities of Jewish psychology does not presuppose any intention on my part to depreciate Jews, but is merely an attempt to single out and formulate the mental idiosyncrasies that distinguish Jews from other people. No sensible person will deny that such differences exist, any more than he will deny that there are essential differences in the mental attitude of Germans and Frenchmen . . . Again, nobody with any experience of the world will deny that the psychology of an American differs in a characteristic and unmistakable way from that of an Englishman. To point out this difference cannot possibly, in my humble opinion, be in itself an insult to the Jews so long as one refrains from value judgments. If anyone seeking to pin down my peculiarities should remark that this or that is specifically Swiss, or peasant-like, or Christian, I just wouldn't know what I should get peeved about, and I would be able to admit such differences without turning a hair. I have never understood why, for instance, a Chinese should be insulted when a European asserts that the Chinese mentality differs from the European mentality . . . (Maidenbaum, 2003)

In this letter, Jung's rather hurt tone and his feeling of being misunderstood suggests that the topic of national character itself became contaminated by the swirling emotionalism activated by a cultural complex. These same cultural complexes can lead to fascism, racism, and all of the other horrors committed in the name of perceived differences between groups of peoples. So, it is important in defining cultural complexes to differentiate them from cultural identity and national character.

The bipolarity of cultural complexes

Another way to make this most important distinction between cultural complex and cultural identity and/or national character is to use the idea of the 'bipolar complex' that John Perry introduced in his seminal paper on complexes in the individual psyche (Perry, 1970). Perry spoke of the everyday ego as being quite different from the ego which has been taken over by a complex. When a complex is activated in the unconscious (for instance, rebellious son and authoritarian father), one-half of its bipolar content with its potent affect and one-sided perceptions of the world takes hold of the everyday ego and creates what Perry called 'the affect-ego.' The other part of the bipolar pair is projected out onto the person with whom one is caught in the complex and they, in turn, become what Perry labeled an 'affect-object.' Hence, you get the ragged and highly charged interactions between an 'affect-ego' and an 'affect-object.' Neither party in this unholy pair usually fares very well. This same notion of 'affect-ego' and 'affect-object' can be carried over into our discussion of cultural complexes to help make the distinction between cultural identity and cultural complex clearer. An individual or group with a unique cultural identity that is not in the grips of a cultural complex is much freer to interact in the world of people from other groups without being prey to the highly charged emotional contents that can quickly alter the perception and behavior of different groups in relation to one another. Once the cultural complex is activated in an individual or a group, however, the everyday cultural identity can be overtaken by the affect of the cultural complex. At that point, the individual and/or the group has entered the territory of what Perry called 'affect-ego' and 'affect-object' – but at the level of the cultural complex rather than personal complex.

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PART TWO: AN EXAMPLE OF A CULTURAL COMPLEX

Archetypes, cultural complexes, and riverbeds

In *Wotan*, Jung's 1936 essay about Nazi Germany, he wrote:

> Archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which it can find again at any time. An archetype is like an old watercourse along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flowed in this channel the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its old bed. The life of the individual as a member of society and particularly as part of the State may be regulated like a canal, but the life of nations is a great rushing river which is utterly beyond human control . . . Thus the life of nations rolls on unchecked, without guidance, unconscious of where it is going, like a rock crashing down the side of a hill, until it is stopped by an obstacle stronger than itself. Political events move from one impasse to the next, like a torrent caught in gullies, creeks and marshes. All human control comes to an end when the individual is caught up in a mass movement. Then the archetypes begin to function, as happens also in the lives of individuals when they are confronted with situations that cannot be dealt with in any of the familiar ways. (Jung, 1936/1970)

Clearly, what Jung wrote in 1936 resonates with our current crisis between Islam and the West. The ancient, archetypal riverbed of rivalrous conflicts between Christians, Jews, and Muslims is once again overflowing with a rushing torrent that threatens to flood the world. This is at the archetypal level. Can we say something about this same situation from the perspective of the notion of a 'cultural complex?'

Cultural complexes can have very long histories, very long memories, and very powerful emotions embedded in them. Cultural complexes can both enshrine and encrust themselves in the consciousness and unconscious of groups of people and they can intertwine themselves with the cultural complexes of other groups of peoples. Indeed, these intertwining and affect-laden energies of conflicting unconscious cultural complexes can form the pre-conditions for human events to unfold with a fury that can be likened to the natural forces portrayed in a movie of a few years ago called *The Perfect Storm* – when all of the climatic conditions off the eastern seaboard of the United States were uniquely positioned to come together and cause a storm of huge proportions. It is no stretch of the geopolitical, psychological, and spiritual imagination to say that we are living in a time when a rare configuration of swirling cultural complexes have been aligning in just the right combination to unleash massive destructive forces.

The best way to know that one is touching a cultural complex – in either a group or an individual – is by the emotional reactivity that certain topics automatically trigger. Of course, this is how Jung first came to identify personal complexes – the emotional reactivity of a trigger word caused a significant delay in a timed response. And, today, exactly the same thing can be said about a 'cultural complex.' A hallmark of a cultural complex is the emotional reactivity of trigger words, such as 'George Bush' or 'Osama bin Laden' or 'war on terror' or 'holy jihad' or 'colonial empire.' I suspect that just about every reader has definite opinions and potent affects about these particular trigger words. I might venture to say that at least some of those strong opinions and potent affects belong to 'cultural complexes.'

In writing this paper, I debated a lot with myself about whether I wanted to risk stepping on the emotional land mines of the virulent cultural complexes currently seizing Islam and the West. Is it possible to have an objective dialogue about the war in Iraq, the war on terror or 9/11? Can we begin a psychological discussion about the conflict between the West and Islam by using the

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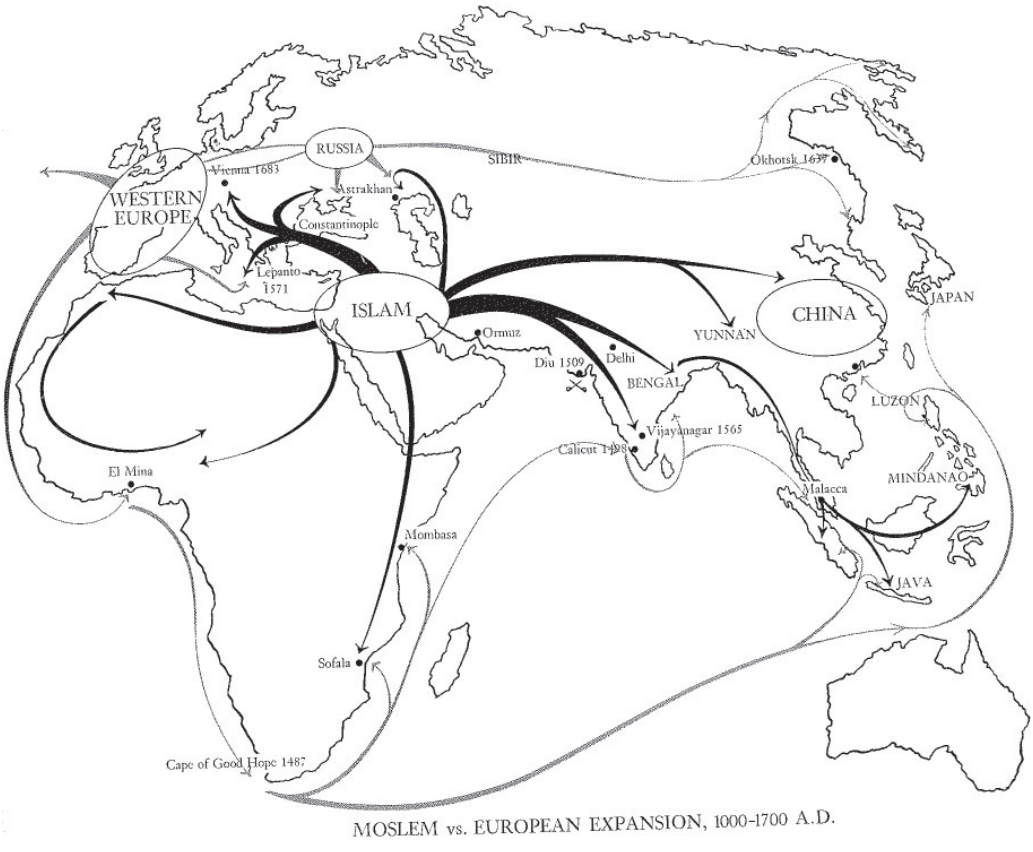

Figure 2. Muslim vs. European expansion, 1000–1700 AD. From *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community,* by McNeill W. University of Chicago Press, 1963. Reprinted with permission.

concept of the 'cultural complex' as a vehicle for exploring the powerful affects, dogmatic ideas, and violent actions that are taking hold of people around the world? Is it possible to evoke something of the swirling forces at play at the level of the cultural unconscious in such a way as to shed light rather than just heat on the topic?

1492

In the course of my thinking about Islam and the West in preparation for a talk at the 2004 International Jungian Congress in Barcelona, a very specific date in Spanish and world history sprang to mind – a date that can simultaneously be seen as the middle, the end, and the beginning of several interconnecting cultural complexes that we are currently in the grips of. This is not just a historical date – rather it should be thought of as locating in time and space a real embodiment of several profound symbolic movements in the collective psyche that have taken shape in the form of cultural complexes (McNeill, 1963) (Figure 2).

1492 marks the expulsion of the Moors *and* the Jews from Spain and the end of the Islamic presence and dominance in this part of Europe. 1492 also marks the discovery of America by Spanish ships under Christopher Columbus (although this date does not stand out as a landmark of either discovery or celebration in the cultural consciousness or cultural complexes of contemporary American Indians).

What fascinates me about this map is that 1492 can also be seen as a watershed date

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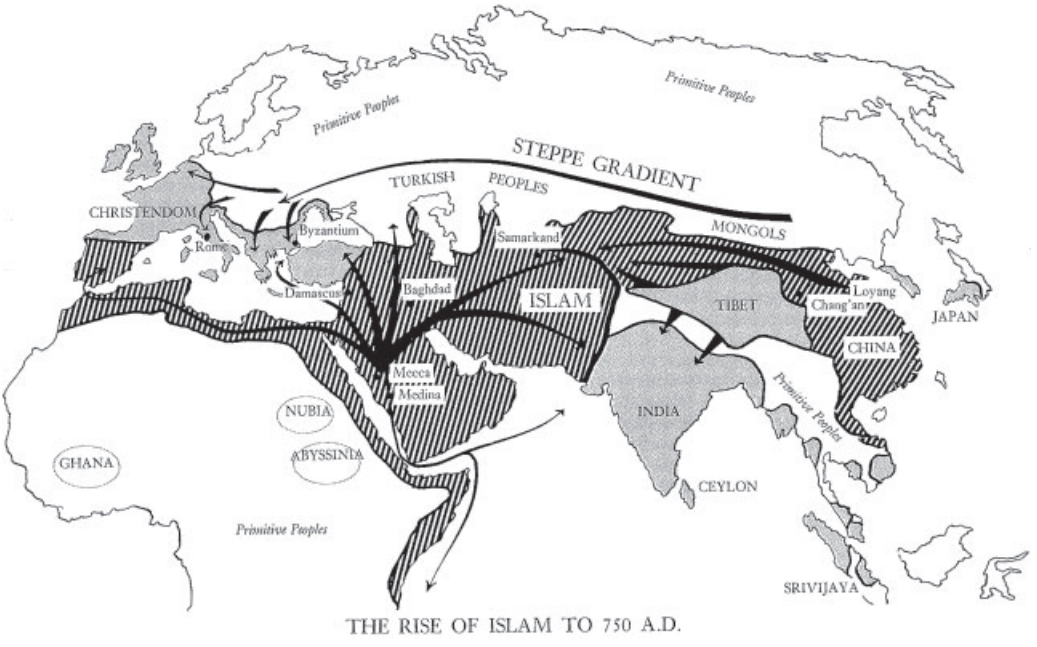

Figure 3. The rise of Islam to 750 AD. From *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community,* by McNeill W. University of Chicago Press, 1963. Reprinted with permission.

that marks both the beginning of rise of the West and the beginning of the decline of Islam – a parallel and contrary movement which has been going on for at least the past 500 years and the swirling affects and effects of which threaten to engulf us today. The bipolarity of this movement is obvious, compelling, and quite characteristic of how cultural complexes work; that is, of how two groups get caught in the conflicting, opposite, and spiraling movements of cultural complexes. If one looks at the geography of the unfolding of these conflicting cultural complexes, it is clear that Islam expanded mostly by land and the West leapfrogged around the world by sea. In taking the sea route, the West encircled the globe. In taking the land route, Islam seemed to be landlocked and outflanked. Looking at what we might think of as 'cultural complex weather maps' of the West and Islam, first the one from 1492 and then comparing it to one from some 750 AD – some 750 years earlier – (Figure 3) one can observe Islam's initial spread by land to dominance of the known world. Islam's rise was lightning quick, just about total and marked almost exclusively by uninterrupted triumph. But, by 1492 that movement had begun to reverse itself as the Islamic world began to shrink, a process that continued for the next several centuries. Now, some 500 years later – in our current era – the tide may be shifting once again. I do not want to be understood as equating the origin of cultural complexes with the geographical expansion and contraction of civilizations, but one can see 1492 as being a critical date for the beginning of the rise of the West and the beginning of the decline of Islam, and it is worth noting that the coincident interlocking of date and place did help shape the ripe conditions for the genesis of potent cultural complexes.

The cultural complexes of Islam and the West

To say that the rise of the West is at the core of one cultural complex and that

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Islam is at the core of another is, of course, a gross oversimplification. For instance, there are multiple local and regional complexes that get caught up in these mega-cultural complexes. In the West, for instance, old French, German, English, and American rivalries and hatreds have been stirred up, just as in the Islamic world, Sunni, Shiite, Kurdish, and other tribal feuds have been activated – and all of these cultural complexes – Western and Islamic – have been thrown together to form the conditions for a global 'perfect storm' of colliding cultural complexes.

But, if we take 1492 as a turning point in defining the history of Islam and the history of the West and in giving rise to two very different kinds of cultural complexes, we can begin to sketch – only in the broadest of strokes because of space limitations – some of the characteristics of these cultural complexes.

On one hand, 1492 marks the beginning of the ascendancy of the New World with its 'discovery' of the Americas. In addition to the New World providing just the right climate for the creation of a set of remarkable values such as democracy, freedom, and the sanctity of the individual, it has also given rise to a particular type of cultural complex characterized – especially in the United States and its relative 'newness' on the world stage – by:

- addiction to heroic achievement
- addiction to height
- addiction to speed
- addiction to youth, newness, and progress
- addiction to innocence (Gellert, 2001)
- and, most importantly, a profound belief in the resilience of the Western – and especially, the American – group spirit which can easily translate itself into arrogance and grandiosity.

On the other hand, 1492 also marks the beginning of the retreat of Islam from the West – and a long steady decline for the past 500 years of Islam's ability to take creative initiative in the intellectual, economic, and social realms. This decline in Islamic power and influence has led to a cultural complex in the Islamic world and especially in its groups of radical fundamentalists that can be characterized by adherence to:

- purity
- absolutism
- tradition
- incorruptibility.

These first four characteristics of the cultural complex of Islamic fundamentalism are rather perfectly mirrored in their bipolar opposite, that is, the cultural complex of Christian fundamentalism in the United States. The next two features I want to highlight are more unique to the cultural complex of Islamic fundamentalism.

- Renunciation of materialism (as so awesomely symbolized and concretized by turning America's addiction to speed, height, and material success against itself in the attack on the World Trade Center).
- And, most importantly, a profound wound at the center of its group spirit that has given rise to despair and suicidal self-destructiveness. Repeated humiliation is at the heart of much of the Arab world's experience of itself and the fear of and rage at humiliation constitutes a most dangerous core symptom of the Islamic cultural complex. (For instance, Saddam Hussein's fall from power is seen by much of the Arab world as another Arab humiliation at the hands of the West rather than the collapse of a ruthless tyrant.)

If you mix all of these ingredients together, you will see that we have a truly horrific recipe for a witches' brew of cultural com-

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plexes that has mobilized huge energies in the life of nations and at the group level of the psyche in the individual, including most people reading this paper. These aroused cultural complexes can activate what I have described elsewhere as the 'archetypal defenses of the group spirit.'

Archetypal defenses of the group spirit

When a group has been attacked at the core of its being and values – as the United States was on 9/11 – or when a group has been corroded at the core of its being and values – as Islam has been for the past 500 years – I believe that archetypal defenses of the group spirit are mobilized to protect the vulnerable and injured group spirit, much in the same way that Donald Kalsched has postulated happens to the personal spirit of the traumatized individual (Kalsched, 1996). These archetypal or *daimonic* defenses are ferocious and inhuman. The daemonic defenses often direct their primitive aggression back onto the wounded spirit of the group as evidenced in the self-mockery and self-denigration entrenched in the humor and self-perception of any number of oppressed, minority groups. But, just as often, these same daimonic archetypal defenses of the group spirit can turn their savage aggression out onto whomever or whatever appears to be a threat to the spirit, basic value, or identity of the group. I see this response as automatic, reflexive, and in some ways the most natural way for the group psyche in the grips of a cultural complex to react. Those individuals who become the human embodiments of the 'archetypal defenses of the group spirit' can torture people in prison. They can behead people. They can blow themselves and others up without regard to their own personal being or those who happen to be in their path. As defensive agents of a wounded group spirit, they are not constrained by normal human values or concerns. They are truly impersonal representatives of the group and its wounded spirit.

Considering the rise of radical Islamism in terms of the model of the archetypal defenses of the group spirit that I am proposing, Islamism and its terrorist agenda can be understood as an expression of this defensive pattern in an activated cultural complex. From this point of view, Bin Laden and the Mujahideen are *Daimones* – human but terrifyingly impersonal incarnations of archetypal defenses of the collective spirit. Their Islamist dream of creating a new 'caliphate' can be interpreted as a geographic projection of a wish to restore a wounded, collective Muslim spirit through the creation of an empire that transcends national boundaries – perhaps in their mind's eye looking a bit like the map of the Islamic world in 750 AD. The traumatized collective spirit of the Muslim world suffered centuries of humiliation at the hands of a rapidly expanding Western civilization that captured the scientific, technological, and materialistic initiative that once belonged to the Muslim world. But, by the most ironic of historical twists, the Muslim world – deeply wounded in its collective self-image – ended up with the richest share of the world's oil that is the current fuel for the materialistic advances of Western civilization. This is a perfect example of how cultural complexes beget cultural complexes.

The axis of evil

Bin Laden and the al-Qaeda conceive themselves to be the avenging angels of the deeply and long traumatized spirit of the Muslim world – the specific trigger of their current vengeance apparently being the fact that infidel American troops remained in the holy lands of Saudi Arabia after the first Gulf War in 1991. The possession of one group by a cultural complex can automati-

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cally trigger its bipolar, reciprocal opposite in its rival, and so Islamist fundamentalists and their Western counterparts have been on a nightmarish merry-go-round. It is no accident that George Bush made a slip of the cultural unconscious when he first referred to a 'crusade' as the American response to the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings. Bush's slip was reflexive and automatic; it was backed up by a centuries-old memory. A crusade is our cultural complex's answer to a holy jihad.

For many in the West then, the Islamic fundamentalist terrorists have become the Daimones – what Bush calls 'the evil-doers.' Bush painted a dramatic picture of these 'evil-doers' literally linked together in a global 'axis of evil' that includes Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Simultaneously, for much of the Muslim world and many in the Western world as well, George Bush – like Bin Laden, self-appointed in his role – has also become an arch *Daimone*. And, it is precisely at this intersection – where the Daimones or archetypal defenses of the spirit of one group's cultural complex trigger the Daimones of another group's cultural complex – that I think we can more accurately locate a real 'axis of evil' – be it the daimonic forces of Israel aligned against the daimonic forces of Palestine, or the daimonic forces of Bush aligned against the daimonic forces of Osama bin Laden. These negative alignments truly form an axis in the sense that a direct line or connection is drawn between the Daimones of one group, protecting their sacred center, and the Daimones of a rival group, protecting their sacred center. Such negative alignments or axes create the conditions for the eruption of violence and wholesale destruction. Through the linking of the daimonic defenses in one group with the daimonic defenses of another, the cultural unconscious in multiple groups becomes ripe for the wholesale emergence of evil. Out of such potent negative alignments springs an 'axis of evil' that is founded on the archetypal defense patterns of interlocking cultural complexes – for instance, of fundamental Islamism, of fundamental Christianity, and of fundamental Judaism.

As we see from the radical Islamist movement and the response of the West to it, (or, taken from the point of view of Islam, from the rise of the West and the Islamist response to it) cultural complexes that trigger archetypal defenses of the group spirit tend to have long, repetitive histories. In terms of intergroup conflict, Christians, Jews, and Moslems have been at it for 1200–2000 years. Blacks and Whites in America have been at it for over 300 years. Freudians and Jungians have been at it for almost 100 years. What makes the complexes that drive these conflicts so potent is that they take on a life of their own, not only in the group's response to attacks on its collective spirit, but also in the way that these complexes seem to take up permanent residence at the cultural level of the psyche in the individual members of their respective groups.

CONCLUSION

We hold up strange mirrors to ourselves and to one another when we start to explore cultural complexes as part of our individual and our group development. Our cultural complexes get all mixed up not only with our personal history and complexes but with other cultural complexes as well. If we do not sort through our cultural as well as personal complexes carefully, we end up – at a minimum in the unconscious – feeling responsible for, identified with, or traumatized by events that belong to our cultural complexes far more than our personal complexes. Failure to consider cultural complexes as part of the work of individuation puts a tremendous burden on both the per-

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sonal and archetypal realms of the psyche. Tremendous psychic energy in the individual and in the group can be bound up in unconscious cultural complexes and the inter- and intra-group conflicts that are their natural expression.

Conceptualizing intractable group conflicts (even those as large in scale as Islam and the West) in terms of cultural complexes allows us to make use of our 100-year experience with complex theory. Most modestly, we have learned from our work with personal complexes that there is no quick fix or easy resolution to complexes; we are knowledgeable about the accumulation of stereotypical memory and behavior that accrues around any complex; and we are prepared for the seemingly endless autonomy and vexing unconsciousness of complexes. In speaking of the resolution of personal complexes, Jung warned, 'A complex can be really overcome only if it is lived out to the full. In other words, if we are to develop further we have to draw to us and drink down to the very dregs what, because of our complexes, we have held at a distance' (Jung, 1954/1959). Applying that same wisdom to cultural complexes, we certainly have had recent experience in the Balkans, in the Middle East, and in any number of 'hot spots' around the world about the need to drink 'down to the very dregs' our cultural complexes. Formulating these phenomena in terms of cultural complexes is thus a heavy prescription, rather than a panacea; but it also allows us to appreciate and make more room for a level in the individual's psyche that belongs neither to personal experience nor to the archetypal depths and permits us a way to work toward deeper understanding of the role of cultural complexes in structuring the psychological responses of individuals and groups in the face of particular conflicts.

Even more importantly in my mind, the theory of cultural complexes and their archetypal defenses of the group spirit suggest that Jung was not entirely correct when he said, 'nowadays particularly, the world hangs by a thin thread, and that thread is the psyche of man' (McGuire and Hull, 1977). An important piece was left out of that otherwise remarkable – one might even say – primal insight. The fate of the world does not in fact hinge on the thread of the individual psyche. Rather, the emergence of a theory of cultural complexes suggests that an understanding of the individual psyche through its consciousness will not be enough. The group itself will need to develop a consciousness of its cultural complexes. Perhaps each injured culture – be it Balkan, American, Black, White, Palestinian, Israeli, Iraqi, Catholic, Jewish, Jungian, Freudian, Men, Women (the list is endless once you begin to think in terms of cultural complexes) – needs to learn how to drink to the dregs its own complexes, as well as those of its neighbors, allies, and enemies. To settle down the archetypal defenses of the group spirit, the collective psyche itself and its often traumatized, sometimes immature or stunted, spirit needs to individuate – and this is not the work of an individual alone or of analysis alone.

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