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Jung's Perilous Journey Into The Collective Unconscious

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Abstract

This paper is born out of the study of Carl Gustav Jung's Red Book, under the guidance of Jungian analyst Brenda Crowther. Among all of Jung's work, the Red Book stands out as the document of an intense self-exploration. Journeying through the layers of his psyche, Jung uncovered archetypal images that put before him complex ethical and spiritual problems. To support this point, I will discuss parts of Jung's intimate life, particularly the role of his friend and romantic partner Toni Wolff in the creation of the Red Book. I will argue that Jung's findings on the complexity and paradoxical nature of the psyche bring to a re-calibration of our moral compass, which Erich Neumann consolidated in the proposal of a new ethic. I will contend that Jung's honest incursion into his own psyche is in itself a new form of ethical and moral leadership, based not on presenting oneself as a moral example but rather on modeling the willingness to explore and confront one's own shadow.

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There are times when reading a book feels like communing intimately with the spirit of the author. This was the study of the Red Book by C.G. Jung for me: a transformative voyage into the psyche of one of the greatest contemporary geniuses, the opportunity to follow him in a most intimate journey. I had been interested in Jung since my early twenties, when I was first introduced to his work. In the following years, I read through much of Jung's opus, an encyclopedic body of writings ranging in subject from clinical psychology to alchemy, from religion to mythology. And yet, none of that had prepared me for the Red Book (Jung, 2009), a volume that sits in a category of its own, exceptional not less for its material qualities than for its contents. Sonu Shamdasani, who curated the edition of the Red Book we have today, took the bold decision to create a faithful facsimile copy of a leather book where Jung organized his notes and recollections of a series of psychic experiments. The result is a tome measuring forty by thirty centimeters, an object that will not fit in most bookshelves, but looks impressive on an altar.

For a prolific scholar like Jung, one who loved to show his eruditeness by writing long, intricate treatises, the style of the Red Book is as unusual as its format. Here, Jung shows himself naked, facing his own unadulterated psychic content, and venturing into the territory of the transpersonal and the collective. As an explorer traveling to a faraway and as yet uncharted land, Jung appears at times driven, at times almost lost, but always fully engaged in the process. In his introduction to the Red Book, Shamdasani recapitulates the historical and cultural context in which Jung went through the experiences that would give birth to this unique manuscript (Jung, 2009, p. 1-3). In December 1913, when he was thirty-eight, married and a father of four¹, and having "achieved everything that I had wished for

¹ Jung's fifth and last daughter would be born in March 1914.

myself,” (Jung, 2009, p. 127), Jung embarked on an extended series of psychoanalytical experiments. A couple of months before, he had had a vision that had profoundly shaken him. He had seen Europe being devastated by a catastrophic flood, with “yellow waves, swimming rubble, and the deaths of countless thousands” (Jung, 2009, p. 123). The image turned out to be prophetic, for Europe was indeed going to be hit by a devastating tsunami of violence and blood two years later with the outbreak of World War I.² But the vision also made Jung anxious about his psychological condition. He, a man who had dedicated his life to improving the mental health of others, now doubted whether he was going mad. Jung’s reaction was to plunge into a deep investigation of his inner world and a systematic analysis of its contents (Jung, 2009, p. 19). He went into the experiment so wholeheartedly that, in the first half of 1914, in order to make space for these explorations, he resigned his roles as a president of the Psychoanalytical Association and as a lecturer at the medical faculty of Zurich (Jung, 2009, p. 25). The result of this inner analysis, carried out over the course of four years, is the material today collected in the Red Book.

The Red Book, therefore, was not written with an audience in mind, but as the diary of a personal journey where Jung used writing as indispensable support of a risky psychic experiment. As a result, the Red Book contains more questions than answers, more hints than statements, and more doubts than certitudes. This is a work describing a process rather than its conclusions, a book that transmits more than it teaches, inspires more than it educates. Nevertheless, Jung’s account of his self-exploration is consistent with his model of the human psyche, particularly with his understanding of archetypes and the collective unconscious. Jung’s analytical psychology postulates that, when we are born, our psyche is not a blank slate, but instead presents pre-existing and universal tendencies to form certain psychic

² Jung had at least a dozen such prophetic visions (Jung, 2009, p. 29).

“motifs.” Jung named such tendencies “archetypes,” and the images produced by them archetypal images or motifs.

Archetypal images are contents of the individual psyche that do not have any direct connection with the life of the person experiencing them (Jung et al., 1964, p. 57-58). Yet, they regularly appear in dreams, fantasies, hallucinations but also in fairy tales, legends and myths. Jung argued that a vast range of behaviors, spanning the entire spectrum of what is considered normal to what is deemed pathological, can only be explained if we take into account the collective unconscious, where the archetypes exert a profound influence. The realm of archetypes, the collective unconscious, is comparable to a repository of the memories of humanity. Because the contents of the collective unconscious are born out of the crystallized psychic experiences of millions of people, they do not necessarily align with the belief system of the single individual. Therefore, the contents of the collective unconscious can upset and even disrupt the personal psyche. Exploring the collective unconscious, a psychic realm that cannot be entirely observed by consciousness, yet is inhabited by powerful entities, is not for the faint of heart.

The exploration of the collective unconscious is therefore a journey of descent, a going down from the more superficial and conscious strata of the human psyche into the depths of the accumulated layers of psychic content. The collective unconscious, populated by strong, magnetic, albeit not clearly delimited entities, is what Philemon, the archetypal image of the sage in the Red Book, compares to a river of molten lava (Jung, 2009, p. 476) that runs deep in the profundities of our psyche. Venturing there, Jung found sublime and terrible visions: the unfiltered, raw images of millions of human experiences. The collective unconscious is the abode of the “spirit of the depths,” the underground current of life force that runs silently and wells up in exceptional times, giving rise to a massive shift in

civilization, a new religion, or a new set of moral values (p. 119). But, Jung warns us, this wellspring of power is dangerously neutral. The spirit of the depths produces visions of wonder as well as torturous nightmares and is rife with moral ambiguity; this is a territory where one's inner compass can be lost.

One of the most graphic illustrations of the horror of the unconscious is the fantasy in which Jung finds the corpse of a small girl, her body ravaged by a violence of unknown origin (Jung, 2009, pp. 320-322). One would normally recoil from such a scene in terror, but he remains, captivated. There is another figure in the background: a veiled woman, who presents herself as the soul of the murdered child. The woman, speaking with the authority of an archetype, asks Jung to perform an appalling cannibalistic ritual: he must take a piece of the girl's liver with his bare hands and eat it. When he concedes, the woman reveals herself as Jung's soul. Through this excruciating trial, Jung shows us empirically that diving into the collective unconscious means recognizing, and partaking of, the essential unity of all human beings. By eating the liver, Jung renounces to any pretense of innocence, of "not being" the girl's murderer. In the psychic depths, we share the glory and the horrors of the whole of humanity. Similar powerful and frightening images are sure to exist in anyone's psyche, although normally our consciousness does an excellent job of keeping them well hidden. Once we dare to dive headfirst into the depths of our inner world, though, those terrible, dark visions swell up, along with visions of wisdom and clarity.

Those who have the courage to journey into the unconscious and are, moreover, fortunate enough to come back (for a one-way journey into that territory amounts to psychic breakdown), can bring home precious treasures—in fact, it is their duty to do so. The demands of the unconscious lead one on the path of individuation, which runs contrary to adaptation to society. What ensues is a break of conformity that inevitably produces guilt in

the individual. Jung believed that the only way to expiate such guilt is to carry back something from the underworld journey: new values that the collective can benefit from. Those who are not creative enough to return realizable, socially useful values, had better renounce individuation and reestablish conformity with the community (Jung, 2009, p. 51).

Jung surely managed to bring back powerful images, and those make up one layer of the Red Book's richness: visions, pieces, fragments of the magma that runs deep in the collective psyche, seen through the prism of his personality. But beyond the power of those visions, the Red Book contains compelling reflections on the role of the individual and the collective, of man's relationship with other men and with God, and on the value of morals. Providing an alternative and original point of view, Jung shows us that by embracing paradox and contradiction, by investing in a constant mediation between the opposites, we grow humanly and spiritually. As we shall see, Neumann (1990) will elaborate Jung's positions further, suggesting that the recognition and integration of our own psychic ambivalence is both a psychological and an ethical necessity.

A New Ethic

Although Jung was not a moralist in the strict sense, his psychological investigations have profound consequences on our understanding of morals and ethics. Neumann, a disciple of Jung's, was the one to turn the principles of analytical psychology into a proposition for a new ethic. Neumann's core intuition is that the ethic systems that we are most familiar with revolve around the assertion of absolute moral values: they tend towards the moral perfection of the individual man. While that ideal of perfection looks different across specific times and cultures, the psychological stress created by the ethics of perfection, and the mechanisms we use to cope with that stress, are similar everywhere. Sigmund Freud, the father of

psychoanalysis, demonstrated empirically that, under the surface level of our consciousness, lives all sort of amoral content: fantasies of incest, violent impulses, infantile desires for power, all of which is as much a constituent part of our psyche as our most noble aspirations. As a result, it is impossible for any individual's to conform to the standards of perfect morality. Therefore, once the current moral system is crystallized into a collectively accepted set of norms, defining the behaviors that are in agreement with the moral values of the time, a split happens in our psyche. Since early childhood, we start forming two separate psychic systems (Neumann, 1990, p. 37). The first system, the persona, develops as the front-facing side of the psyche and responds, to the best of our abilities, to the requirements of our environment and our community. Parallel to the persona, there emerges another, fairly autonomous psychic system: the shadow, where we relegate all the traits of our character that we deem to be unacceptable by the societal norms, interiorized as the voice of our consciousness.

To keep this state of affairs, we invest a tremendous amount of psychic energy in the mechanisms of repression and suppression. Repression happens when we unconsciously remove those ideas and feelings that are contrary to our intended moral standards. Suppression achieves the removal of the troublesome contents consciously, through self-discipline and asceticism (Neumann, 1990, pp. 34-35). Both these mechanisms produce an intense feeling of guilt, unconscious in the case of repression, or fully perceived and even celebrated in the case of suppression.³ In both cases, the sense of guilt is highly uncomfortable and calls for elimination: to that end, individuals and collectivities alike resort to the phenomenon of projection, by which we attribute to others the undesirable qualities

³ Neuman thought that repression was far more common, and fare more dangerous, than suppression (1990, p. 35).

that we can't admit as being part of our own shadow (Neumann, 1990, p. 50). The unfortunate target of our projections, whether it be an individual, an ethnic group, or an entire country, becomes then the object of our violent rebuke. Neumann goes so far as to state that war is only possible when we have turned the enemy into a carrier of our projection, a receptacle of all the vices that we cannot and will not acknowledge in ourselves (Neumann, 1990, p. 57). But war does not happen only between armies; it happens between political parties, between genders, between family members. The morality of perfection is, therefore, directly responsible for much of the conflict and violence that we experience on any scale.

To the old ethic of perfection Neuman (1990) contrasts a new ethic based on the principle of psychic wholeness: the acceptance of both persona and shadow and, from a moral standpoint, of both good and evil. In the new ethic, the goal of the individual is to be psychologically autonomous (p. 102), conscious of both her persona and her shadow. Getting to know and managing one's shadow becomes a moral imperative, and a responsible act of service to the collective. From the standpoint of the new ethic, what leads to psychic wholeness in "good," while what leads to a split in the psychic system (such as repression and suppression) is "evil" (p. 126). Attaining psychic wholeness means, to a certain extent, renouncing certitude and the pretense of innocence; everyone must recognize the light and dark aspects within himself and move towards a state of integration where "purity and impurity are alike contained" (p. 110).

Neumann's ethical findings are an organic consequence of the paradoxical nature of the human psyche, something that Jung pointed at multiple times across his work, and particularly in the Red Book. For instance, Jung stated that ambiguity is the way of life, while unequivocalness leads to death (Jung, 2009, p. 170). From ambiguity arise both the need and the possibility to look for compromise. In the Red Book, Jung is engaged in a constant

attempt to find a compromise between the extremes of light and dark, feminine and masculine, good and evil. He argues that the only way to achieve balance is by nourishing our opposite; for example, by men cultivating their femininity, and women their masculinity (Jung, 2009, p. 226).⁴ He urges all men to find the woman inside of them, so that they can stop “being a slave to women” (p. 228)—an unfortunate expression, by which Jung meant the tendency of men to outsource their feminine side onto women, basing their relationship with women on a projection of the disowned feminine parts. We can only assume that Jung held the same advice to be valid for women.

There are more examples in the Red Book where Jung gives a vigorous shake to the edifice of the moral of perfection. For instance, he warns us against thinking that one can always do good because evil is needed in the scheme of things. Sometimes, we need evil because it is the only force that can shatter whatever we have considered good so far and make space for the new to come (Jung, 2009, 310-311). This is a profound thought and one that ran across Jung’s inner explorations for his entire life. But the ultimate celebration of paradox comes in Jung’s effort to envision a new God—understood as the all-encompassing archetype of the totality. The new God, writes Jung, will have to be relative, because a God of absolute goodness cannot encompass the fullness of life (Jung, 2009, p. 166). This is a mystical statement, yet one anchored in a deep psychological understanding of human nature. Birthing the new God is a messy business, it is “blood and torment” (Jung, 2009, p. 154); like in all births, there is blood, sweat, and tears involved. Giving life to a new psychological

⁴ Jung assumed that men’s personality has predominantly masculine traits and women’s personality predominantly feminine traits. This is a debatable assumption; however the need of balancing the opposites is independent from one’s predominant conscious tendencies.

reality requires us to stretch from heaven to hell, in the paradoxical and yet essential task of embracing both.

The tones of the Red Book are often solemn and bordering on the prophetic, but we would be ill-advised to think that the moral dilemmas exposed in its pages were, for Jung, only theoretical speculations. In fact, there are reasons to assume that he was acutely and intimately aware of the conflict between the complexity of the inner life and society's norms and regulations. Although Jung passed on to posterity a relatively respectable image of himself, a less-than-superficial investigation into his personal life reveals that he made risky choices—including choices that would be considered unsustainable by current professional and ethical standards. Nan Savage Healy (2016) has dedicated her research to the study of one of the lesser-known aspects of Jung's life: his extramarital affairs, particularly his lifelong relationship with Toni Wolff. This rapport is especially relevant because Toni Wolff was of paramount importance for the creation of the Red Book.⁵

In opening this paper, we noted that Jung thought that entering the collective unconscious could cost one his or her mental sanity. Therefore, Jung had an important recommendation for all who dared to venture into the depths: do not go alone. (Jung, 2009, p. 168). Having a companion, an anchor, someone that can hold space for us as we traverse the inner realm is the best assurance against psychic breakdown. Toni Wolff, a friend, a tireless ally, and a lover, was that companion to Jung. The Red Book, in all likelihood, would not have been composed hadn't Jung chosen to enter his relationship with Toni Wolff, against all social conventions and at the cost of much distress for his wife and family.

⁵ Jung's son Franz observed that it was only thanks to Toni Wolff if his father did not lose his mind during the explorations that gave rise to the Red Book (Healy, 2016, p. 144).

Interlude: A Drama Triangle

We don't know exactly how many female patients of Jung's became his lovers, but we know with certainty of his relationships with Sabina Spielrein and with Toni Wolff, both of whom had been his analysands. While Jung's relationship with Spielrein was rather short and tumultuous (Healy, 2016, pp. 60-65), Toni Wolff remained an important presence throughout Jung's life and exerted a profound influence on his work. Wolff played a major role in Jung's explorations, particularly those that gave rise to the Red Book; she was his guide in the darkness of the unconscious (Healy, 2016, p. 127), an indispensable companion to his inner journey. But from Healy's work, we know that not only was Jung involved in an extramarital affair with Toni: he somewhat defended its legitimacy, bringing her into his life with little restraint, to the consternation of his wife Emma and children (Healy, 2016, p. 99). According to Healy's research, Toni Wolff, Emma Jung, and Jung himself all suffered the strife of this difficult romantic triangle (p. 154).

Yet despite Toni's relevance in his life, Jung did not publicly express his love and gratitude for her. In Jung's autobiography (Jung, 1983), Toni Wolff is never mentioned by name, even when she was a protagonist of the events described. For example, in 1914, right in the midst of the experimentations with the Red Book material, Jung and Toni Wolff traveled together to the Italian city of Ravenna. There they experienced a powerful and mysterious psychic phenomenon: they both admired four mosaics in the Baptistery of the Orthodox. But upon returning from the journey, Jung discovered that the mosaics do not exist; in their place, there are windows. In his autobiography, Jung shares his amazement and wonder at this puzzling and synchronistic experience, but he refers to Toni Wolff simply as "an acquaintance" (Jung, 1983, p. 334). It is sad to see a person who played such a pivotal role in Jung's life delivered to posterity as just an acquaintance. And yet, Wolff's oblivion

may not be entirely attributed to Jung's personal preferences; after all, he was a married man, going against societal and moral norms by entertaining an extramarital relationship.

Reading through the pages of Healy (2016), we can almost feel the palpable tension between Jung's love for Toni Wolff and the reality of his familiar and professional commitments. As a result, Jung's intimate life does not stand out as a paragon of bourgeoisie morality, but as the life of a man that navigated complex and diverging desires, and made choices that were not always in accordance with the social norms. Perhaps it is to these inner conflicts that Jung sought to give a moral justification when he advocated the right "to avoid the known moral good and do what is considered to be evil, if our ethical decision so requires" (Jung, 1983, p. 388).

The freedom that Jung advocates for, especially in the realm of relationships, often attracts moral rebuke. Even Healy (2016), despite her willingness to look into Jung's life with honesty and curiosity, cannot hide a certain judgment towards his relationship choices. In Healy's description, Toni Wolff is at times represented as a victimized character who gave her life to Jung and got next to nothing in return. According to Healy (2016), the crux of Wolff's fallout with Jung was his refusal to divorce from his wife, Emma, and marry her instead (p. 197-217). Toni Wolff, writes Healy (2016), ended up renouncing her personal desire, which was to marry Jung, and conformed to the archetypal role of the *hetaira*, the spiritual companion. She was perhaps influenced and persuaded by Jung himself into choosing the archetypal over the personal (p. 206). But Healy (2016) warns that a victory of archetypal over personal leads to suffering, particularly in the realm of personal relationships (pp. 223-224), and concludes that denying the possibility of marriage to Toni Wolff amounted to condemning her to a life of grief and solitude (pp. 287-297).

Whether Healy (2016) is or not right in her conclusions about the relationship between Jung and Toni Wolff, we may legitimately ask ourselves: what was the moral, ethical thing for Jung to do? From the standpoint of an ethic of perfection, he should never have engaged with Toni Wolff, even more so as she had been one of his patients. Or perhaps he should have divorced his wife and married Toni, probably just displacing suffering from one person to another. From the angle of an ethic of wholeness, he might have acted ethically by allowing the contradiction in his life to express itself, embracing both the love for his wife and that for Toni Wolff, his most sensitive companion, the only person who could accompany him in the depth of his inner explorations. Jung's relational quandaries highlight the complexity and irreconcilable richness of the human condition, a richness that the moralists of all times have sought to regulate rather than understand. The intricacy of the situation advises against passing moral judgment on Jung's actions; yet it is difficult for most of us not to take a moral stance on matters of relationship and sexuality. Jung himself was aware of that, and even though in many of his early works he expressed ideas that were challenging the accepted social and sexual norms (Healy, 2016, p. 67), in later revisions he deleted or rewrote the passages related to sexuality in most of his writing. Jung, who already suffered the accusations of being a mystic, was wary of being considered a libertine.

Be it as it may, Jung had to confess that Eros remained an enigma to him and that, faced again and again with the mystery of love, he was unable to explain its "paradox" (Jung, 1983, p. 413). I believe that in Jung's erotic predicament we see an example of what Neumann highlighted as the conflict between conscience and inner voice. The story of Jung, Emma Jung, and Toni Wolff, points to the fact that if we follow our inner voice, we may end up disrupting social conventions and potentially hurting others; yet if we don't, we may build up resentment and fail to express our innermost truth. From the standpoint of the morality of

perfection, we seem to be doomed to failure; but by embracing and admitting our imperfection we can become more compassionate towards other people's shortcomings. At the end of his life, looking back, Jung wrote that he was "astonished, disappointed, pleased" with himself (p. 418), and that the older he became, the less he felt he knew about himself. But he also revealed that with his increased uncertainty grew a feeling of kinship and communion with all things (Jung, 1983, p. 419). As the iron grip of personality, ideas, and opinions loosens, there is a potential for more compassion and openness.

Knowing more about Jung's private life allowed me to see his moral remarks not just in an abstract sense, but as intimate reflections. As a result, studying the Red Book felt fundamentally different from being exposed to a spiritual teacher. This time, I was not looking up to a paragon of virtue. Instead, I was reading the diaries of an older brother, a brilliant yet flawed human being who had gone through inner trials and discoveries that I could relate to. Following Jung's footsteps was gratifying not because it provided any solutions to my existential dilemmas, but because it showed me that someone I admire and respect had faced similar struggles. Jung's very demand that we follow our own path is one reason many of us may feel inspired to learn from him; in this sense, he stands as an example of a new kind of leadership, one that inspires through realness and vulnerability.

Invisible Authority

Of all of Jung's books, the Red Book is the one that could have more easily spawned a blind following, because the experiences it describes are almost messianic in nature. Jung himself accepts to become a prophetic character: in one of the fantasies, Jung is told by

Salomé: “You are Christ” (Jung, 2009, p. 197).⁶ Jung seemed to be aware of the Red Book’s messianic potential and went to great lengths to warn the reader against becoming a follower of his ideas. Jung expresses the position that each life path is unique, and imitation leads us to a dead end: “There is only one way, and that is your way” (Jung, 2009, p. 125). To progress along the path of individuation, which in Jung’s view was the general pattern of human development (Jung, 2009, p. 80), we need to dare to follow our inner guidance, which will inevitably lead us “astray,” away from the collective ways and values. On an archetypal level, the interplay between the necessity to heed one’s inner guidance and the pull to conform to the collective standards is mirrored in the confrontation between the spirit of the depths and the spirit of the times.

While the spirit of the depths stands for the power of the collective unconscious, the spirit of the times represents the “general spirit in which we think and act today” (Jung, 2009, p. 155)—that is, the collective consciousness. Within the individual, those two forces create a dynamic conflict between the inner voice, speaking for the spirit of the depths, and the voice of our “good conscience,” representing the spirit of the times. Every human being is then caught in a dilemma; if she lives her life completely according to the demands of good conscience, she will never listen to the inner voice and realize herself. Only by listening to the inner voice can we proceed towards the goal of psychic autonomy, but this means going against both one’s conscience and the collective morals.

Therefore, the path of psychic growth inevitably goes through the guilt and anxiety of realizing that our actions are not in accordance with what collectivity asks of us and, sometimes, with our own conscience. In order to grow, one needs to experience this

⁶ For Jung, this was really a psychological statement: anybody has the potential to contact new collective values, just as Jesus embodied the eruption of a new religion within the Jewish spirituality of his time.

excruciating tension between what his inner voice asks him to do and the resistance of collectivity, whose demands are carried on internally by what we call “good conscience.” Certainly, Jung’s is not the only way to understand human development, and it is conceivable that Jung’s own moral struggles influenced his observations. Was he torn by the inner voice telling him to establish a deep relating with Toni Wolff and the voice of conscience telling him to be a faithful husband? That does not seem to be out of the question. For this very reason, if we want to receive the depth of Jung’s transmission in the Red Book while sheltering ourselves from its messianic power, we must refrain from elevating him to the status of moral champion, and recognize him as a human seeker.

Jung’s Red Book, like all initiatory journeys where we face a reality wider and more complex than the one we are used to, is filled with doubt and confusion. And while Jung recognizes the destructive potential of indulging in doubt, he also asserts that entering doubtful territory is the only way to grow: “you grow if you stand still in the greatest doubt” (Jung, 2009, p. 361). Only the strongest and the weakest entertain doubt; or, which is the same, certitude is the hallmark of a middling soul. These reflections strike me as antithetic to the high value we place on certitude. Especially in any position of power, doubt is by default considered a liability rather than an asset; yet if we do not doubt, we never allow ourselves to contemplate thoughts beyond our level of comprehension. Perhaps a healthy dose of doubt about one’s own opinions should be a cherished personality trait, especially for anyone in a leading position.

Jung’s reflections on morals, and Neumann’s capacity to weave them into a coherent ethical proposition, model a new kind of leadership, one where leaders are required to seek, know and digest their own shadow. Jung revealed to us that having a shadow is a universal trait: there is nobody without it, and those who more stubbornly broadcast an image of light,

purity, coherence are likely to have the nastier, most hidden shadow aspects. In a general climate of denial of the shadow, scandal becomes a major weapon: if one can show that the adversary has a moral flaw, then one will probably win the political game—until one's shadow is also revealed. It is a psychological sickening game, where the more forcefully we deny our shadow through repression and suppression, the more chances we have to be respected, admired and recognized.

Perhaps, if our leaders underwent the heart-wrenching, soul-searching experiences that Jung went into, the world would be different. What if every person in a position of power was required to embark on his or her personal underworld journey, unearth their shadow, and find a way to integrate it? If Neumann (1990) is right in foreseeing a society that embraces and celebrates psychic wholeness, that does not require people to wage an internal war against their shadow through suppression and repression, then we need to ask ourselves what leadership may look like in such a culture. Marie-Louise von Franz, Jung's disciple and collaborator, wrote that integrating as much as possible of one's own dark side, through a constant confrontation and dialogue with the shadow, results in a kind of "invisible authority" (Von Franz, 1993, pp. 202-204). Von Franz argued that knowing our dark side makes us more solid and impenetrable, more mature, but the opposite is also true: ignorance of one's own shadow means being exposed, open to emotional manipulation. Jung's example of going into one's own depths, exploring the landfill where we throw all the psychic elements we do not want to look at, is both the condition and the sign of an authority rooted in psychological wholeness.

Conclusion

As we venture into the pages of the Red Book, we find a dangerous yet liberating book, one that, if we have the stamina and courage to read through it, ends up shaking us to the core. Jung showed us that if we go to the depths of our psyche, we will find revelations that can make a whole society tremble. Does this mean that Jung's ultimate intention is to lead us, like Nietzsche attempted to do, beyond good and evil?⁷ Not necessarily. For Jung, the ultimate moral battle is not between good and evil, but between meaning and meaninglessness. And in this confrontation, Jung takes a clear stance. "Life is—or has—meaning and meaninglessness. I cherish the anxious hope that meaning will preponderate and win the battle" (Jung, 1983, p. 419). These words, written at the end of Jung's autobiographical memories and just two years before his passing, sound like a parting gift, a goodbye wish from one that is transitioning into the next phase of existence.

After having dedicated all his life to the research of the human soul, Jung concluded that not good, but meaning is the basic vector of morality, the orienting principle of life, and the real yardstick of evolution. I find this reflection to be incredibly sobering and, at the same time, full of hope. For unlike the absolute principles of Good and Evil, meaning is something we can be responsible for. Meaning is fragile, precious, yet always within our reach, if only are we willing to extend our hand. By showing us that meaning is where true moral value resides, Jung has done much to give us our power back, wresting it away from crystalized societal and religious structures that, as we progress our journey through time, may be no longer serving us.

⁷ Jung both admired and commiserated Nietzsche who ultimately, in his view, had "succumbed to exaggeration and irreality" (Jung, 1983, p. 225).

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