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On the Hazards of Being a Stranger to Oneself*

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ABSTRACT *This paper traces out the socio-political consequences of self-ignorance and self-deception. These consequences were clearly recognized more than 2,000 years ago by early Greek philosophers, in part along the lines of 'a conceit of wisdom'. The consequences were more recently spelled out in striking ways by Carl Jung in his psychoanalytic analyses of 'mass-minded man' who, through self-ignorance and self-deception, wreaks havoc and cruelty on others. The paper also points up the challenge of attaining self-knowledge and possible paths to its attainment that bolster or augment classic psychotherapeutic approaches. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

Key words: 'know thyself', ignorance, stranger, shadow, mass-minded man, psychic epidemics, the 'blindly convinced'

I: THREE PERSONAL MODES OF THE STRANGER

We come into the world as strangers. By being attentive to and learning the ways of the world, especially the ways of creatures like ourselves, we make our way knowledgeably, efficiently, and effectively within it. Such a successful apprenticeship depends on our being attentive to our bodies, learning their animate possibilities and limitations, building on and expanding the dynamics of our kinaesthetically-felt bodies. In engaging in more and more complex ways with the everyday world, we correlatively expand the horizons of our awareness and transform the initial strangeness of the world into an everyday familiarity. The everyday world thereby becomes a relatively safe and predictable haven, but one not inimical to strangeness. Indeed, what we come to know individually as the familiar everyday world is not the limit of the world. By the same token, what we come to know individually as our familiar everyday selves is not the limit of ourselves, at least not if we are open to the challenge of examining what Jung called our shadow side or 'undiscovered self' – of which more presently.

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We come into the world as strangers. Western bible-based religions exalt this fact, although in a notably different way. Their attention is riveted not on the developmental phenomenon known as human ontogeny but on a heavenly God and on fidelity to that God. From their perspective, we are strangers here on earth who will find our real home only in heaven, in God's domain. Our status as strangers is thus mitigated if not alleviated by religious allegiance and practice. So also may be the fearful pangs of death that afflict us as earthlings. Specific deistic fidelity is required, however, insofar as each religion has its own god, its own theology or ideology of god, and its own way of providing support to its followers in the way of salvation, of eternal life, or of being God's chosen people. Given our vulnerable status as strangers here on earth together with the knowledge and fear of our ultimate death, religions may indeed be conceived as Jung in a totally non-critical way conceived them: 'psychotherapeutic systems in the truest sense of the word, and on the grandest scale' (Jung, 1970, 172).[1] They assuage our earthly fears, most prominently our fear of death, not by cultivating familiarity with the world, but by making the unknown palatable as it were, that is, by cultivating hope and the promise of a better life to come or by elevating us in status with respect to others.

Both the ontogenetic stranger and the theological stranger warrant consideration, and not only as separate formulations with essential differences that distinguish them, but conjointly in terms of certain conceptual affinities. The prenatal womb of the one, for example, is conceptually akin to the postmortal heaven of the other; a blissful paradise obtains at either end. Similarly the protecting, nurturing mother of the one is conceptually akin to the protecting, nurturing Father of the other; a parental figure watches over one in each instance, safeguarding one's life. One might say in view of these affinities that theology recapitulates ontogeny. A third personal mode of the stranger, however, warrants more pressing consideration, not least because it is commonly overlooked. That it is commonly overlooked is ironic because this stranger affects us profoundly, penetrating to the core of both our individual and socio-political lives. This stranger is the psychological stranger that Jung identifies as the shadow. We come into the world as strangers to this stranger and many of us go out of the world as strangers to this stranger as well – strangers in the psychological sense of being deficient in self-knowledge. In our typically busy relationship to the world, we leave *self*-knowledge largely out of the equation. Our eyes and ears are typically focused outward and while we make and have made the world familiar, we remain a stranger to ourselves. In a word, we are knowers of the world but remain opaque to the knower.

The irony of our self-opacity is compounded when viewed in the light of the historical significance and priority of self-knowledge in Western thought. 'Know thyself' is not just a well-known marker of Western civilization anchored in ancient Greek thought, but a highly esteemed marker. Socrates epitomized the dictum in his own life and emphasized its fundamental import in many ways in many dialogues. Speaking to Phaedrus, for example, he states, 'I must first know myself, as the Delphian inscription says; to be curious about that which is not my concern, while I am still in ignorance of my own self, would be ridiculous' (*Phaedrus* 230). To Protarchus, he points out that ignorance of the self is evident

1. Jung (1970) adds that religions 'express the whole range of the psychic problem in mighty images; they are the avowal and recognition of the soul, and at the same time the revelation of the soul's nature.'

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in three domains: wealth, beauty, and wisdom. He specifies each domain in turn in the following words: 'the ignorant [person] may fancy himself richer than he is … [a]nd still more often he will fancy that he is taller or fairer than he is, or that he has some other advantage of person which he really has not … [a]nd yet surely by far the greatest number [of people] err about the goods of the mind; they imagine themselves to be much better men than they are' (*Philebus* 48–9).

In such passages, Socrates adumbrated what Jung more than 2,000 years later described as the shadow side of the human psyche. Indeed, in the Charmides, Socrates speaks of an *unconscious* disposition to dissemble with respect to actual knowledge. In answer to a criticism of Critias, he first asks, 'How can you think that I have any other motive in refuting you but what I should have in examining into myself?' and then specifies his motive as 'a fear of my unconsciously fancying that I knew something of which I was ignorant.' Moreover he goes on to broaden the human significance of self-knowledge, asking whether 'the discovery of things *as they truly are*, [is not] a good common to all mankind' (*Charmides* 166; italics added). In effect, he testifies to the socio-political benefits of self-knowledge. Resemblances thus obtain not only between Socrates' notion of the human psyche and Jung's twentieth-century formulation of the human psyche, that is, of the human penchant to 'err about the goods of the mind' but, as we shall see more fully, in their common recognition of the socio-political price of both self-ignorance and self-deception.

When we consult Plato directly, we find further notable resemblances between ancient Greek thought and Jung's psychoanalytic. To imagine oneself a better human being than one actually is, is to take on what the Athenian Stranger in Plato's *Laws* describes as the 'conceit of wisdom' (*Laws IX* 863). The Athenian Stranger – an ironically named character in terms of this article since the Stranger is Plato himself – is the protagonist, the foreign 'Other' who, in dialogue with Clinias, the Cretan, and Megillus, the Spartan, is the conceptual source of knowledge for the formulation of laws that produce what he deems 'the good society' (see Zeitlin 1993 for a detailed analysis of Plato's quest to delineate 'the good society'). To take on the 'conceit of wisdom,' says the Athenian Stranger, is to fall short of the highest virtue: one does not accurately assess one's knowledge but professes to know what one in fact knows not. As he goes on to point out, this form of ignorance can have dire socio-political consequences. In particular, the Athenian Stranger affirms that when 'conceit of wisdom' is 'possessed of power and strength, [it] will be held by the legislator to be the source of great and monstrous crimes' (ibid.). In finer terms, when ignorance is not simple, resulting in only 'lighter offences' but is accompanied by a 'conceit of wisdom,' ignorance doubles (ibid.). When 'doubled ignorance' combines with power and strength, criminal action results. Present-day testimony to the trenchancy of this observation is readily available. We have only to open our eyes to the 'great and monstrous crimes' that are today committed by certain leaders, among whom a certain pre-eminent leader in whom the embodiment of the conceit of wisdom combines with unparalleled power and strength.

That the socio-political consequences of self-ignorance and self-deception were clearly recognized early on in Western civilization, and that the consequences let alone the fact itself of self-ignorance and self-deception have gone virtually unnoticed for more than two thousand years – or if duly noticed in such classic texts as Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Arendt, 1977), have eventuated in essence in no more than pro forma hand-

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wringings rather than in intense investigations into the nature of human nature – is a sharp and telling comment on *Homo sapiens sapiens*. In finer terms, that 'know-thyself' is today nothing more than a sweet and sentimental idea, paling before such putatively more critical present-day concerns as self-esteem and self-image, is surely testimony to the staunchly obdurate self-opacity of *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Clearly, self-knowledge affects not just one's individual life but the larger socio-political arena in which one lives one's life. This basic fact of human life warrants attention in itself. But it furthermore warrants investigations into the nature of human nature, and in light of insights gained into that nature, into educative processes that, as Plato urged, best promote the attainment of 'the good society.' In sum, the third stranger is of critical moment. The hazards of being a stranger to oneself leech out socio-politically in deleterious directions.

II: FURTHER HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS: ON THE WAY TO JUNG'S PSYCHOANALYTIC OF MASS-MINDED MAN

Jung's clinical work and extended delvings into his own psyche taught him that self-knowledge is the key both to an honest and psychologically healthful life and to a fully meaningful and even enriched life. The illness of a patient, he states, 'is not a gratuitous and therefore meaningless burden; it is *his own self*, the "other" whom, from childish laziness or fear, or for some other reason, he was always seeking to exclude from his life' (Jung, 1970, 169–70; italics in original). Commenting more fully at a later point, he affirms: 'We should not try to 'get rid' of a neurosis, but rather to experience what it means, what it has to teach, what its purpose is. We should even learn to be thankful for it, otherwise we pass it by and miss the opportunity of getting to know ourselves as we really are' (Jung, 1970, 170). In short, Jung affirms that what we keep from ourselves as we habitually and egoistically plump ourselves up in one way and another is an obstacle 'to know[ing] ourselves as we really are.'

Jung's analytical words resonate conceptually not only with the 2,000-year-old words of Socrates and Plato but with the 2,000 year-old words of the Buddha, which themselves parallel in precise ways those of Socrates and Plato. For Buddhists generally, self-knowledge is foundational to understanding 'things as they truly are'; it is foundational to wisdom. In his introduction to *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Bhikkhu Bodhi writes that 'The task of insight meditation is to sever our attachments by enabling us to pierce through [the] net of conceptual projections in order to see things as they really are' (Bodhi, 1995, 40). '[T]o see things as they really are' and '[to discover] things as they truly are' are patently coincident with 'knowing ourselves as we really are.' The path in each instance leads to seminal truths about ourselves. These truths are not, of course, all sweetness and light. As the internationally renown Vietnamese monk Thich Nhât Hanh notes, 'Mahayana teachers sometimes identify the Dharma treasure with the good and beautiful … The true face of our essential nature is also the mud–the greed, hatred, ignorance – the suffering and the killing between human beings' (Nhât Hanh, 1985, 28–9). He amplifies this 'other side' of human nature explicitly at a later point when he states–obviously from first-hand experiences of the Vietnamese war–'The bombs, the hunger, the pursuit of wealth and power–these are not separate from your nature' (Nhât Hanh, 1985, 30). Such truths about ourselves naturally take work – and time – to discover. Moreover as long as we are living and awake, the flow of our feelings, thoughts, dispositions, fantasies,

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motivations, images, and so on – everything that structures both our spontaneous movements and gestures and our deliberations and actions – is limitless. Our potential knowledge of the flow is correlatively limitless. Examining the full and multifaceted spectrum of the flow as it arises, noticing what is present and not shrinking from the awareness of what is present – even taking time in the first place to notice what is present – takes courage, energy, perseverance. Perhaps most basically it takes interest, interest in what it is to be human and in the complex density of being human. Self-knowledge is indeed limited only by our individual selves. That Jung considers self-knowledge a lifelong enterprise and that Buddhists similarly consider meditation a lifelong enterprise attests to the fact that, however habitual, individual human experience is inwardly complex and ongoing and what is complex and ongoing inwardly is always open to examination.

Jung's psychoanalytic project is related methodologically as well as conceptually to distinguished ancient Greek philosophers and to Buddhism; that is, it is methodologically akin to the maieutics practised by Socrates and Plato, and to Buddhist meditational practice. It is furthermore akin to phenomenological practice, a practice colloquially described as 'making the familiar strange'. Undoing what phenomenologists term 'constitution' – undoing everyday sense-making through the phenomenological procedure of bracketing and descriptive analysis – goes against the grain insofar as it means unraveling the familiar meanings and values of our lives and tracing them back to their origins. Undoing the process of constitution testifies eloquently to the complexity of the task with which we are faced from the beginning of our lives: making sense of ourselves and the animate and inanimate world about us. From the very beginning we are moved to move. We are naturally inclined to explore and to make sense. We are instinctively motivated to open ourselves toward the world and its wonders. Moreover, smiling comes naturally to us. We are indiscriminate in our openness toward others. Of specific moment here is that, in contrast to our natural curiosity in face of the animate and inanimate world and our spontaneous initial outward openness toward it, the energy and motivation toward self-knowledge comes not from nature directly but from a desire to make transparent the nature of our humanness. In contrast, then, to our spontaneous outward openness toward the world, self-knowledge requires a diligent effort toward *inward* openness. When we unravel ourselves phenomenologically, we open a particular path toward 'the goods of the mind', showing us how, in our sense-makings, we take for granted and assume that we already know, perhaps sometimes even shaping or reshaping experience so that experience fits our comforts as well as our theories. Unraveling ourselves phenomenologically may thus show us that 'the goods of the mind' are at times counterfeit.[2]

With respect to both meditational and phenomenological practice, being present to what is, *as it is*, is challenging. In meditational practice, however, it is not a matter of building down what has been built up, that is, of going against the epistemological grain as in phenomenology. The Buddhist challenge testifies to a different kind of complexity: the complexity not of making sense of ourselves in the process of making sense of the world but the complexity of mind pure and simple, in a worldly unencumbered mode as it were. To

2. It is also notable that verification by others guards against phenomenological omissions, errors, and so on. Phenomenological analyses are indeed not mere idiosyncratic reports about experience but follow a precise methodology through which verification by others is possible.

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begin with, one finds oneself far less in control than one ordinarily thinks oneself to be or even perhaps cares to admit. Serious meditational practice can indeed expose an unbending 'conceit of wisdom'. When we stop filling mind with the stuff of the sensory world and encounter it on its own ground, we find that, left to its own devices, it capriciously brings forth its own objects – feelings, thoughts, images, desires, and so on – zinging here and there wholly on its own and at seeming random. As Buddhist monk Joseph Goldstein succinctly put it, 'The mind wanders' (Goldstein, undated cassette recording, JG215). We find, in effect, that we do not control our minds; we control only what, in light of our thoughts, feelings, fantasies, images, and so on, we actually do–or choose not to do. While we can direct our attention to our breath or some other object as in meditational practice, or to thoughts and feelings with respect to such and such a subject, topic of investigation, or problem in our everyday lives, and certainly find it possible to succeed in concentrating on it, that we do so is not testimony to our power to control our mind; it is testimony only to our potential capacity to concentrate, and in particular, to our success in concentrating in this particular here and now such that we are uninterrupted by other concerns, unimpeded by distractions, and the like. Our potential capacity to concentrate is in fact put to a bare-bones test in meditational practice, for ordinarily, we neither find the mind – *our* mind – so engrossing that we want to attend to it, nor do we ordinarily attend to it in the process of its focusings and wanderings in the first place. We are, indeed, ordinarily strangers to it.

Were a neutral observer – a stranger, if you will – to judge the degree to which humans were strangers to themselves, or in positive terms, self-observant to the end of gaining self-knowledge, he or she would find little indication of a continuing and consolidated interest in the pursuit of self-knowledge, let alone a concern with its value to education. In fact, apart from the general observation that the pursuit of self-interest rather than the pursuit of self-knowledge fuels and has fuelled human life – recognizably so, we might note, in the dominant forms of consumerism and entertainment in today's everyday Western world – the stranger might well judge that twentieth- and twenty-first-century Western humans pursue an aberrant, even thick-headed route to knowledge of themselves. They devote their study to *the brain* as to the Temple at Delphi, exalting the dictum 'know thyself' as if it pertained to neural tissue. The critical judgement would rightly recognize that the ancient call 'know thyself' is a call to the living individual him/herself, hence to serious first-person introspective and reflective labours, a call, in short, to 'thyself' in immediate and direct experience, an experience not of *the brain* but of one's individual human being from start to finish.

III: FROM THE SHADOW TO MASS-MINDED MAN

Jung expressed his view of the shadow trenchantly and succinctly when he wrote, 'One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light but by making the darkness conscious.' He went on to remark, 'The procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular' (Jung, 1983, 265–66). Indeed, when we open to the shadow side of ourselves, we have the possibility of illuminating the darker corners of our humanity and seeing their ever more disastrous socio-political consequences. The consequences do not await us in a distant future but present themselves to us straightforwardly – and relentlessly – in human history and in today's globalized world. They lead us to pose the following questions: What

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is the nature of a being who cannot live in peace with others of its own kind, who is obsessed with power and who has the power in equal measure to create and to destroy, and to destroy not simply his own kind but other kinds as well and indeed the whole earth? More finely, what is the nature of a being who cannot live without killing, not in order that he may eat but in order that others, whether termed the enemy or the devil, the intruder or the insurgent, but singularly epitomized as *the stranger*, are obliterated?

Jung did not write of the stranger but nevertheless gave powerful clues regarding answers to these questions. He did so in terms of the shadow, that is, of the 'undiscovered self' and the need for its discovery. That his insights have not been culled by people in the humanities and human sciences and in turn brought to bear on 'the human condition' and studied as such is initially puzzling. Puzzlement readily fades, however, on recognition of a commonplace but by no means inconsequential fact. The humanities and soft human sciences are notably unlike the hard sciences – physics, chemistry, microbiology, neurology, physiology, metallurgy, astronomy and so on – areas of study in which there is conceptual and practical continuity. In the humanities and soft human sciences – psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, and so on – there is no such continuity, or so little or so short-lived that insights and findings disappear, remembered only as passing moments in the ongoing stream of human thought. In effect, there are no truths in the annals of the humanities and soft human sciences as in the annals of the hard sciences, or at least nothing recognized as truths. For example, there is nothing equivalent to the law of gravity or to factual knowledge of the circulation of the blood. In the hard sciences, one generation not only learns from another but builds upon that learning, weeding out what is not empirically sustainable and building on what is; in the humanities and soft human sciences, there is no such learning, weeding, and building. Studies in the humanities and soft human sciences tend toward fads – fads such as cultural relativism, behaviour modification, critical theory, positivism, and postmodernism. This is not to say there are not fads in the hard sciences – fads in the sense of proposing near absolute answers in the way, for example, that some strands of present-day neuroscience do by segmenting *the brain* into functional modules. All fads aside, when it comes to studying themselves in humanistic and soft human scientific terms and learning from such study, learning in the sense of applying the findings of empirically and phenomenologically carried out investigations, humans seem at a loss. Whatever the findings, life commonly proceeds in its habitual ways; fundamental changes in practice or thought are hardly initiated much less sustained. In effect, neither the human obsession with power nor the human disposition to obliterate the stranger is brought into the light, confronted straightforwardly, and questioned. However noxious, nefarious, or barbarous, age-old patterns of thinking and behaving remain as entrenched as ever.

Yet surely it is time that 'great and monstrous crimes' were tracked down to their psychic motivations, that conceptual and practical continuities began to emerge in the humanities and soft human sciences, and in particular, that the disposition to gloat on power and the dispositional fervour to kill were brought out from their dark corners within the human psyche. Jung's insights into 'the undiscovered self' provide solid grounds for embarking on this challenging task. His conception of the shadow in human affairs might even be formulated as the human law of psychic gravity, or better, the human law of psychic antigravity: 'do not dive into the depths to search the murky psychic waters that constitute your shadow; better to project its contents unwittingly onto others.' In essence, the law

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constitutes an injunction against self-knowledge. The socio-political consequences of obeying the law, of perpetuating self-ignorance and self-deception, are deftly spelled out in the tenth volume of Jung's collected works, a volume containing essays written or presented in lecture form between 1918 and 1959, a period spanning the First and Second World Wars. The title of the volume, *Civilization in Transition*, readily signals a comprehensive vision of humanity as being at a critical crossroad and of having the possibility of moving toward self-knowledge and an enlightened humanity. The essays are described on the inside jacket cover as being concerned with 'the contemporary scene and, in particular, [with] the relation of the individual to society,' but a fitting epigraph of the book might well read, in Jung's own words, that 'for man to regard himself "harmless" is to add "stupidity to iniquity"' (Jung, 1970, 296).

Jung indeed emphasizes over and over the need for self-knowledge in the very real terms of an examination of the psyche in full: not just its conscious contents but its latent feelings and dispositions that lie hidden away in the unconscious, whether repressed or whether forgotten remnants of the past. He terms such feelings and dispositions 'incompatible contents' – contents that are not simply incompatible with social behaviour, with law and morality but incompatible with the individual's notion of him or herself, that is, with the conscious contents that *to his or her mind* make up the whole of his or her life. Clearly, 'incompatible contents' echo just the kinds of ignorance Socrates and Plato identified in their conversations with fellow citizens and foreigners more than 2,000 years ago. That the echo spans 2,000 and more years surely testifies to the fact that self-ignorance and self-deception are not the idiosyncratic tendency and practice of just a few individuals scattered across human history but are rooted in the empirical realities of human nature. Moreover self-ignorant and self-deceptive people do not simply disown disagreeable aspects of themselves. They do indeed project those aspects onto others: it is others who are contemptible, poor, lazy, dishonest, frivolous, aggressive, stupid, and so on.

Avoidance of the shadow is a xenophobic avoidance: the shadow is the instantiation of the stranger *within*. It is odd that, in his identification and analyses of archetypes, Jung did not single out the stranger as an archetypal figure, that is, a figure that, whether within or without, is formally symbolic of a certain kind of person or situation, namely, one that is basically feared or threatening. Indeed, the archetype of the stranger *without* is fundamentally lodged not only in the human psyche but phylogenetically in the nonhuman animal psyche; human and nonhuman animals alike are basically wary of strangers, a wariness explained or explainable in evolutionary terms as adaptive. While gradations of xenophobia exist across the animal kingdom and while both human and nonhuman animals can display an openness toward strangers, a basic apprehension and closure is nevertheless commonly evident, and not only toward those who are unfamiliar, but those who are unlike oneself. Chimpanzees keep their distance from a conspecific whose behaviour changes, who now moves about strangely because afflicted with polio, for example (Goodall, 1971, 221–2). Human apprehension and distancing has a much wider compass, commonly centring on a dissimilarity in language, skin colour, and beliefs, as well as behaviours and so on. The psychoanalytic stranger – the stranger *within* – elicits similar feelings and behaviour: apprehension and distancing are indeed themselves archetypal responses to the archetypal stranger. In addition to apprehension and distancing, however, the stranger within elicits a further reactive response; one not only fears and distances oneself from the psychoanalytic

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stranger but turns a blind eye and deaf ear to any resemblance to the stranger within. As noted earlier, being opinionated, rapacious, dishonest, and unreasonable are characteristic of others, not oneself. The stranger within is indeed, precisely as Jung observes, 'the "other" whom … [one is] always seeking to exclude from [one's] life.'

The problem is that self-ignorant, self-deceptive people are not self-contained modules of stupidity; they jeopardize the very society of which they are a part, and, by extension, the wider world in which their society exists and with which it interacts. Human history substantiates this claim: nations are xenophobic and reactively projective in just the way that individuals are. Though not mentioning xenophobia or projection outright, the noted British writer Julian Barnes, for example, in highlighting the historically distrustful relationship between England and France, writes that 'the fundamental character traits each nation deplores in the other are the same: arrogance, cruelty, and a desire for dominance; selfishness, duplicity, hypocrisy; cowardice and betrayal.' He asks: 'Are these authentically observed defects, or merely a reflection of the viewing country's own faults? Or both at the same time? And are they specifically Anglo-French, or does the catalogue apply to any striving nation-state?' (Barnes, 2007, 6). Without speaking of a lack of self-knowledge, he elaborates further on the Anglo-French relationship, remarking that 'each supposed fact and understanding about our conjoined cross-Channel history has an equal and opposite counter-fact and counter-understanding' (ibid.). 'Both sides,' he says, 'are monocular when it comes to joint history. Each celebrates its victories and ignores its defeats … unless that defeat – like Dunkirk or Waterloo – has something in it which can supply a sustaining myth' (ibid.).

The sustaining myths nations tell themselves – in contemporary times, the sustaining myth that 'progress is being made', for instance, or that 'this nation does not engage in torture' – are an amplified version of the sustaining myths individuals tell themselves and obviously emanate from those myths. Because the myths can reverberate with deadly ferocity, self-knowledge is crucial and the self-knowledge of each individual is crucial. Passages in Jung's essays bring this relationship to the fore vividly and with an unflinching eye. In the Terry Lectures given at Yale University in 1937, he exclaimed:

> Look at all the incredible savagery going on in our so-called civilized world: it all comes from human beings and their mental condition! Look at the devilish engines of destruction! They are invented by completely innocuous gentlemen, reasonable, respectable citizens who are everything we could wish. And when the whole thing blows up and an indescribable hell of devastation is let loose, nobody seems to be responsible. It simply happens, and yet it is all man-made. But since everybody is blindly convinced that he is nothing more than his own extremely unassuming and insignificant conscious self, which performs its duties decently and earns a moderate living, nobody is aware that this whole rationalistically organized conglomeration we call a state of a nation is driven on by a seemingly impersonal but terrifying power which nobody and nothing can check. (Jung, 1970, pp. 231–2)

It is notable that Hannah Arendt's 1977 characterization of Adolph Eichmann in terms of 'the banality of evil' accords perfectly with Jung's more general 1937 characterization of people: 'everybody is blindly convinced that he is nothing more than his own extremely unassuming and insignificant conscious self, which performs its duties decently and earns a modest living.' Indeed, though Jung was speaking implicitly of Germans, it was not just Germans who were 'blindly convinced' but Nazi collaborators resembling in some respect

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Maurice Papon, for instance. In its obituary of Papon of 24 February 2007, *The Economist* begins by noting (p. 99) that, 'Among the ranks of the French civil service, it would be hard to find a more perfect example [of rectitude] … [He carried out] instructions … to the letter and correct form was followed. *Un fonctionnaire*, as the tag went, *est fait pour fonctionner*: the purpose of a bureaucrat is simply to do his job.' The obituary ends in fact by emphasizing the role of *un fonctionnaire*: 'In court, assured as ever, [Papon] played the scapegoat. He felt no remorse, had no regrets. He had done his job.'

The self-opacity of the 'blindly convinced' is reminiscent of the vapidness of Heidegger's '*they*' the 'everybodys' who fail to live authentically, who are cowards to confront their own fears, in particular, the fear of their own death, and are instead consumed in 'idle talk' (Heidegger, 1962). The Jungian-Heideggerian kinship is actually ironic in light of Heidegger's support of, and allegiance to the Nazis, for Heidegger's *they* are precisely those who can and do follow orders unquestioningly to kill others; *they* are simply 'performing their duties decently', doing their job. The self-opacity of the 'blindly convinced' and of the *they* may also be linked directly to the motivations of those who take pleasure in the high excitement and bravado of killing others, who thrive on manly competition. Darwin rightly identified male-male competition as 'the law of battle', an evolutionary fact of male life. He described what we might call enactments of the law in 12 chapters, upwards of 460 pages, detailing the competitive behaviour of males in species across the animal kingdom. What hardly needs saying is that the law has been culturally elaborated in infinitely barbarous and violent ways by humans, notably male humans. What in a phylogenetic sense began as male-male competition in the service of mating has mushroomed into an ever larger cloud that threatens to efface not just humanity, as noted earlier, but the 99 million other species inhabiting this planet and the planet itself. Male-male competition is in fact an overlooked and indeed ignored topic of study (For more on this issue, see Sheets-Johnstone 2003, forthcoming 2008). Its neglect in terms of human history and our present barbarously violent world is indeed astounding. *Real* male-male competition is nowhere on the academic map, let alone on laymen's or politician's lips even though its real-life presence is all about us. It will not do to distract our attention with studies of sperm competition (Birkhead, 2000; Birkhead and Moller, 1998; Parker, 1998; Simmons, 2001). Sperm are, after all, rightly doing their job in a quite laudable biological sense, a sense totally unlike the savagery to which *real* male-male competition is devoted and for which it is culturally honed. Neither should we be distracted by discourses on aggression. Aggression is a cultural euphemism for the essentially biological phenomenon of male-male competition, something akin to *les préciosités* in earlier French literature where authors, rather than speaking of teeth, for example, spoke of 'the furniture of the mouth'. Aggression deflects our attention from the basic evolutionary phenomenon in just such ways. Indeed, those humans who are 'blindly convinced' that they are just doing their job include those whose motivation lies in the pleasure of killing others, in the sheer excitement and bravado of war. To reverse Jung's words, they are adding iniquity to stupidity. If the present scientific surge toward reductionism were really a credible pursuit, then surely the most significant study a geneticist could pursue would be a search for the gene that drives male-male competition and expresses itself culturally in war. If the idea sounds ludicrous, consider the following report concerning the role of hormones in the service of cooperation and trust.

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Following up her summation of primatologist Robert Sussman's book *Man the Hunted* in her extended *Newsweek* article titled 'Beyond stones and bones', science writer Sharon Begley states that 'Being hunted brought evolutionary pressure on our ancestors to cooperate and live in cohesive groups.' She then states that 'more than aggression and warfare', cooperation and living in cohesive groups 'is our evolutionary legacy' (Begley, 2007, 56). Subsequent to this sweepingly bald statement, she goes on to affirm that 'Both genetics and paleoneurology back [up] that [evolutionary] legacy [of cooperation and living in cohesive groups]. A hormone called oxytocin, best-known for inducing labour and lactation in women, also operates in the brain (of both sexes). There, it promotes trust during interactions with other people, and thus the cooperative behaviour that lets groups of people live together for the common good' (Begley, 2007, 56–7). If such a claim were true, why is not the hormone oxytocin made available and clinically administered worldwide? To affirm that a hormone promotes trust is in reality an outlandish and irresponsible claim, let alone piece of journalism. Were it plausible, it follows that if a hormone can promote cooperation and trust, then surely a hormone can promote male-male competition and war. Again, if this were so, then surely the hormonal treatment of male-male competition in the cultural service of war should receive immediate medical attention and be treated accordingly.

In sum, nothing can compete with self-knowledge. But clearly, nothing either can compete with the challenge of attaining self-knowledge. Ignoring the challenge, however, comes at a socio-political-ecological price. Mass-minded man is a menace precisely because of his ignorance. He has never looked within. He has never made the effort to know himself as he truly his. His 'conceit of wisdom' protects him from exploring 'the goods of his mind,' which, if exposed to the light, would show him to be at times unfair, hypocritical, fearful, stubborn, vindictive, deceptive, haughty, full of vengeance, and more. Mass-minded man produces what Jung terms 'psychic epidemics' (Jung, 1970), a term that exquisitely captures the real-life affective import and social infectiousness of mass political movements. The following quotations from Jung are eloquent testimonials to the insights and truths that a soft human science can offer, insights and truths that surely stand as beacons of light from the past that illuminate the present.

In 1916, Jung described the First World War in a way uncannily descriptive of America's action in Iraq and in its present 'war on terror'. He began by asking, 'Is the present war supposed to be a war of economics?' and answered 'That is a neutral American business-like standpoint, that does not take the blood, tears, unprecedented deeds of infamy and great distress into account, and which completely ignores the fact that this war is really an epidemic of madness' (ibid., 233). In 1932, lecturing in Vienna, he stated, 'To a quite terrifying degree we are threatened by wars and revolutions which are nothing other than psychic epidemics. At any moment several millions of human beings may be smitten with a new madness, and then we shall have another world war or devastating revolution. Instead of being at the mercy of wild beasts, earthquakes, landslides, and inundations, modern man is battered by the elemental forces of his own psyche' (ibid., 235). In 1933, lecturing in Cologne and Essen, he observed that

> The collective man threatens to stifle the individual man, on whose sense of responsibility everything valuable in mankind ultimately depends. … So-called leaders are the inevitable symptoms of a mass movement. The true leaders of mankind are always those who are capable of self-reflection … Small and hidden is the door that leads inward, and the entrance is barred by countless prejudices, mistaken

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> assumptions, and fears. Always one wishes to hear of grand political and economic schemes, the very things that have landed every nation in a morass … But I speak not to nations, only to the individual few, for whom it goes without saying that cultural values do not drop down like manna from heaven, but are created by the hands of individuals. If things go wrong in the world, this is because something is wrong with the individual, because something is wrong with me. Therefore, if I am sensible, I shall put myself right first. For this I need … a knowledge of the innermost foundations of my being. (ibid., 230)

In these challenging and overwhelmingly militaristic and technology-driven times in which we live, we would do well to consider the age-old dictum and the age-old practices of maieutics and meditation and to consider as well the virtues of – dare I mention the word? – introspection and, further still, the phenomenological virtue of making the familiar strange. In a word, paths toward self-knowledge exist. In these challenging and overwhelmingly militaristic and technology-driven times in which we live, we would do well to consider too the events that others before us lived through and the insights they gained through their experiences and reflections. Given the vaunted intelligence of humans, is it not stupid of us *not* to learn from their insights, their practices, their experiences, their reflections? Why indeed not be – as eighteenth-century British philosopher George Berkeley would say (Berkeley, 1929 [1709], 85, see also pp. 72–3) – 'at the pains of a little thought' about what history can teach us? Why indeed not see how the power-driven destructive side of human history repeats itself over and over, only with more and more sophisticated technologies whose sole aim is to kill other humans and to destroy their way of life. Rather than genuflecting to militaristic and technological traditions and to passing fads, in effect rather than repeating history, we would do well to consider the history of psychic epidemics produced by mass-minded man and acknowledge that the present one in which we live is of such proportions never reached before, that the time is short, that there is no quick fix. There is only the necessity of an ongoing dedication to the pursuit of self-knowledge such that the conceit of wisdom coupled with power and strength is vanquished, that those so afflicted with ignorance no longer flourish, going forth and multiplying as they do today, that *Homo sapiens sapiens* finally redeems itself and lives up to its own billing, that it is no longer the dangerous species that endangers all others and the earth itself. Surely we need a worldwide educational system that encourages and even inculcates the courage to look within.

'Our modern education is morbidly one-sided,' Jung remarked. He went on to say,

> No doubt we are right to open the eyes and ears of our young people to the wide world, but it is the maddest of delusions to think that this really equips them for the task of living. It is the kind of training that enables a young person to adapt himself outwardly to the world and reality, but no one gives a thought to the necessity of adapting to the self, to the powers of the psyche, which are far mightier than all the Great Powers of the earth. (Jung, 1970, 153)

'… than all the Great Powers of the earth.' Is this a hyperbolic claim? If we look with courageous honesty at the simmering anger of the oppressed, at the unadulterated violence of the powerful and the ambitiously powerful, at the all-engulfing fear that saturates so many people's lives, at the relentless desire for excitement and bravado that saturates so many *other* people's lives, at the unquenchable thirst for vengeance that, culturally inculcated, lasts for centuries, then the Great Powers of the psyche that drive people to power and to fight and to kill can hardly be denied. Surely, then, we need an educational system

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in which self-knowledge figures prominently, in which children and young people learn about the disposition of humans to project their own shortcomings, their own foibles, their own stupidities, their own harmful practices onto others – an education system in which the concern is to see human nature as it truly is. If it is true that '[n]o one who does not know himself can know others' and that 'in each of us there is another whom we do not know' (Jung, 1970, 153), then surely we should ask: do we each of us have the courage to open ourselves to 'the goods of the mind', to be sensible and 'put myself right first', to rise to the challenge of knowing ourselves as we truly are?

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