

Gerhard Burda

**SELF-DIFFERENCE**  
(Absolute Fragility)

Sigmund Freud Universitätsverlag

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# ***SELF-DIFFERENCE***

**(Absolute Fragility)**

Post-Foundational Perspectives on Ethics  
in Analytical Psychology

Vienna, 2013

Sigmund-Freud- University Press  
[www.sfu.ac.at](http://www.sfu.ac.at)

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1st printed 2013  
digi-druck A 1100 Vienna  
ISBN 987-3-902626-38-7

Dedicated to L. Kargl.

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## Preface

Although there seems to be a veritable boom in ethics, it is a common place that ethics is only something one can feel a personal obligation to or not<sup>1</sup>. Ethics represent particular beliefs that can be argued but actually there is no ultimate point of reference that can serve as a basis of universalization. Accompanied by a dark shadow, ethics depends on *ethical power*<sup>2</sup> and on definitions about what is called a human being or not; its ideals are sometimes difficult to distinguish from the abyss they seek to avoid. Good can be evil and vice versa, and the diverse approaches certainly differ in their orientation<sup>3</sup>. In short: *ethics imply a self-difference*.

Psychoanalysis has shown how important processes of maturation depend on early experiences, on being grateful, on being aware of one's own dark sides, on avoiding splitting and on the wish to reconcile. However, these approaches often fail to reflect on their own theoretical basis that is simply assumed to be given by nature, by a given community or by language. But neither consciousness nor the unconscious can be assumed to be the ultimate basis of legitimation. This is something we have to keep in mind when studying Jung's approach to ethics. For him the term *self* is crucial. It represents a mixture of metaphysical, transcendental, and empirical heritages and it denotes a singularity from which everything originates. This is a very common idea forming the basis of the main disciplines in Western thinking<sup>4</sup> since ancient times. In contrast to the preference for a primordial unity guaranteeing identity, the opposite idea of a constitutive

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1 Moore, 1996.

2 See Butler, 2003; Nietzsche, 2005.

3 Düsing, 2005; Lacan, 1996.

4 As a consequence dualisms are again and again revealed, e.g., nature/culture, being/nothing, self/other, unconsciousness/consciousness, etc. (Descola, 2011).

otherness has become a key concept in continental philosophy. The theory of self-difference seeks by contrast to *both* options to show that one should not deal with the foundationalism of an either-or, reducing one side to the other, self to difference or vice versa, but with an as-well-as: with a *self-difference* (of the self as well as of difference). Both sides are considered to be dependent on processes of *de-constitution*, connecting with and separating from both themselves and their respective other.

This post-foundational approach implies an *absolute fragility*<sup>5</sup> of world and beings on an ontological basis. When speaking of the self in terms of ethics this fragile basis should be kept in mind. Precisely the fact that there is no ultimate point of reference legitimating the universalization of a particular concept can be assumed to be the very basis of a universality we share beyond identification with particular aspects such as species, race, culture, nationality, sex or language. The exposure to self-difference and its absolute fragile basis imply a radical and excessive moment embracing the humane and the inhumane in a process of permanent *de-constitution*<sup>6</sup>. It raises the central ethical question *Who shall die and who not*<sup>7</sup>. This radical moment extends even beyond the single human being, the social body, and the question *Who shall die and who not*: it touches the very idea of ethics itself and its dependency on fragile and self-different beings.

Gerhard Burda  
August 2012, Chios/Greece

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<sup>5</sup> *Absolute fragility* is another term for self-difference (Burda, 2010; 2011).

<sup>6</sup> This is the point to which all discussions concerning humanism, post-humanism, etc. are indebted to (see Latour, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Badiou, 2003; Lévinas, 1996; Lévinas, 2003.

## Introduction

This book presents a collection of works concerning ethics in Analytical Psychology. Its title can be read as being programmatic: *self always means self-difference*. The idea of difference<sup>8</sup> was one of the most important philosophical insights of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The consequences of this insight for the Jungian concept of the self are to be examined in four chapters. Discussing the relationship between self and difference, I have tried to avoid the problem of *autoimmunity* or self-closure implied by the term self and a quasi-Hegelian<sup>9</sup> dialectical dynamic (synthesis of opposites, *transcendent function*) or by its characterisation as an all-encompassing *monad*. I have also sought to show how *microethical* and *macroethical* levels are interwoven and how they depend on each other. Last not least, I want to reject the universalisations of particular beliefs by stressing the importance of an orientation towards the fragile foundation of being<sup>10</sup>.

To this end I have introduced some new terms such as *archetype*<sup>11</sup>, *ethical primal scene*, *participation éthique*, *de-constitution*, *convergence of the self* and others. To revise the Jungian term self in the field of ethics it is necessary to introduce a *medial* format of the psyche which is contrasted with common mental and material formats. The medial format stresses the ontological quality of imagination, which is supposed to unfold in two

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8 See also the terms *alterity*, otherness, Derrida's *difference*, or *altarity* (Taylor, 1987).

9 Giegerich, 1994.

10 The theory of self-difference aims at a universality that is beyond identification with particular aspects like culture, nationality, etc.; being subject to self-difference implies a radical and excessive moment because there is no *essence* of what is called human but a (psychoid) connection between the humane and the inhumane that opens a space of redefining what it might mean to be human (see also Badiou/Žižek, 2005, 78).

11 Archetype written with “th” creates a neologism combining the Greek words *ethos* and *arché* to underline the ethical demand.

senses (*imaginary* and *imaginal*). Both aspects can be found on the *psycho**id* basis of any ontology. Against this backdrop man is characterised as a being that has to deal with an ongoing production of identities and differences transforming life and the traditions of politics, ethics, religion, and of social and economic conditions. This is seen as a task of envisioning the horizons of the future in connection with something *absolutely fragile*. Confronted with our fragility we are facing psyche and self in their ultimate ethical dimension where the contingency of life, of beings, and institutions becomes its opposite: *non-contingency* – a paradoxical cluster of necessity and freedom that regards otherness as a medium of becoming oneself.

The first chapter, *C.G. Jung: Ethics in the Shadow of the Father*<sup>12</sup>, starts with a glance at history and discusses why Jung's and also Erich Neumann's writings on ethics must be seen as remaining in the *shadow of the father*. This means that the father – in terms of ethics *the law* – is not realised as an ethical potential. One reason for this can be found in the unconsciousness of the hysterical shadow whose trace can be detected in a history that can be traced from Jung's relationship to his father to the image of the Jew, in which the rejected father emerges as the paradigm of desertion. Thus it is firstly a question of recognising that we are creatures of desire who need a law so as not to succumb to a deceptive and dangerous self-closure. We must therefore go back to where Jung and Neumann began their considerations of ethics, to the *participation mystique*, the matrix in which according to Jung all people are equal – to our "unconscious humanity". What is unconscious in this is perhaps only the circumstance that we

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12 *Ethics in the Shadow of the Father* was a lecture given at a congress of the German-speaking Jung Societies, Vienna 2005.

have always been incorporated in a social context (space) and made into human beings (law). This basic ethical dimension, the *primal ethical scene*, cannot be escaped by referring to an inner *voice* as Jung suggested. If "the moral problem of the whole of humanity [...] appears as a last stage 'after' the personal and collective shadow"<sup>13</sup> the question arises as to where the source of solidarity and the shift in focus towards the "fraternal and human" actually can be found. Neither *participation mystique* – a latent mass psychosis – nor the rejected father and its law can be the source of this solidarity. However, we can find this source if we follow the line of projection of the hysterical shadow to Nietzsche, Jung, Hitler, the hysterical Germans and finally to the Jews – a line of projection along which what is universally human is shifted to an excluded element in order once again finally to land with the father and *participation mystique*. Now however under changed auspices. The task is first to understand the antonymic structure of what relates to the law, i.e. the father as *archetype*, and to examine the dark abyss of melancholy from which hysteria turns away in horror. Secondly we must understand the *participation mystique* as a *participation éthique*, as a responsible being-in-soul of a desiring being split by the ethical law, that takes responsibility for the continued writing of the law and the continued shaping of the space which it has always shared with others, shares now and will always share. Thus a *positive ethical primal scene* is revealed.

The second chapter, *On the Primal Scene of Ethics*<sup>14</sup>, unfolds this approach in more detail. The concept of an *ethical primal scene* brings Jung's idea of the self in connection with the philosophical question of otherness. As opposed to an absolute *asymmetry* between subject and the oth-

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13 Neumann, 1990a, 134.

14 *On the Primal Scene of Ethics* was presented on the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Congress of Analytical Psychology, St. Petersburg 2012.

er/otherness a *symmetrical* position is introduced that neither neglects the other/otherness nor the subject. This is called a *positive ethical primal scene* combining the three indispensable ethical dynamics of *space*, *law* and *desire* which are seen as part of the *de-constitutive* dynamic of the self. It is argued that what can be called “good” is to be found in a positive primal scene where space, law, and desire are realised in their dependency on each being embraced by a self in all its difference. Both on the micro-ethical level and on the macroethical one constitution and deconstitution are recognised as two sides of the same coin instead of being split and projected onto their respective other. *Divergence* of the self is rejected, its *convergence* – i.e., self-difference concerns the subject as well as the other – favoured. In “our” shared self-difference we realise ourselves as a medium of becoming oneself: In terms of microethical realisation this is what *individuation* means; in terms of a macroethics it can be regarded to be the *most necessary of all possible worlds*.

Chapter 3, *Divergence and Convergence of the Self*<sup>15</sup>, leads us to Jung’s idea of a *self of mankind* and to the latest discussion on *cultural complexes*<sup>16</sup>. In contrast to the implicit *global* view of culture<sup>17</sup> and a *divergence* of the self, a *universal* view<sup>18</sup> and a *convergence* of self-difference are stressed, allowing for a better understanding of the relationship between individuals and collective/s and the relationships among collectives. In this connection, I address collective defence mechanisms against psychotic fears on the basis of de- and re-integrative processes manifesting themselves in the individual as well as in the collective. The challenge is to rea-

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15 The content of this chapter was presented at the IAAP-Congress in Montreal 2010 in a paper entitled *Self and Intercollectivity. Alterity, Antagonism, Archetype*.

16 Singer/Kimbles, 2004.

17 Differences are seen as external differences.

18 Differences are seen as internal differences, e.g., the unconscious as an *inner alterity* which initiates and also disturbs the constitution of any identity (Santner, 2001).

lise that every constitution of identity depends on de-integration. If this stays unconscious, the deintegrative aspect is often projected onto the other. The result then is a split in the ethical space, which is dominated by a cluster of archaic defence mechanisms, generating a self in divergence. If this becomes conscious the convergence of self-difference embracing both sides can serve as a medium of understanding and as a way to avoid the universalization of particular symbolic systems. This implies dealing with political antagonism in a responsible way.

In the fourth chapter, *Towards a Phenomediology of the Soul*<sup>19</sup>, I begin by observing that the present trend is to either completely suppress the psyche under the dominance of science or to captivate it directly by means of pictograms to an unprecedented extent. As the “unit of cognitive, emotional and affective conditions and achievements”<sup>20</sup> psyche is seen as a physical condition bound to brain structures and processes. However, it turns out that *disseminative*<sup>21</sup> and *delocutive*<sup>22</sup> processes play an important role, just as the urge to act out affects and intensities does. This reminds us of archaic ideas regarding the soul (Homer), on one hand, and of the later appealing integration of diverse centres of excitability in an inner and relatively autonomous and self-reflective unit called *psyché* (Plato, Aristotle), on the other. The extension of the central nervous system claimed on the basis of digital technologies into the globality of a world connecting network (McLuhan) seems to be a further indication of these ancient ideas reappearing in a new guise. Now it is no longer the “soul of the world” guaranteeing a sense-making and organized cosmos, but the world-connecting

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19 This was a presentation given at the International Congress on Psychology of Religion, Vienna 2009. Its title was *Between Heaven and Earth: Psyche, Religion, Media*.

20 Roth, 2005, 37.

21 Messages are directed to anonymous receivers (Deleuze, 1997).

22 Acts of communication can be independent of intentionality and conscious expression.

ICT-net, in which all media converge. Against this backdrop I will show that psyche can be seen as a *medium*, i.e., a self-different, sense-generating process of change<sup>23</sup> (*mediamorphosis*) transforming what we usually connect with mind or matter. Psyche's self-difference belongs neither to one side nor to the other but is located "between"<sup>24</sup> mind and matter, between inside and outside, between subject and object, between the individual and the collective. This *phenomediological* perspective of the soul proves to be a genuine subject of research for psychoanalysis as well as psychotherapy sciences<sup>25</sup> underlining the key role of two aspects of imagination (*imaginary* and *imaginal*) forming the *psychoid* basis of any ontology and of any ethical belief.

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23 Notice that the term *medium* in an ultimate dimension is an *ontological* one: *Omne ens est medi-ens* (Burda, 2011).

24 "Between" does not mean that psyche is located in the *mundus imaginalis* (Corbin) as a third ontological realm besides the realms of mind and matter. Instead what is addressed as mind or matter is embedded in and depends on medial processes (*immediability*). This is an important difference to Archetypal Psychology which does not raise the question of the status of fantasy, the fantasy concerning fantasy: images disclose a plurality of archetypal worlds (Hillman, 1977); the *ontological status of fantasy* and of the archetypal worlds is *imaginal*. This is only one side of the coin of *imagination's self-difference* because the *imaginary* aspect of the *psychoid* psyche is missing. Archetypal Psychology thus fails to avoid a literal understanding precisely because the sentence that everything is structured by imagination is itself understood *literally* and not on an imaginative (psychoid) basis. Pure imaginal understanding that neglects its self-difference is the reason why I prefer to speak of *ontomediology* and *phenomediology* instead of ontology and phenomenology (see also Brooke, 1993, who connects the world-disclosive quality of imaginal phantasms with Heidegger's *intentionality* and Merleau-Ponty). In this respect being is not something that simply exists but a *being-in-passages* due to medial processes.

25 Burda, 2012.

## *1. C.G. Jung: Ethics in the Shadow of the Father*

### 1.1. The Question of Hysteria

Let me begin by first taking a closer look at the two terms that figure so prominently in the title: ethics and the father. As far as ethics is concerned, there is a proliferation of a variety of ethical concepts some of which are contradictory. In response to this there are critical voices talking of inflation, a dread of principles, even of nihilism. However, ethics itself – this should not be forgotten – already reflects an awareness of crisis and of splits that are in part irreparable<sup>26</sup>. This can be traced from ancient times, through the Middle Ages and up to the present. As far as the present is concerned, modern psychoanalysis in particular laments the decline of patriarchal power and the proliferation of uninhibited excesses in a *post-patriarchal* era. In my view this diagnosis does in fact seem to lead to the very heart of the ethical – although not in the same way intended. For it could ultimately prove to be that talking of a post-patriarchal era does not refer to a new era at all but to a fantasy intrinsic in the father. This means another way of using the imaginary of the patriarchy in order to establish new structures of authority and at the same time to veil something that is essentially includable.

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26 Adorno, 1997.

The ethical deflation seen today could in fact also have something to do with this. Seen in this light, pluralism could be an expression of an inevitable ongoing restructuring that has to do with the character of ethical law and its implicit power as well as with the inconclusive nature of desire. Against this backdrop it strikes me as all the more important to work out an ethically relevant dynamic that can provide an initial point of orientation. One of them – and I have already indicated it with the word patriarchy – now appears under the heading the father. I will use this term primarily to reflect upon the relationship to the father archetype, to the collective great father who in Jungian discourse – as befits a good father – mostly shines through his absence while nonetheless having a hidden effect. I would therefore like to discuss the father *archetype* as an indispensable constant of the *ethical primal scene* and suggest a new interpretation for the word archetype. Jung emphasises again and again: the archetype has no moral attributes. The father, for example, is a type of non-antithetical consciousness that is characterised as amoral, inferior and inconsistent. The father-son relationship is seen as an example of *participation mystique*.

If we now, as mentioned, merge the word archetype with *ethos*, we get the *archetype* written with “th”, firstly in order to underline that it is about an ethical potential, that the examination in itself demands an individuation effort – and for this it is necessary to understand the paradoxical structure of the archetype. Secondly, this word emphasises that it is a question of an ethical dynamic that precedes the singular consciousness of a structure that is *not* reducible to the empirical<sup>27</sup> but is quasi-transcendental, i.e., a proviso for the possibility that a human being can be an ethical being. In short, before there is a human subject, there has always been a law and – we can also immediately add – a social space that is structured by the

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27 Lacan, 1997, 254.

law. Both, law and space, are essential aspects of the primal scene of the ethical subject and are of the same origin. Two important ethical dynamics are thus taken as subjects and in the following I would like to argue that Jung and Neumann both misinterpret the ethical law as well as the ethical space. The reason for this misinterpretation can be found in the hysterical shadow and in a particular lack of understanding for the depressive side of the father relationship. And I would also like to put forward the interpretation that behind Jung's and Neumann's manifest attempt to transcend the father as law there is the latent tendency to enthrone him again. So while the father should be rejected on a conscious level, he is reinstated at an unconscious level. Jung's and Neumann's writings on ethics are thus informed by an unconscious restorative wish.

This way of looking at the father archetype also has implications for ethics *in general*. Ethics can never be substantiated simply in empirical terms (as, for example, assumed by evolutionary, psychobiological, neurobiological, and cerebrophysiological approaches). Rather, ethics is *quasi-transcendental*, meaning that it comes from noetic capacities and their corresponding noematic meaning content, which have their origin in human desires that cannot be defined merely naturalistically or empirically. This desire is no blind drive pushing for fulfilment but it is rather composed *intersubjectively* – and thus dependent on thought, on language, and on the communication of language. With desire we now have before us, after the ethical law and the ethical space, the third constant of the primal scene of the ethical – a triad of law, space and desire. With the intersubjective composition of desire, *anthropotechniques* also come to bear –, techniques by means of which people form and rear people (education). There is the idea that there is ethical violence and that ethics is itself rooted in the amoral (Nietzsche, Freud) and should for this reason alone be questioned – which

also means that ethics is process-like and open-ended – and that ethical law must always be questioned as to its good, precisely because it is invariably allied with ethical violence, i.e., with the decision about life and death and with the decision about what a person is/should be and what not<sup>28</sup>.

Now I come to my main topic, namely the ethical violence of Jung's self in connection with the father archetype. Here the father is the central theme as a representative of the self (Neumann) and of the symbolic order (Lacan). I would like to show that Jung's – as well as Neumann's – writings on ethics ultimately remain in the shadow of the father. This does not mean that the father has a shadow but that the self cannot – as postulated – be separated from the father, precisely because one's *own* hysterical shadow remains unconscious. I previously spoke about splits and crisis consciousness, as one finds reflected in Erich Neumann's *Depth Psychology and New Ethics* (1948/49). The solutions that Neumann offers shortly after experiencing the horrors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War are: 1) Conscious acceptance of the shadow in order to escape unconscious identification with the mass and collective archetypal shadow potential. We will be asking which shadow it is about. 2) Separation from the super-ego as a conventional and acquired ethical law. 3) It is a question of a new-old image of god: of a divinity that is light *and* darkness.

Here we have touched on an ambiguity that also appears in other Jewish thinkers (Fackenheim, Herschel, Lévinas): the ambiguity of God as *creator AND murderer*. In other words, the absolute ethical commandment, the *Thou shalt not kill*, does not apply to the one who set up the commandment. This is where we already see the decisive paradox: in the final analy-

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28 In his *Stories of Mr Keuner* Bert Brecht gives us a good example of what it is at the heart of this ethical violence: What do you do when you love someone? Mr K. was asked. I make an image of that person, Mr K. replied, and make sure they match. What? The image matches? No, said Mr K., the person.

sis, the law collapses into its absolute opposite. Jung's attitude in *Answer to Job* (1952/1992) also perhaps takes this as its starting point, when the individual being thinks he has "morally" (ibid. 408) surpassed his creator, with "consciousness" being the decisive "moral criterion" (ibid. 436). The *son* is more conscious than the "inferior" (ibid. 407), "amoral" (ibid. 371) father. In view of this contradictory nature of the father god, the decisive question is how the human being will from now on ethically justify his actions when this moral authority no longer applies. Jung's answer, as for instance in the essay *Das Gewissen in psychologischer Sicht* (1957/58/95), is ambivalent: "The power of ethos [...] flows empirically from two sources, from reason and grace". The subjective ethical decision is thereby bound to a paradoxical dichotomy and unpredictability – namely: to the self and its antinomies. "As a totality the self is all the more dark the more that consciousness makes a claim to moral authority" (Jung, 1952/1992, 445). With this answer Jung leaves unanswered *who* is ultimately responsible and in my opinion this springs from a typical basic characteristic of hysterical desire: not wanting to know and concealing what one perhaps already knows. How is this to be understood? You may perhaps ask what the self in the Jungian sense has to do with hysteria.

If we are talking about hysteria here it is because in hysteria – and here I am following a thought of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan<sup>29</sup> – a basic characteristic feature of human desire *in general* is expressed. I would now like to take a closer look at this: in Lacan desire is symbolic-linguistic desire. As a linguistic being an individual is initiated into language and thereby into a social and simultaneously ethical structure by the collective *symbolic* father. The symbolic father (the "name-of-the-father", the "*Herrensignifikant*" from whom everything acquires its meaning) how-

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29 Lacan, 1991; 2004.

ever, has a cleft foot, a *failing*: he is an "impostor". The symbolic realm, thus language, is forcibly constructed, through naming things it creates a reality that can never completely describe and encompass the reality behind it. If a person grows into a cultural context, he essentially never knows *why* everything is as it is. However, it is exactly this question that hysteria poses: it turns to the other with the question *What do you want from me?*, or more precisely, *What do you want me to be (for you)?* The other is thereby made into a master to whom knowledge is imputed that he does not in fact have. It is not precisely about this knowledge, because hysteria itself is aware of the cleft foot, about the deficiency or self-difference of the other, it knows that the other fundamentally cannot know. Nevertheless it makes him into a master. *Why?*

The answer is to control him and to keep the process going through continual frustration. Enticed by a rich repertoire, the other thinks that it is a question of a knowledge that he continually attempts to respond to (Freud's first patients) without of course being able to do so. However, it is for this very reason that the process becomes open-ended because for hysteria it is not about the knowledge of the other but about the other's *desire*. It is a question of the desire of the other, to which the hysterical subject makes itself the object through these masquerades: it is the carrot in front of the master-donkey, who will consequently continue moving forwards – perhaps somewhat grumpily but still well-behaved. Thus the dependency relationship that is unconsciously sought remains intact. Hysteria strives to compensate the deficiency *of the other* in its imagination – its motto is: *I am what is missing in you* (e.g. Christ, love, in God). And in that the deficiency of the other is supposedly compensated for in the imaginary, one's own deficiency is also compensated for. This is exactly what the hysterical

subject conceals from itself: that it also has a deficiency that can never be fulfilled.

## 1.2. Shadow and Self in Theory and Political Practice

To come back to Jung and Neumann, what does this hysterical desire have to do with the self and a new ethic? To answer this question we must once again turn to the father. We have already encountered the father as the *symbolic* father at the centre of culture which, through law, combines forbidden and protective aspects. Emotive images are entwined around this symbolic father – the *imaginary* father, who is idealised or demonised in a wide panoply of figures (Freud's *Urvater*, Jung's *Vatergott*). I will now focus on the father as the representative of the self. According to Neumann the self is, "depending on its stage of development, incarnated in an archetype without being identical to it" (1990b, 200). The "transformation of the self" also always requires the killing of the hitherto highest value, which on a patriarchal level amounts to deicide. In this connection we could also quote from Jung's essay *The Transformation Symbol in the Mass*: "As long as the self is unconscious, it corresponds to the super ego" (1941/42/1992, 276). Thus on the one hand, there is a sense that the separation of the self from the father is necessary. On the other hand, this separation of the self from the father is approached on the level of the *father as law*.

The rejection of Freud's super ego as a "patriarchal obsolescence" in favour of the "voice with the character of the son" is paradigmatic for this. I think that this rejection is motivated by a mixing of the symbolic father function and the imaginary father. What is not realised in this mixing (of imaginary father and symbolic law) is that the required "patricide" (1990a, 123) *cannot* overcome the symbolic father, i.e., the ethical law, but actually

establishes the law. Here we think of Freud and his myth of the murdered *Urvater*. If these paradoxes of basic paternal constants, the grey zone of law and violence and one's *own* desire that struggles against this grey zone are unconscious, one remains *in the shadow* of the father and the required separation of the self from the father is doomed to fail. What is missing here is the decisive insight that each transgression of the law *must* at the same time be a redefinition of the law.

In order to not just leave this idea on a purely theoretical level I would like to illustrate it with two examples. The first is Neumann's imperative: "Whatever leads to wholeness is good, whatever leads to splitting is evil" (1990a, 128). The second is taken from Jung's life. This imperative sets up a law in which precisely what should have been excluded from the *New Ethics* returns: the formation of ideals and splits. Just this point – as a result of this imperative – should therefore be regarded as mistaken in Neumann. His *New Ethic* is also based on a splitting and is also a partial ethic. He thus discovers the paradox of the law, of the law that emerges through the inclusion of what should have been excluded. In the law-giving *sovereign*<sup>30</sup>, law and violence are ultimately indistinguishable – just think of the Ten Commandments. Each new position is a repetition of this violence<sup>31</sup>; there can be no *pure*, non-violent positing. In view of this violence one could ask why we need the law at all. Because – and this is its positive side – with its prohibitions and precepts, it provides something that is essential for life: protection. And, with the rejection of the symbolic father, this protection ceases to exist – and this, in turn, entails the threat of incest with the unconscious and the loss of the difference I/others, in brief: psychosis.

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30 See also Agamben, 2002.

31 Derrida, 1991, 83.

It is therefore necessary to recognise the indispensability of law. The insight that the ethical subject *is by necessity* split by a law is also connected to this recognition. In this regard Nietzsche speaks of *dividuum* and in Kant the moral law splits the ethical subject into sensual inclination and rational will. In Jung the ego is ultimately also split: in the self it certainly encounters the super ego supposedly rejected with the paternal extremes. Our illustration of this leads us into history – first to Nietzsche and Freud, and then to Hitler and the hysterical Germans, and finally to their ultimate enemy image – the Jew. Here I come to the second example to make this theory a little more colourful. It is about Jung's documented relationship to Nietzsche, who had already shattered paternal values to smithereens several decades before. An extremely contradictory picture emerges from this relationship: shy admiration and a notion of affinity are juxtaposed with damnation and pathologisation. In his essay *After the Catastrophe* Jung diagnoses Hitler as "Pseudologia phantastica", as "hysterical dissociation", where a person believes his own lies and is incapable of recognising his *own* guilt. The shepherd has become the wolf and the people the herd of sheep. In this essay Jung cites Faust and Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as witnesses of the coming catastrophe, from which it may have been possible to draw conclusions that may have prevented it from happening. What remains at the end is the torn apart Dionysus who is described by Jung, in his essay *Wotan* (1935/95, 213), as the "spontaneous emotional" and at the same time "intuitive inspiring side of the unconscious".

This god attacked Christianity on a wide front – the "ordering, justly administering even loving Mediterranean father". While in Switzerland this attack was only "simmering", in Germany, the "land of spiritual catastrophe" first the obsessed Nietzsche and then Hitler played with the blond beast. Europe became a "bloody swamp". But Wotan is not only explosive

ecstasy. He, the *double*, also has another side. He agonises about the secret of the world<sup>32</sup>. Some years later in Jung's *Memories* this other side emerges clearly. In the attempt to bridge his own inner conflict (No. 1 and No. 2) the adolescent had read, of all things, Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* and described his "secret fear" of being similar to him, which also turned out to be justified. Jung realised that he was driven "by the same spirit" as Nietzsche. His dangerously tempting shibboleth "Dionysus against the Crucified" was of course only half true. Nietzsche was just as much fascinated by the other side, the Crucified: by the one who had given himself up to the father and fulfilled the law.

Jung then sought and found this law in no less a figure than Freud. In the famous letter from 1910 Jung expresses his wish "to transform Christ back into the wise god of the grape and so make everything into a drunken celebration, where man can be an animal in ethos and holiness" (Jung/I, 38) with Freud's help. So what was Jung looking for? Simply put, he wanted to *renew Christianity dionysically*. Body-hating Christianity with its one-sided idealised image of God should be compensated for by the libidinous creative Dionysus and he, Dionysus, should be compensated for by a father who, although law-giving, is just as libidinous. In Freud the libidinous condenses with what curbs this drive, the paternal law with patricide, protection against psychosis with illusion that the law does not exist. Not "Freud versus Nietzsche" (Jaffé, 1982, 157), but Freud *with* Nietzsche: the *Übermensch* after the death of God and at the same time the one who had survived the rejection of the father and the incest with the unconscious. Unfortunately, Freud did not understand incest as symbolic and was quickly stigmatised as a neurotic.

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32 Schmitz, 1995, 52.

Jung's dream from 1911 indicates the changed situation: Freud appears as a churlish Habsburg customs officer protecting an endangered border against a threatened flood of slime – and Jung as a crusader from the 12th century in an Italian town looking for the Holy Grail. A Christianised German with a Jewish father. An ideal in shining armour. It is midday and the sun is at its highest point, the shadows small and difficult to discern. In another dream, this time from 1913, this dark side reacts and Jung's dream ego, accompanied by a brown-skinned savage, shoots the resplendent Siegfried. The German is no longer christianised and has rejected his Jewish father and the hope of resurrection and redemption placed in him. However, the symbolic paternal law, the law that *must* invariably split the moral subject, responds in a pressing impulse. The awakening Jung feels shame and guilt and, just about to shoot himself, struggles for understanding. He realises that the enforcement of his own heroic will no longer applies to him (Jaffé, 1982, 184): "there is something higher to which one must subject oneself". This indeed paves the way to the self – to the self and of course also to its fundamental lack of that moral indifference which we have already encountered in the father. However, what remains in the wake of the murder of Siegfried is primarily the brown-skinned savage, the primitive brown shadow, the representative of the will to power and an enormous destructive potential – but also the carrier of an unconscious guilt.

The political repercussions of this failed father-son-relationship appear in 1933/34 in Jung's remarks on *Verschiedenheit der germanischen und der jüdischen Psychologie* and *Zur gegenwärtigen Lage der Psychotherapie*. Dionysus-Wotan, the dark side of No. 2, has asserted itself, creating a precarious situation. Shortly afterwards, Jung deals with it in a way that is appropriate for the shadow. It is ousted, separated, rejected, and diagnosed as a *hysterical German shadow* whose prophet were Goethe and Nietzsche

– and a renounced Jewish father who is rejected along with the hysteria and at the same time once again enthroned. One might wonder what role is played by the hysterical German shadow in Jung's discourse. On the external stage it certainly provides justification for a "slip-up". The principle guiding this is typically hysterical: *everything depends on me but I cannot do anything about it*. In view of the threatened ban on psychotherapy by the Nazis Jung invokes scientific interest, collegiality and the "lively connection of German-language intellectual culture" and purports selflessly to sacrifice his "egotistical well-being" and his "different political disposition". On the esoteric level the hysterical shadow serves to complete the building of Jungian theory, since hysterical desire plays an important but suppressed role. However, in the self and on the "ego-self axis" (Neumann, 1990b, 18) this aspiration appears unveiled. In order to understand this we must take a closer look at the hysterical German shadow.

We have before us its declared enemy image in the figure of the *Jew*. In it we can see both sides of the rejected father: the paternal law AND its dark opposite, the excess of the law. Already in 1937 the Marxist psychoanalyst Fenichel had said that the Jew appears so sinister because archaic religious roots are associated with him – especially the killing of God. And this evoked, unpleasantly, Nietzsche's "God is dead – we have killed him." The Jew was therefore accused of what should not be – his own excessive enjoyment which, however, after the demise of God, was kept in check and at the same time perpetuated with the help of a phantasm, namely: the Jew oversteps the law and simultaneously re-establishes it. He becomes a reservoir of envy, jealousy, rivalry, guilt and hate – and the target of an absolutely destructive violence. In light of this phantasm that we have already encountered in Freud, we can now ask once again: what is the Jungian subject looking for? The answer: it is looking for a connection to the self, and

this itself is a compromise, since, on the ego-self-axis, one finds desire, the incestuous *thing* and the paternal law which forbids incest and provides protection from slipping into psychosis.

This now also means that the connection to the self, which actually should have overridden the dissociation of the ego, now more than ever inflicts the split on the ego again. However, this is hardly noticed because in the imaginary identification with the "creative fullness of one's own psychic abyss" (Neumann, 1990a, 138) impotence and omnipotence coincide and reverse restriction and trauma by virtue of one's own strong constitution. Desire can remain so vital *without* becoming excessive or psychotic. The erosion of symbolic authority is re-established through a symbolic belief. Autonomy develops and at the same time serves as a limitation, since a kind of mandate is created which makes it possible to assume a place in the symbolic universe. This means the role of the self, idealised as far as its creative-destructive shadow sides are concerned, can be re-enacted. The individual becomes a microscopic-microcosmic *monad* (Jaffé, 1982, 199 f) that contains everything it needs. This now has consequences for the *ethical content* of the self, because this self as a monad, as *my* self, moves dangerously close to narcissistic structures in which it is a question of self-preservation<sup>33</sup>, of concern for oneself and of a deceptive wholeness from which every other person and stranger remains excluded. In the hysterical dramatisation, the other is only the audience who should recognise what one would like to believe about oneself or it is a modification of "my" self and a projection screen for an inner "non-acquaintance with myself" (ibid. 361). A non-acquaintance that cannot know itself significantly and does not want to, for it is precisely this non-acquaintance that the ego actually encounters again in the self.

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33 See Spinoza's *conatus*.

So is it true that the experience of the self, as Jung writes (ibid. 341), bridges the "antithesis in the image of God"? Should we not rather assume that the image of God should help bridge the irreconcilable antithesis *in man*? It is not the *son* who bridges the antithesis in the father but the father *image* that bridges the antithesis *in the son*. It is not Jung who plays a role for God but the *image* of God that perhaps plays a role for him. And precisely in this image of God we once again encounter the rejected father. The father is thus the *paradigm of an abandonment* that shocks us just as much in this particular excluded element in order to enable a tragic illusory closure: the Jew, in whose name solidarity should be demanded since in truth he is *our* problem, as Sartre had already conceded. He is that excluded (*singular universal*) symptom with whom we must identify in order to recognise the deceptive hysterical closure as something illusory.

It is now becoming clear what I am trying to get at: it is – what else? – the desiring ego that is ethically responsible. Thus it is first and foremost a question of recognising that we are creatures of desire who need a law so as not to succumb to a deceptive and dangerous closure. We must therefore go back to where Jung and Neumann began their considerations of ethics, to the *participation mystique*, the matrix in which according to Jung all people are equal – to our "unconscious humanity". What is unconscious in this is perhaps only the circumstance that we are human – and that means that we have always been integrated in a social context (space) and made into people (law). This basic ethical dimension, the *primal ethical scene*, cannot be escaped by recourse to an inner *voice*. Because if "the moral problem of all of humanity, which at the same time is also that of the divinity, appears as a last stage 'after' the personal and collective shadow," as Neumann (1990a, 134) writes, then there is the question where the source

of the sworn solidarity and the "shift in focus towards the fraternal and human" (ibid. 137) can actually still be found.

Because of their negative omens neither *participation mystique*, which is basically a latent mass psychosis, nor the father can be the source of this solidarity. However, we can find this source if we trace the line of projection of the hysterical shadow to Nietzsche, Jung, Hitler, the hysterical Germans and finally to the Jews, a line of projection along which what is universally human is shifted to an excluded element ultimately ending up with the father and *participation mystique*: now, however, in a new guise. We must therefore first understand the antonymic structure of what relates to the law, i.e., the symbolic father as ethical potential, so that the split in the father image in the imaginary can be overridden – which leaves the symbolic father in place. To do this it is also necessary to examine the dark abyss of melancholy<sup>34</sup> from which hysteria turns away in horror in order to address the desire of others. Secondly, we must understand the *participation mystique* that has been devalued in its ethical content as a *participation éthique* – meaning as a fundamental and indispensable being-in-relation, as the expression of an ethical constant: the ethical space.

What is now with the self that can no longer be symbolized by the father and also not by the monad which one is supposed to be? In other words, what would the self be in the ethical dimension as an expression of an ethical potential or of an ethical horizon? I would like to suggest the following answer to this question: perhaps a potential of *responsibility*<sup>35</sup>: *participation éthique*, responsible being-in-soul. Split by the ethical law the ethical subject takes responsibility for the continued writing of the law and the

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34 Burda, 2005b.

35 Burda, 1998.

continued shaping of the space which it has always shared with others, shares now and will always share.

## 2. *On the Primal Scene of Ethics*

### 2.1. The Unconscious of Ethics

I would like to begin with a short case study. A 27-year-old man – let us call him Chris – undergoing analysis, has reached the point of his greatest fear: the world could be bad in the ultimate sense and its creator a sadistic demon. Early experiences with his reckless father provided the background of this phantasm. His father, who tormented his family in manifold ways, was a lawyer with criminal connections. The use of physical violence as well as psychic terror and acts of cruelty and punishment were accompanied by the slogan “You simply have to endure”<sup>36</sup>. Because the mother could not stand that any longer, she fled with their two children one night which took the father by complete surprise. His parents then got divorced, with the mother getting custody of the children. Chris’s childhood was overshadowed by constant worries about his mother, his elder sister and his beloved little cat. These anxieties were combined with feelings of shame and weakness which were projected especially onto his mother whom he looked down upon since she was seen as not being intelligent by comparison to the father, who was not only feared but also idealised because of his deceptive power. There was of course a high price for this idealisation because reality could never prove to be something solid that could be trusted. Chris combatted his paranoid fears and derealisations with alcohol, drugs and an arsenal of psychotechniques. His worst experience happened in an experience with the drug *Ayahuasca*. This liana is used as a holy commun-

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36 See Wurmser, 1993.

ion in the so-called Ayahuasca churches in Brazil and in other regions of the Amazons. In Quechua the name means “liana of the dead” or “tendril of souls”. After a start with pleasant images the scenery all of a sudden changed rapidly and Chris experienced the world as inhabited by cruel and threatening reptiles. Panic arose. To escape he wanted to commit suicide. However, the leader of the drug ritual prevented him from throwing his life away. And this was paradoxically the ultimate terror, the fact that he was not allowed to kill himself, that he was kept within a space that was not human, and that he had to stand the horror for hours until the effect of the drug wore off. In this situation he was not able to realise that there was also something good happening – the leader of the ritual had noticed his fear and saved his life. In analysis we spoke about dreams in which he and his sister were tormented. In other dreams he was a punk living in deserted churches and derelict houses, something he had actually done in his teens. In other dreams again he found himself confronted with architects and boat builders, whom he did not dare to trust. During our sessions the demon father was on the one hand idealised, but also rejected, yet returning in his son’s paranoid fears. The incalculable world creator entered transference from time to time and raised the question if there could be something good despite his fear of the metaphysical Evil he had been expecting all over his life. Finally Chris acknowledged that not everything could be evil, especially because there was at least a stage of indignation about the inhumane and injustice. We talked about Job and the question, where the Good could come from and have its source. In the course of analysis his fears began to diminish and so did his excessive abuse of alcohol. He even managed to finish his studies in philosophy. In his dreams he began to mediate between one of his peers who represented the cowardly civil life – something Chris longs for even though he finds it boring – and a dreadful punk who broke

into houses and killed people. Slowly *his* destructive energy emerged as an important topic.

I presented this story as a way to approach the topic *ethics and alterity*. Ethics asks after a life that can be called good and alterity refers to the absolute otherness that cannot be integrated in an autonomous subject. From history we know that ethical concepts differ in their orientation; they represent a particular belief over which one can argue, but as history has shown there is no ultimate point of reference that could serve as a basis of universalisation. It is generally assumed that ethics is something one feels committed to or not. Besides, ethics is accompanied by a dark shadow, it depends on ethical power, as good can be evil and vice versa. In other words, ethics implies a kind of self-difference. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century writers such as Derrida, Lacan, Lévinas and others have pointed out that the encounter with otherness is a trauma for any self-centred unity, be it called subject, ego, or self. Following these lines of philosophical exploration it is impossible to refer to an ultimate point revealing itself as the absolute source in the generation of sense; as a consequence any kind of legitimisation ends in paradoxes and antinomies. The topic of alterity developed mainly as a reaction to the abysses of two world wars or of the Holocaust that destroyed any kind of *metaphysics of presence* as well as any kind of totalitarian thinking. As you probably know, centuries before it was already the earthquake of Lisbon that took place on All Saints' Day in 1755 which for the first time raised the question of *theodicy* among the thinkers of the Age of Enlightenment (Kant, Voltaire), the question how such a catastrophe could be understood in connection with a God who represents the Good.

Let us turn to Jung. In his book *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* he uses the term “the foreign” (das *Fremde*) which consciousness has to face. In other words, Jung encounters the foreign, calling it the *numinous*, which in his

eyes could either be called “God or the unconscious”. But contrary to the contemporary ethics of alterity which stresses an absolute dimension of otherness which cannot be addressed, integrated or overcome, Jung proposes the possibility of communication between consciousnesses, the ego and the *ignotum X*. This sets him off essentially from authors who prefer the previously mentioned asymmetry between the self-conscious and transcendental ego and otherness. Concepts of alterity constitute a sharp contrast to a psychoanalytic concept describing a self that can be understood as a kind of *monad* or essence<sup>37</sup>. If everything discloses something that is only unknown to what is called a self-transparent consciousness, ego or self, the danger of self-closure emerges. Of course, we should not reduce Jung this kind of monadic exploration of the self, because he is also a forerunner of intersubjectivity in the analytic setting. In the analytic setting both individuals are involved in the process in an equal way, the analysand as well as the analyst. The analytic situation is a field of medial interdependency.

*The other is the medium of my becoming myself and vice versa.* Yet it is obvious that Jung’s view also implies an asymmetry as does the primacy of alterity. If in one case the other is reduced to a projection of the subject, then it becomes evident that in the other case it is the sovereignty of the other or otherness in general that dominates the subject. As already mentioned, Jung proposes the possibility of encountering the other by means of imagination. Encountering the other means entering the realm of images we share via the realm of the collective unconscious. The danger, however, lies in confusing the other with the image one has in one’s mind.

Is there a way to negotiate these extreme positions – on the one hand, the primacy of the subject and, on the other hand, the primacy of alterity,

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37See Jaffé, 1982, 199.

the primacy of an absolute otherness? And can we clarify what can be called “good” in this connection? I will approach these questions in two steps: 1) First, I will discuss the difficult relationship between the individual and the other in terms of a *de-constitutive* dynamic of the self. 2) Second, I will introduce the model of a *primal scene* in ethics.

Now to my first point: the term *de-constitution* refers to the idea that the self, introduced by Jung, takes place as a dynamic embracing *identity AND difference* without one being reduced to the other. Following this perspective the self can be described as a *self-difference* that implies a gap within itself that is never to be closed completely. It is exactly this gap which functions as the driving force (*spiritus rector*) in the formation and transformation of identity and in the production of sense in the individual as well as in the collective. From this perspective identity is based on and bound to the encounter with otherness and any kind of self-evidence is informed by differences. As a consequence, consciousness can be understood as a *realisation of self-difference* at any given moment. Summing up this point it can be said that otherness concerns the subject not only from within – something the term *unconscious* as an *inner* alterity already implies –, but also from the outside, because the individual inhabits a social and political world that is shared with others. The individual subject and the others are involved and engaged in a *symmetrical* dynamic of constitution that is contingent upon the other. The generation of sense and the formation of the respective self in the individual as well as in the collective is always dependent on the confrontation with differences and on the transformation – or better: de-constitution – of identities. This is something we all share: *we are media of becoming ourselves to each other. We share a self-difference*

*that at the same time connects and separates us from ourselves as well as from others<sup>38</sup>.*

Now to my second point. How can we connect this with our question *unde bonum* and with our search for the Good which I will approach by means of the term *primal scene*? The term *primal scene* (*Urszene*) was coined by Freud who originally understood it as the initial witnessing by a child of a sex act between the parents. Later he broadened his understanding by seeing it mainly as an expression of pure imagination, which created the psychic background of his patients. However, I will use this term in a different way to describe three indispensable *anthropological dynamics* which we have to take into consideration when we are speaking of ethics. These are the ethical *space*, the *law* and the *desire*. In general, we can assume that we as human beings are always embedded in a space we create (a culture, a family, a community). This space is always structured by certain laws and rules which regulate our desire, telling us what is allowed and what is forbidden. While space as a symbol and psychic factor evokes maternal qualities, law evokes paternal ones. On the one hand, space and law give rise to individual desire, on the other hand, they themselves are generated by means of this very desire<sup>39</sup>. In other words, the three dynamics depend on each other. Each one is the precondition of the other ones.

When studying the history of ethics one always finds one of these aspects at the centre of man's search for the Good. Some ethics prefer community – the ethical space (Aristotle, MacIntyre, Walzer, etc.) – some prefer law (Kant, Rawls, etc.), while yet others place the individual and its de-

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38 I suggest to call this a *divergence* of self-difference (see chapter 3).

39 This is a *quasi-transcendental* relationship, because each factor can be regarded as the precondition of the others. Or, in terms of an *anthropomediological* approach: a) we are media to ourselves; b) space, law, and desire can also be seen as media being dependent on each other.

sire at the centre of their ethic interest (Nietzsche, Jung, etc.). In this connection, one could speak of an *unconscious of ethics*, because some aspects are often ignored in order to stress the aspect the respective writer favors. It is interesting to note that the other aspects which are marginalized are nevertheless assumed to be a prerequisite for the respective ethical design.

Behind these approaches we find a reference to God or to community or to future generations and so on. To put it in a nutshell: One could say that *every ethical approach – consciously or not – refers to and is bound to a space that is structured by a law that regulates the individual's desire.*

This applies not only to philosophical ethics but also to any kind of theory or way of life. By way of illustration I will cite two examples:

- a) We can ask ourselves what kind of ethical primal scene a scientific view of the world would imply. By doing this we ask in what way space, law and desire are related. At best science yields to a blind urge to which we as natural beings are subjected to but not to free will. Doing that, we face a *negative* ethical primal scene. Nature understood as a space is like a prison governed by a relentless merciless law. Considering this one can understand that man tries to control nature by aspiring to a hypothetical technology that might enable him to manipulate the most elementary qualities at the lowest level of matter at some point in the future. If matter and information are one and the same, nature can be manipulated or even replaced by technical projects. Nature thus loses its nightmarish regime and horror.
- b) We can also ask ourselves which type of primal scene is implied in theology, basing the dignity of Man on the assumption that Man is the image of God and a being that is capable of distinguishing between right and wrong and that is endowed with a free will. However, Man can never be as free as his creator. This is shown, for instance, by the well-documented discus-

sion<sup>40</sup> between *pantheism* (God is immanent in the world) and *panentheism* (God stays transcendent but has established a close relationship with the world and its beings). Man can never employ this kind of divine freedom because he has never had the choice of coming into existence or not. His being an image of God has a flaw. Concerning our topic, this circumstance reveals a misbalance between space, law, and desire in the dimension of ethics because desire is generally regarded as sinful and therefore placed under a law which does exactly what it forbids Man to do. The Fifth Commandment admonishes man not to kill, threatening to exclude him from the ethical, i.e., the good space if he sins. Space is thus split by the divine law into heaven and hell. Nietzsche was among the first to describe this dialectic of law and desire: the forces that are responsible for establishing moral codes emerge from the same source as those they are trying to curb. Concerning law this means that it is always followed by a shadow because it includes what it intends to exclude.

## 2.2. The Most Necessary of all Possible Worlds

Let us now turn to Analytical Psychology. How can Jung's ethical primal scene be described? We know that Jung struggled with overcoming the patriarchal image of God all his life. His primal scene is dominated by a negative phantasm. His fight is against a repressive paternal law (super-ego) that should be overcome by the relation between the self and the individual subject. With regard to our subject, this means that law as well as space have less value than his concept of individuation. Law is reduced to the super-ego, downgrading space as *participation mystique*. Jung's solution is: relation to the self. Yet, encountering the antinomies of the self,

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40 See Clayton, 1996.

which is in fact the paradox of light and shadow – reminding us of Manichean concepts – the old problems emerge because one never knows if in what Jung called *the voice* it is God that speaks or the devil. If the self is as paradoxical as described, then one might wonder where the ethical orientation targeting the Good should in fact come from. Because turning from the outside world to an inner life, the individual after all faces alterity and difference in the assumed inner relation to the self. If the self is in fact a *complexio oppositorum* and thus a self-difference, it reflects the split of the subject<sup>41</sup>.

So the question still remains: where does the Good come from? Talking about the Good<sup>42</sup> means to enlighten oneself about the Evil. Good and Evil are interdependent. They cannot be separated from each other. In Jung's eyes tradition has reduced Evil to a lack of Good. In *Aion* Jung discusses the doctrines of the *privatio boni* according to which God is the *Summum Bonum*. He quotes St. Augustine and other Church Fathers: *Si Deus est, unde malum? ... Et si non est, unde bonum? ... Nulla est substantia mali ... Omne bonum a Deo, omne malum ab homine* (1976/89, 60 ff.). For Jung this clearly diminishes the Evil because the Evil must have existed before man came into existence. The Good is thus derived from the knowledge of Evil that is the same as unconsciousness. Consciousness is therefore seen as the “decisive moral criterion” (1952/92, 436). Man is not only the creator of Evil but also of Good. Yet his consciousness is placed on uncertain ground, because the totality of the self, hidden in the unconscious, is “the darker the more consciousness tries to maintain its moral authority” (1957/95, 44).

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41 Remember Jung's warning: “If an inner fact is not made conscious then it occurs as fate outside” (1995, 80).

42 See Moore, 1996.

Although Jung argues against a tradition stressing that there should be no misbalance assumed between Good and Evil, the reference to an inner self is not able to solve the problem, for by encountering the self as restricted to an inner factor the individual faces exactly that alterity enabling and also threatening individuation. It faces what constitutes as well as de-constitutes the individual and the social life shared with others. In other words, regarding the self, the internal and external world merge. Seen from this perspective it makes no sense to insist on either a primacy of alterity or that of an individual connected to the self because in both cases a *negative* ethical primal scene is generated. When either the ego or the other maintain the primacy, then the self as an embracing factor ultimately *diverges*. Divergence means that the encounter with otherness cannot take place in a positive and symmetrical manner. Instead, constitution and de-constitution are pitted against each other. As a consequence the other is separated from what is referred to as "my" self. In that case, it is the de-constitutive moment of the self in particular, which is experienced as a threat and therefore fended off and projected onto the other<sup>43</sup>.

How should we deal with this dilemma? Let us begin with a thought experiment. What would happen if we free the individual and self from their narcissistic entanglement and try a kind of "oedipal" solution implying a social<sup>44</sup> one? This is exactly what the term ethical primal scene implies. As I have shown in other contexts<sup>45</sup>, even the connection to the self could be understood in this way and insofar as a compromise, because the so-called *ego-self-axis* connects the incestuous desire for the self (the maternal *thing*) with the paternal law forbidding the fusion and identification of ego and self. Exactly by means of this limitation desire can stay vital without be-

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43 See chapter 1.

44 See also von Raffay, 2006.

45 Burda, 2005a.

coming inflated or, even worse, psychotic. Desire is thus granted a place in the symbolic universe and, by extension, in a space shared with others. In the field of ethics the relation to the self, in which the individual appears as a “filiation” can now be interpreted as a placement in a social field of *responsibility*<sup>46</sup>: What formally was seen as a *participation mystique* by Jung, the ethical and political space we share with others – is now no longer reduced to a mass psychosis, that can erupt any time, but implies a *participation éthique*, a responsible and shared being-in-soul (*esse in anima*), an ethical space, in which the subject may at the same time be linked with the others and also separated from them<sup>47, 48</sup>.

Bearing this in mind, we can now ask: How could the difficult relationship between subject and other be understood more precisely? As we have seen, the encounter with the real other can be a traumatic experience for both sides. Remember that according to Lacan the subject is never able to know if it shall be killed, loved, devoured, abused, abandoned or tormented by the other’s unconscious. The other is able to de-centralise the subject and is in return mistaken and treated as an object by the subject. As I have shown, in both cases there is the danger of getting entangled in a negative primal scene. Either the primacy of the other’s otherness deprives the subject of its breath, thus degrading it – literally understood – to a subjected *sub-ject*. Or the subject insists on its autonomous self-constitution exclude-

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46 Burda, 1998.

47 Let me mention an amplification by Nancy (2003) quoting Freud: “Psyche is stretched, does not know it”. The psyche is stretched, a space creating movement on the one hand, being itself created by medial movements on the other. Regarding the self, this means that the other and the subject are embraced in a de-constitutive dynamic. The other is the medium of my individuation and vice versa. Seen from a different perspective, this also means that the self itself is part of this quasi-transcendental movement.

48 In this connection let me also mention the *Extended-Mind-Theory* (Chalmers, 2009) and the newly awoken interest in *panpsychism* or *animism* (Descola, 2011).

ing the other. It thus ignores that the other is in any case the medium of individuation.

It is exactly this fundamental dependency on the other that is indispensable for finding one's own individuality. For this very reason identity is never a return of an autonomous entity to itself incorporating all difference but rather implies a self-difference that cannot be overcome. Identity implies difference and has to deal with difference in the very dimensions of space, law and desire. It is striking that in both versions – coming either from the subject or from the other – the integrative moment of the other's self-constitution is described as de-integrative for the other part. In one instance, it is the other made into an object by the subject, in another it is the subject being de-centralised by the other. Instead of understanding *both* instances in terms of a respective movement of de-constitution both are pitted against each other. The de-integrative moment of self-difference is thus warded off and projected onto the respective other, with the relationship being frozen in an absolute asymmetry and divergence. In other words, in a negative primal scene. The prevailing law destroys the ethical space. It topples over into its opposite, into its shadow, generating a space that is lawless.

Up to here, we were able to ascertain a divergence of the self in a negative ethical primal scene. What both positions are lacking is the awareness that the de-constitutive process of the self at the same time connects and separates the subject and the other in their respective self-difference. Favoring a positive and symmetrical approach would mean accepting a certain unrest. It is exactly this permanent unrest of a respective de-constitution that keeps desire alive and social space open. With respect to desire, this demands an examination of the qualities of the prevailing space and law. This is exactly what *individuation* can be re-defined as. Its basis is

the realisation of the law's shadow<sup>49</sup> on one hand and the depressive treatment of the loss of the other who has to be mourned for<sup>50</sup>.

We can now start to ask what can be called “good”. The Good is not to be found in the *best of all possible worlds* (Leibniz) but in the *most necessary of all possible worlds*. The most necessary of all possible worlds is that one in which we have become conscious of the problem of convergence. The challenge is to deal with desire in a way in which freedom and necessity have been reconciled so that we can become engaged in a world that is to be called good. *The most necessary of all possible worlds is the world of a positive primal scene*. Regarding ethics space, law, and desire are recognised as indispensable dynamics. Regarding the self, constitution and deconstitution are recognised as two sides of one coin instead of being split and projected onto the respective other. Divergence of the self is rejected, its convergence favoured. Convergence means that self-difference concerns the individual as well as the other. It is the common ground we share being unfolded in the triad of space, law, and desire. In “our” self-difference we realise ourselves as a medium of becoming oneself. The other functions as the medium for one's own individuation and vice versa. Consciousness understood as realisation of self-difference is respected as the “decisive moral criterion” (1952/92, 436).

What does the idea of an ethical primal scene in connection with a self, being understood as a medium of sense mean for Analytical Psychology? Traditionally, Analytical Psychology advocates the importance of the individual. However, this is too little because the individual is never a solitary entity and has to come to grips with its desire within a social sphere that is structured by a certain law. The way, the individual does that, will shape

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49 Derrida, 1991; Burda, 2005a; 2008a.

50 Samuels, 1989; Beebe, 1992; Burda, 2005b.

the future of the ethical and political space. It is internally as well as externally constantly exposed to its and the other's otherness. On the one hand, Jung clearly saw that consciousness is the “decisive moral criterion”. What he did not see clearly enough is the danger of a self being understood as a *monad*. The concept of an ethical primal scene can help to avoid this trap. It neglects neither the individual's desire nor the otherness of the other. Instead, both demands are combined in the process of individuation in the de-constitutive process of self-difference. The de-constitutive aspects need neither be dislodged from the self nor from alterity. Instead both poles open themselves to their respective self-difference. Thus the self becomes a medium of sense embracing subject and other in a symmetrical relationship and de-constitutive dynamic. In terms of ethics it can be described as an *archetype*<sup>51</sup>, as an ethical potential of responsibility.

The orientation towards a good world and towards an ethical horizon does not mean following an unrealistic utopian dream that gives reality a lie. It is the very acceptance of manifold limitations that the engagement with the Good and the Evil demands. To be oriented towards what could be called good and wishful does not imply limitlessness. The other and one-self are indeed not to be reduced to an image or a definition. The ethical horizon is not an inhumane ideal for it includes failure opening a space, in which the law neither excludes the other nor the individual but grants them to be embedded in a space that contains the self in all its difference.

This is illustrated by the short case study with which I began my lecture and with which I will also end it. Under extremely dire circumstances, the young man jumped over his shadow and wrote his father a letter asking for help. His father did not react to this letter. The negative primal scene which

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51 Archetype written with “th” is a neologism combining the Greek words *ethos* and *arché* to underline the ethical postulate.

had defined his life up to that moment seemed to confirm itself again. However, that did not happen. There might have been anger, disappointment, and sadness but the destructive absoluteness had given way to a positive motivation enabling Chris to extend his hand to his father even though it was not taken and rejected. This was accepted. The world, the ethical space of *participation éthique*, is no longer ruled by the deliberate law of a sadistic demon demanding masochistic submission. The world did not threaten to break apart every moment, because he could feel his responsibility for his own destructiveness and desire. A space was established in which the law did not exclude the other in his otherness, but granted him to be embedded in the self in all its difference.

Let me summarize: I spoke of three indispensable dynamics that constitute an ethical primal scene by virtue of which individual as well as social life is disclosed: space, law, and desire. I brought these dynamics into relation with Jung's term *self*, understood as a *de-constitutive process* of generating sense and identities. I suggested the term *self-difference* stressing that self AND difference, constitution and de-constitution belong together, *without* reducing one to the other. This enables us to avoid the primacy of a self without difference as well as the primacy of otherness without a minimal basis of self-reference. The process of de-constitution concerns the individual (*microethical* level, individuation) as well as the social body (*macroethical* level, "self of mankind"). The idea is that a) we are media to ourselves, and b) space, law, and desire are also seen as media being dependent on each other. In practice this means avoiding univeralisations of one's own particular belief and projecting the deconstitutive aspect onto the other/s causing a split. Concerning this I spoke of a *convergence* of the self (we converge in our shared self-difference) in contrast to a *divergence* of the self. Thereby the other is regarded as the medium of becoming one-

self and vice versa. Describing the self as an *archetype*, as an ethical potential of *responsibility*, does not imply limitlessness. Yet there is such a moment of limitlessness to be found because self-difference implies a *universality* that is beyond identification with particular aspects like species, culture, nationality, sex or language. The exposure to self-difference implies a radical and excessive dimension embracing the humane and the inhumane in permanent de-constitution. This exposure raises the central ethical question *Who shall die and who not*. But this radical moment goes even beyond the single (human) being, the social body, and the question *Who shall die and who not*: it touches the very idea of ethics itself and its astonishing dependency on fragile and self-different beings.

### 3. Divergence and Convergence of the Self

#### 3.1. Global versus Universal

Let me turn now to processes of forming identity in the individual as well as in the collective. I will address them in connection with the terms *alterity*, *antagonism* and *archetype*. It has already been observed by Thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Lacan, Lévinas, and Derrida that any kind of identity is an illusion. According to them identity depends on something that has to be defined as something else and different, which regularly is excluded. Nevertheless, the other or alterity in general remains the medium of becoming oneself. This is a contradiction we must reckon with when we talk about a self. In Analytical Psychology the self is meant to be the archetype of wholeness and of sense, which also contains a potential of conflict. As you may know, the self means a *coincidentia oppositorum* (a synthesis of opposites), which is closely related to religious ideas, ethical ideals and images of God. We know that throughout his life Jung struggled with the Judaeo-Christian images of God. Among post-Jungians this "theological temperament" with its focus on the monotheism of the self has been criticized. It has also been pointed out that *de-integration* as well as *re-integration* are necessary parts of the process of *individuation*. That means when talking about the self we have to take into account a factor of change, of becoming something other (*alteration*). We also have to consider that there is a difference between the individual and the universal, between "my" self and the self of the others and of mankind in general. I am especially interested in the idea that the self is in itself a difference that reveals itself in medial processes in the individual as well as in the inter-

collective psyche. This means that we have to examine the consequences regarding politics and ethics.

A few years ago a discussion concerning the theory of *Cultural Complexes* developed in the Jungian community (Singer/Kimbles, 2004. Cultural complexes are seen as a kind of link between the personal and the collective psyche. It is assumed that our experience is embedded in an unconscious matrix that, when activated by a traumatic or stress situation, reveals powerful and largely destructive affects and collective representations. A special kind of defence becomes activated: splitting that manifests itself, for instance, in demonizing the other. Ethnical, religious or national conflicts between groups are seen as cultural complexes. What I want to show now is that these conflicts can be understood out of the dynamics of a self, that does not deny difference. This point of view helps to avoid the following theoretical inconsistencies: 1) the inherent *essentialism* of the theory of cultural complexes, 2) the *global* view of culture (differences are viewed as *external* differences concerning skin colour, race, sex, language, religion, nation), and 3) the *divergence* and dissociation of the self into “group spirits”.

As an alternative to the above, I would like to stress a *universal* view of culture: differences are seen not only as external differences, because their source is self-difference or what could be called the turbulence immanent to any construction of identity<sup>52</sup>. As a second point, I would like to stress the *dynamics* of a self that shows up in processes of constitution and de-constitution, embracing the individual and the collective.

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52 Santner, 2001.



In this model<sup>53</sup> each group or collective develops its own *implicit* or particular self (the holes in the "cheese") that coexists alongside the selves of the others. In the case of conflict we have two opposite parties. The trans-collective self breaks apart in divergence (lat. *di*, apart, and *vergere*, tend, incline, bend). Now, the question is how this divergence can be reconciled with Jung's intuition of a self of mankind (*explicit* self)?

Let me now distinguish between "inner conflict" and "political antagonism" as the differentiation of *we* and *they* in the political field – a differentiation which is the precondition of politics and democracy. In Jung's essay *Present and Future* one can read: "If an inner fact is not made conscious, then it becomes real as fate in the outside world, that means, if the individual stays unified and does not get conscious of his inner opposite,

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53 Source: Internet.

then the world has to depict the conflict and has to be divided into two halves" (1957/95, 80). What Jung is addressing here is the relation of micro- and macrocosm. He argues that the microcosmic dissociation (the *inner fact*) is reflected as a split in the macrocosmic world. For Jung it is the individual upon whom the relation and balance of micro- and macrocosm depends. In this way Jung clearly prefers the "inner" aspect to the detriment of the "outer" political one – which I consider to be a serious mistake, because the inner difference is projected onto the world outside and confused with antagonism.

But one needs not stumble into this trap. What Jung describes in this text is not only a rift between the inner world and the world outside, but rather a gap within the idea of the self. This self is meant to be the self of the individual and the self of mankind in general. And this implies a paradox: the archetype that should grant identity and the unity of opposites is also the archetype of difference, revealing itself especially in conflicts which demand a solution or even sustained redemption. In my opinion this means that "inner conflict" should not be misunderstood and mixed up with antagonism. Considering this we have to be aware of the relation between inner alterity and political antagonism which serves as a screen upon which the self-difference is projected in real life. This self-difference is something that cannot be overcome, because it is the very basis of forming identity and sense in the individual as well as in the collective.

This also means that the self is not a non-historical platonic entity but rooted in time and space and engaged in a steady movement of *de-constitution*: it constitutes or manifests itself as a complex in the individual as well as in the collective psyche. To call it a "complex" means that we have to take for granted a distortion of reality or the existence of a *corpus alienum* in the realm of the collective consciousness. As you may remem-

ber, *corpus alienum* is precisely Jung's definition of a complex. Deconstitution means that every new meaning or every new *self-integrate* concerning identity and meaning is immediately followed by its opposite dynamic and depends on de-integration. That often includes and opens a "paranoid potential" (Hillman, 1988). Therefore it can be assumed that in the collective as well as in the individual every process of identification depends on unconscious defence mechanisms which can be observed especially in cases of intercollective conflicts which are now my main focus.

Once we talk about collectives and intercollective identity we enter uncertain ground. There are no real entities existing that could be distinguished clearly from each other in the way, e. g., in his *Clash of Civilizations* Samuel Huntington sought to portray – a world divided into six civilizations: the Christian West, Islamic World, Africa and three other ones. Although there are no real entities like *The West* or *The Islam*, we usually treat the foreign other as if he or she belonged to something that shows clear historical, natural or cultural borders. This is short-sighted, because normally collective identities are legalized by (religious or political) retroactive dogmas and rationalizations relying on external differences which are not given by nature or God but have developed in a historical process much too often written by the sword and with the blood of innumerable lives.

Before proceeding to study collective defences in detail, it might thus prove useful to take a short glance at history. It is important to mention that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe collective identities boomed as a consequence of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and its disintegrating effect. For this reason, a rich spectrum of collective ideas arose in the course of this century, including communism and nationalsocialism. Apart from these factors, including other forces such as the diverse nationalisms, the legacy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

one should also not forget contemporary concepts such as multiculturalism, neo-liberalism, and islamism. As I have shown before, any kind of legitimating that is based on external differences (skin colour, sex, language ...) depends on splitting and on the projection of the self-difference onto the political antagonism. Therefore we have good reason to take exactly this *inner difference* of the self into consideration that may serve as a kind of *intercollective medium* avoiding short-sighted universalisations of particular concepts. An example for such a universalized particular concept is the so-called human right of equality which can easily be misunderstood and abused as a claim for a cultural identity that legalizes dissimilarity, negatively impacting the rights of women or homosexuals.

Psychoanalysis can be credited with having directed the attention to the affective, inner dimension of politics. This is mostly neglected in theories that focus exclusively on rational consent (Rawls, Habermas). This inner dimension is the source of libidinous seizure of a “we” separated from the other and therefore the origin of the political antagonism – the differentiation between *we* and *they* on the outside of action. This differentiation is immediately followed by a shadow, because the others are usually identified with danger and threat and are excluded from the formation of the respective self. In this respect we can even see more than that, namely how self-difference and antagonism are connected with each other: self-difference – and its inherent inhumanity – is projected onto the political antagonism and onto the other. The we-they-differentiation is radicalized into a pattern of friend and foe. Here Jung’s warning becomes relevant: no one can ever find a place outside the collective shadow of mankind. Shadow here means the excess of the inhumane that is bound to any kind of humanism. This shadow can neither be ignored nor integrated, because it reveals itself as a consequence of forming identity and meaning, as a con-

sequence of beco-ming oneself. In the psychic field (*psychotope*) a split and unconscious *corpus alienum* – a difference – manifests itself as a consequence of a collective identity emerging. In practice we are confronted with the fact that there are different selves negating their own difference, the result of the process of identification. The self – now as a transcollective factor – remains divergent. This divergence has intra- and intercollective consequences. Now, if this self-difference is the reason why our world is still divided into East and West, North and South we could ask: is there a way for us to deal with this self-difference in a responsible way? This question touches upon the possibility of a *convergence* of the self and its differences.

When studying two groups or collectives the following question arises: *If each group forms its own self-complex – how do these complexes relate to each other?* Well, among other things, intercollective encounters depend on the intracollective proportionality of historically grown integrates (times of prosperity, etc.) and de-integrates (wars, civil wars, times of starving, of persecution and repression). Depending on which of the two is stronger – either integrates or de-integrates – we can assume a *positive* or a *negative* self-complex, which will also influence the intercollective field where the encounter with the other is taking place. In very many cases the result will be a regression. These reactions suggest that collective defence mechanisms play a decisive role. Defence mechanisms offer an opportunity to study the interaction of self, difference and complex as seen against the backdrop of Jungian theory. Let me mention the work of Michael Fordham<sup>54</sup> and his concept of de- and reintegration. His starting point is a *primary self*, which encounters its surroundings with certain expectations. The early interactions – especially those with one's mother – deintegrate certain

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54 Fordham, 1985.

aspects of the self-sufficient primary self, while the results of the interactions are reintegrated. Here I must add that even in Fordham's thinking conflicts are considered to be *external* conflicts (with respect to culture this means the *global* version which is not helpful at all). Therefore we have to modify Fordham's concept in order to understand the potential for conflict as an *inner matter of the self* – a view that prefers the *universal* version of culture. Then the process of de- and reintegration itself has something to do with defence.

### 3.2. Collective Defences

This would not only concern the individual, which Fordham is mainly interested in, but also collective formations as well as the relationship of these formations to each other. In this connection the *collusion* of individual and collective defence against psychotic fears plays a prominent role. Elliott Jacques, a Canadian based analyst from the school of Melanie Klein, has argued that “social defense” shared with others is perhaps *The* primary moment connecting individuals in social institutions. It is a fact that collective defence mechanisms enable us to support one's own defence against psychotic fears. The unconscious collusion inures the group and its self against any kind of criticism. Collective defences reveal themselves especially in *liminal* phases of endangered identities that challenge a new one to get established. This can be observed in many contemporary scenarios (EU-constitution, Islam in the West ...). In each scenario the proportionality of de- and reintegration as well as the *interference* of these collective factors with individual ones play a decisive role. In those liminal phases self-difference – the deintegrative component of the self – is experienced as something threatening and therefore has to be projected onto the

other. The result is a narcissistic self-closure that universalizes a particular belief, e.g., in your nation or in God.

Let me examine this by means of an example: *migration*. Migrants are usually experienced as a threat by residents and vice versa. Both sides consider the foreigner to be a kind of destabilization. Both sides now start to relate to a restorative kind of identity like nation, religion and cultural background. In other words, the other is sacrificed to one's own universalized particular speciality. In cases like that it can be observed that the deintegrative component of the self-complex easily gets mixed up with self-hate, which has its roots in one's own history of suppression and submission, in one's own education and socialisation. This history has to be repressed so that instead of an individual becoming aware of his/her own traumas, shame and hate, the package gets projected onto the other. Now the other is the reason for my bad fortune – and therefore words like colonialism, globalization, migration, terrorism and islamism serve as powerful weapons that can be used to explain everything that is evil justifying the fight against the other.

Seen from an inner perspective, it is not only the difference that is projected on to the other, it is the self as the structuring principle. In such cases it regularly happens that the reintegrating factor of one side is experienced as disintegrating for the other. For Muslims, for instance, religion is such a reintegrating factor in their situation as being strangers in Western countries. Because of the submission to the symbolic order of one's own political and religious origin one can assume the existence of subversive tendencies and unconscious self-hate – factors that exaggerate the risk of deintegration and therefore have to be projected onto something else. Now it is no longer the inhumane aspect of one's own symbolic order that normally would be the challenge, now it is the foreign law, democracy, human

rights, equality of women and the immoral and godless pursuits of the Western world. On the other hand, for the West the confrontation with the foreign symbolic system, the container of *their* self-difference, also means a factor of deintegration threatening the future of the Western world. The demand for participation or the introduction of the Sharia and the possibility of losing democracy now serve as a screen onto which one should focus one's attention in order not to be forced to confront oneself with one's own historical traumas and their impact on our psyche. As a consequence each side now experiences itself as victimized by the other. This strategy enables the parties to suppress the fact of being a culprit themselves. As long as one sees oneself as a victim, he has to deny being an offender himself unconsciously acting out the self-difference.

Now, let us summarize this process of defence in which the snake bites its own tail: 1) Firstly the encounter with the other provokes a kind of *projective deintegration*, The other serves or is used as a screen onto which the threatening difference as well as – and that is really astonishing – the self is projected. 2) This manoeuvre is completed by *extractive reintegration*, declaring that the other does not own a self, or robbing or destroying the other's self: flags are burnt, symbols destroyed, respected persons reviled and ridiculed, or even worse persons are killed. 3) As a matter of fact, the opposite side answers with *evocative de-integrations* and *evocative re-integrations* which confirm the suspicion even more. In other words, the process of projection, extraction and evocation begins to circulate. This makes it impossible to indicate where and when the psychic tornado first began. The result is an extreme narcissistic state of being, which dominates the intercollective field creating a "third space", a borderland, where processes of fusion and splitting cannot be distinguished any longer. The intercollective field proves to be dominated by suspect, hate, aggression and

fear. Now the other becomes the inhumane double of ourselves and of humanism in general; the self is split and divergent.

From a perspective that focuses on ethics, this means that the self as an archetype cannot be realised and cannot be seen as an ethical potential demanding understanding, compassion and responsibility. The self as the *archetype* of self-difference – archetype now written with “th” creating a neologism combining the Greek words *ethos* and *arché* to underline the ethical postulate – stays unconscious and divergent. It can be misunderstood, for instance, as an accumulation of “*group spirits*”. Now is this the ultimate answer? Rivalling group spirits engaged in a lethal fight for total destruction? A self – split in divergence? I do not think so, because what conflicts always show is that we are confronted with *differences on both sides* and by both sides. In my opinion exactly *this* convergence of self-difference must be aspired to. Compared to this, the cultural complex itself proves to be a certain deintegrate which has been made absolute. This deintegrate gets inflated to a kind of negative self, fighting the self of the others neglecting the idea that the self can be understood as a process of folding and unfolding in the individual as well as in the collective.

To sum up: the self – as a *medium* of becoming oneself – is understood as a dynamic process of de- and re-integration, establishing identity as well as difference and manifesting itself in the individual as well as in the collective: a challenge to realise that every new identity (integrate) depends on de-integration that is projected onto the other, especially in times of conflict. The result is a split in the psychotope, which is dominated by archaic defence mechanisms that freeze the self in divergence. In my opinion it is exactly this convergence of self-difference on both sides of a conflict that can serve as an intercollective medium of understanding, helping to avoid the universalisation of particular symbolic systems. From an ethical

point of view this convergence means realizing the self as an *archetype* – as an ethical potential that has to deal with political antagonism in a responsible way, preferring not the global view of culture – like the theory of cultural complexes – but the universal one whose basis is the relation to self-difference that at the same time connects and differentiates the individual and what lies beyond it.

## 4. Towards a Phenomediology of the Soul

### 4.1. Psyche's Self-Difference

Different views of the psyche have emerged in the course of the history of culture spanning almost three millennia. The term runs the gamut from the postulate of an ontological entity to the function of a principle, all the way to the dimension of religion and art. Whenever man has thought about life, the *conditio (in-)humana*, knowledge, truth, beauty etc. he has encountered something that is best expressed by the word psyche – a term that discloses a structured world that ranges from matter to mind, from the lowest to the highest – and somewhere in-between man, a mortal being aspiring to knowledge and eternity. Two facts have to be taken into consideration whenever we speak of the soul or psyche: firstly, a constitutive *self-difference* that is implied as soon as a self-identical unity is postulated, and, secondly, a special kind of format that in any case is informed by preliminary decisions that are not conscious at all. As a result of these phantasmatic pre-decisions various positions concerning mind and matter can be observed. This dualism mainly reflects two positions: a mental format and its opposite, a physical one.

The classical mental format can be studied, for example, in the development of the multiple centres of excitement such as *thymos* and *phrenes* in the Homeric *Ilias* to the Platonic and Aristotelian *psyché* as a self-centred inner unity and entity. Psyché originally meant vitality, *Lebenskraft*, *élan vital*, the Greek word *empsychos* – meaning animated, vivid and full of vitality. Psyche was imagined as breath, butterfly, bird, shadow and a

spirit that left the body when a person died. Apart from this, the Homeric heroes were driven by multiple autonomous forces such as the *thymos* and *phrenes*. In the second half of the 5th century before Christ a far-reaching change concerning the meaning of psyche took place. The idea of a relative autonomous inner entity emerged, which was called *psyche*, and gained the status of immortality. Besides this, fantasies of *metempsychosis* or of an *anima mundi* arose. What this historical process reveals is that the psyche is not only a concept of unity vouched for by the mental format of the *nous* and the *logos* and their metaphysical realism but also something that in itself is different and therefore struggles with manifold differences, e.g., the epistemological difference between perception and thinking, the corresponding ontological one of an intelligible Being and sensible beings and the soteriological one of contingency and redemption (*soteria*).

The second format, the physical one, is particularly visible today in neuroscience and in the overlapping of science, cultural studies, art, and politics. This demonstrates a new orientation in thinking the humane. Man is said to become *transhuman* when experimenting with new styles of being such as cyborgs, clones and androids. A new so-called *dispositive* is being established: a combination of political power, economical strategies, discourses and performative practices. Scientific disciplines like neuroscience, genetic engineering and cybernetics are at the forefront. The trend is to displace psyche or to try to make it visible by the means of digital devices as if it were a concrete object that can be made visible. Digital devices, combined with biological body data, form the basis of a new *terminal* identity. This way man is becoming transformed into a bio-digital machine. Neuroscience places man and machine on the same footing in physical terms. The early stages of this tendency go back to the beginnings of the modern age. Though psyche originally designated the state of the living

being and the life principle of the whole body and even of the cosmos, the brain is now its prison. The life principle has become the organ of thinking, whose neuronal and biochemical substrates have replaced the psyche. In this context it is interesting to note that from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the corpse and the mechanic machine served as models for experimentation with the human body. So in view of all of this we could ask: what is left of the soul? Modern brain research offers answers such as the following one given by Roth<sup>55</sup>: psyche is a “physical state, whose laws are not yet sufficiently known”. The term psyche is used to denote the “unity of cognitive, emotional and affective states and achievements” bound to brain structures and brain processes underlying the laws of nature”. This turns the psyche, the classical medium of relation and mediation, e.g., between spirit and matter, between the living and the dead, between man and the Gods into a technical issue. The enchanted world of beings and powers connected in a *great chain of being* is displaced by calculation and now loses its spell. Again we notice the previously mentioned self-difference – on the one hand, a unity and on the other, manifold processes such as perception, thinking, emotions and so on that are connected and tamed by a hierarchical principle.

We have explored two kinds of format, the mental or idealistic and the naturalistic or physical one. I would now like to suggest an alternative to both formats. I have stated that whenever we speak of the soul or psyche a special kind of format can be taken for granted, one that is in any case informed by preliminary decisions that are not conscious at all. In my opinion psyche can neither be reduced to something solely mental nor to something physical. Let us now switch to the *medial* psyche. By referring to the third realm of a medial format, I want to avoid succumbing to ideal-

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55 Roth, 2005.

ism, materialism or even psychologism. This format considers the psyche to be a medium that transmits what we usually associate with mind or matter. Psyche means something that is literally between, located in a difference that belongs neither to one side nor to the other: between mind and matter, between inside and outside, between subject and object, between the individual and the collective, between you and me.

Of course, it could be objected that nowadays nearly everything is described in terms of a medium. The term “medium” is a popular one that is used in a very broad sense. We all know that the term *medium* was originally reserved for séances up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century this term entered the realm of technology, communication and information. A few decades later, in the course of the so-called *medial turn*, competing definitions of what a medium is to be considered appeared on the scene. Let me mention just two of them: the medium can be seen as a tool but also as a sphere of possibilities that can be actualized.

Introducing the psyche as a kind of medial setting means claiming a special field, that differs from the field of science and also from the field of cultural studies. First of all, this means that any phenomenon or any event is embedded in processes of transformation taking place below the medial surface in the so-called *submedial space*<sup>56</sup>. I would suggest calling this process *mediamorphosis*. Let us now view the psyche as a vessel where perception, thinking, feeling, vegetative processes etc. merge. All we perceive, think, feel, fantasize goes back to mediamorphosis and depends on it. As soon as we start to reflect on this process, e.g., explore the evidence of thinking, we interfere in this process, while at the same time stay within its “natural” flow. One could say thinking is something that has gone through the medial gap: on the one hand, it is something that has been me-

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56 Groys, 2000.

diated by other processes and, on the other hand, it itself is the agent of change involved in mediality. In other words: psyche constitutes the “intermedial between” of cognitive achievements, emotional, intentional, vegetative and affective conditions. Signals of the body and perceptions translate into thinking, feeling and fantasies. Thinking, feeling and fantasies translate into movements, movements into feelings and thinking and so on. This manifold process is a heteronymous and spontaneous one, a flow always searching for a new course. In this intermedial process every experience, perception, thought, and feeling is already something mediated and serves as a medium of change (*alteraction*) for itself. This means what we consider to be an experience, a thought, a perception, an image, an idea, a phenomenon or the self-giving evidence is already something that has been mediated by manifold processes “in” the submedial space.

It is interesting to see how much mental formatting depends on a medial concept. This could be illustrated by the role of imagination that functions as a link between thinking (*noesis*) and perception or the role images and metaphors play in the works of many thinkers from Plato to Kant and Hegel. These come to bear precisely when something that cannot be expressed by words is translated into pictures, with theory being transformed into mythology or poetry. Nevertheless thinking is still identified with psyche and being claiming its pole position among the other powers like feeling and perception. An idea of world as a kind of totality or horizon of knowledge and *soteria* is thus created – an idea that is indebted to the activity of the *nous* or the *logos* completely denying emotions and perception as those media that play a crucial role establishing the idea of a world and of its manifold political, ethical and religious implications.

It seems as if the real problem of metaphysics is not the *forgetting of Being* (Heidegger) but the *forgetting of mediality*, because metaphysics’ de-

pendence on multiple forms of media and the fact that our relationship to ourselves, to the other and to the world is never an immediate but a mediated one is not recognized. Seen from this perspective, the term medium is a metaphysical one inherited by the onto-epistemological enterprise of understanding the world as a totality. Maybe one reason for forgetting mediality is that the term medium implies differences threatening the supposed sovereignty of thinking and therefore has to be ignored. Another reason could be the phenomenological problem how something that happens in the submedial space and eludes detection can reveal itself on a medial surface. In contemporary theories of art it is speculated that this revelation is due to moments of shocks interrupting the conventional “natural” flow lifting attention to another level realizing the change after it had happened.

Keeping the medial format in mind enables us to redefine the relationship of technology and psyche. What is called for is a kind of medial thinking that is able to recognize that technical achievements are not the pre-condition of psyche – a hypothesis that is prominently advocated by Friedrich Kittler<sup>57</sup>, who maintains that the history of consciousness follows technical innovations. The history of the psyche is embedded in the history of technology. It was, for instance, not accidental that Freud spoke of a psychic device. For Kittler the unconscious is nothing else than a “metaphor for machine-parks” that are yet unknown. When we think of the computer we can say that it is no longer man communicating but a digital gear-shift assembly, which saves, calculates and transmits information not from subject to subject, but from machine to machine. To counter this attempt to place machine before man it should be stated that technical achievements are not the pre-condition of psyche because they themselves are part of the intermedial psychic processes. To illustrate this: the data of neuroscience

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57 Kittler, 1993.

have a background; they are the product of reasoning and have to be translated into writing, speech and symbols. In other words, they are part of the psyche's medial play which – and this is important to be able to avoid succumbing to psychologism – depends on something else serving as the material for mediality.

To demonstrate how much technical media are embedded in the medial psyche I want to tell an anecdote<sup>58</sup>. The philosopher Martin Heidegger was known to have a specific attitude towards technology. Maybe this was the reason why no TV set found its way into his home. Nevertheless, he used to visit his neighbours whenever the German soccer team played. I have to add that Heidegger also did not like theatre because – as he once mentioned – he wanted to watch “gods and heroes”, not modern actors. This is an interesting statement, because referring to Franz Beckenbauer he said: “His team wins the world championship and he himself does not get hurt at all. Such a person I call a god.” That Beckenbauer was experienced as a “god” was not only the merit of the technical medium but also the merit of transforming of what he had watched on the TV into a new fantasy. In other words: Television became part of the psychic process of *mediamorphosis*. For Heidegger the screen no longer showed Franz Beckenbauer but a heroic phantasm that transcends the technical medium, thus proving that man is not only a machine-building animal but a being that depends on and creates phantasms.

## 4.2. Fantasies on Fantasy

The anecdote above can be seen as an indication for the key role *imagination* is playing not only in everyday life but also in any kind of scientific

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58 Kittler, in: Roesler/Stiegler, 2003.

formatting<sup>59</sup>. It will be important to take into account this role of imagination also when reflecting psychic processes especially in connection with politics, ethics, and religion. Discussing the role of imagination means claiming a certain field, that is different from the field of science, e.g., the electromagnetic field or the field of quantum physics. In this field any phenomenon is considered to be *psychoid*<sup>60</sup>. In a narrower sense this term denotes the depth structure of the psyche, a position that develops a kind of metaphysical realism relying on the world-revealing aspect of fantasies completely failing their illusionary character that in contrast to Jung has been elaborated by Freud and by Lacan in particular<sup>61</sup>. In a broader sense, which I am referring to, the term psychoid means that all phenomena are contained in the medial psyche which as an object of research has an imaginative basis. Whenever we refer to something, e.g. the body, the world, thinking, the soul or to whatever we are not dealing with an *apriori* given correspondence of *noesis* and *noematic* object but basically with imagination concerning medial processes.

This perspective has an impact on epistemology and on the methodical principle of evidence, because there is no evidence that is evident in a way that could legitimate itself as *the principle of experience*. When the psyche is seen as the “intermedial between” of cognitive achievements, emotional, intentional, vegetative and affective conditions, the medial imperative that everything is the result of mediation can be regarded as a challenge, namely to proceed from phenomenology to *phenomediology* taking into account that anything appearing or any phenomenon is dependent on medial processes taking place between “that which appears” (*phainómenon*) and our

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59 See Burda, 2013.

60 Jaffé, 1982.

61 In Lacan’s *Borromaeic Node* the *Imaginary* functions as the illusion trying to close the gap between the *Real* and the *Symbolic*.

knowledge (*logos*) of this appearance – a point of view that is different from the phenomenological principle of self-giving evidence. In what we experience we are dealing only with assumptions of something that is considered to be evident. These assumptions depend on the status of imagination. Generally speaking, imagination provides two options. Firstly, an *imaginal* one based on a relation between experience and the experienced, between psyche and the world. It is important to note that despite this connection there is also already a kind of distance assumed between the subject and its objects<sup>62</sup>. The second option is an *imaginary* one placing psyche in an *ignotum X* nevertheless demanding an imaginal element that makes it possible to maintain the refusal and negation of relation<sup>63</sup>.

Tentatively, we can assume that both versions depend on each other. This demands that the not-reflected attitude towards the status of imagination, the *fantasy on fantasy* itself, has to be clarified on the very basis of any theoretical or pragmatic concept. In experience we are dealing with something being fragile, with a world in the liminal state of suspense. *Both* options of imagination build the basis of what could be called the *absolute fragility* of decision and responsibility in research, politics, religion and last but not least in ethics. It is interesting that the trace of this absolute fragility can be detected in the approaches of media theorists like McLuhan or Flusser. I have already mentioned Friedrich Kittler's attempt to posit machine before man. Let me quote one of his precursors: in the sixties of the

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62 This can be illustrated on the basis of Plotin's version of the double bind where the psyche has to realize that perception is only a kind of mirror for the self-reference of thinking. Or we can also think of Hegel's dialectics and the spirit's return to itself through different states of consciousness.

63 Derrida's *différance*, the quasi-transcendental source of all differences can be seen as a combination of both an imaginary distance between *différance* and differences and an imaginal completion, because it is not only *différance* enabling the play of differences – the differences themselves create the space preventing *différance* from being a kind of transcendental principle.

20<sup>th</sup> century Marshall McLuhan (1992) dreamt of a *Golden Age* and of a transmission of human consciousness into the world of computers. His idea was that the central nervous system can extend out into a global net of communication and information so that it becomes connected with the consciousness of others.

Again, ancient images of the psyche seem to be revealed in a new guise. Now it is no longer the *anima mundi*, the soul of the world, guaranteeing a structured cosmos but the worldwide ICT-net in which all media (images, sound, words, etc.) converge. It is interesting to note that this project is motivated by a religious or soteriological idea: McLuhan enthuses a “deep belief” whose aim is described as a “harmony of all creatures”. Another pioneer of media-theory, Vilém Flusser<sup>64</sup>, even spoke of a “religious experience” in the “sphere of communicology” and of standing on the threshold to a new level of being situated between “catastrophe and hope”. This allusion to “catastrophe and hope” refers to something that McLuhan and even Flusser have naively neglected most of the time when proclaiming their new totality of a *connective* consciousness and of a harmony of all creatures. What this allusion reveals is the *self-difference of the religious* itself – the fact that danger, suffering, death and contingency are much too often neglected as pre-conditions of redemption. The truth of religion is its impossibility: the fact that redemption is not possible in an immanent horizontal way. Under the premise that redemption as the ultimate horizon of religion regularly gets projected onto the screen of an eschatological and apocalyptic split, we must ask ourselves *what about the other* who is not actively part of one’s own symbolic universe and therefore finds himself excluded and exposed to death, hell or eternal damnation? A hubris much too often acted out by man taking upon himself a God-like position over

life and death, thereby denying and rejecting the absolute fragility that demands decision, compassion, and responsibility.

Under this premise religion becomes transformed into its opposite, thereby slipping into something that could be called a *reliquariat*<sup>65</sup> – a neologism that suggests another etymology than the one we are familiar with. Not *religare* and *relegere*, but *relinquere* – an expression that opposes the notion that the other is doomed to damnation and therefore excluded from salvation, establishing a dubious identity that denies its self-difference that is projected onto the other. As examples one could cite the *Axis of Evil*, Gaza, *Ground Zero*, and Damascus. To give another example: it is not surprising that this self-difference has found its way directly into the ICT-net. I am especially referring to the contradictory self-presentations of symbolic beliefs committed to peace, understanding and tolerance on the one hand and revealing terror and brute force on the other, thus establishing a self-identity that projects its own negativity and destructiveness onto the other. It can be found especially in the global fight of *video against video*, in videos threatening with terror, in videos of Guantánamo or Abu Ghraib, in videos whose messages are in fact *disseminative*, addressed to an anonymous enemy somewhere out in the global sphere, thus establishing a dubious identity that denies its self-difference.

If the psyche is considered to be a medium, then we ourselves can be seen as media transforming the traditions of science, politics, ethics, religions, and of social and economic conditions. Anthropology thus becomes *anthropomediology*. It is a task of envisioning the horizons of the future in connection with something that is absolutely fragile. We are dealing with a world in the liminal state of suspense depending on both options of imagination. These options build the basis of what could be called the absolute

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65 Burda, 2008b.

fragile of decision and responsibility in research, politics, ethics and last not least in religion. Religion – not in the context of a certain denomination, but in what could be described as the religious interest in a world that goes beyond splitting, preferring an open horizon to be appropriated to the full range of the psyche. Facing psyche's absolute fragility the religious as well as the ethical and political is not a dimension that is objectively given, but something that depends on medial processes and their development. Concerning this, psychoanalysis has taught us how important processes of maturing depend on being grateful, being aware of one's own constitutive self-difference, on avoiding splitting and on the wish to reconcile.

Let me summarize by looking back: We started with the exploration of two formats: a mental and a material one. We stressed that at present a new dispositive is being established, one that treats man as a bio-digital machine. To counter this tendency we suggested a medial format that would enable us to discuss and develop a genuine subject of research. The key role of two aspects of imagination was underlined – an imaginary and an imaginal aspect; both aspects can be found at the very basis of any ontology. Man was characterized as a being engaged in an on-going production of identities and differences. In this respect psyche can be seen as a medium of transforming not only the individual but also the traditions of politics, ethics, religions, and of social and economic conditions. It is a task of envisioning the horizons of future in connection with something that is absolutely fragile. In light of this fragility we are confronted with psyche and self in their ultimate ethical dimension where there is an inversion of the contingency of life and beings, with contingency becoming *non-contingency* – a paradoxical cluster of necessity and freedom that regards otherness as a medium of becoming oneself.

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