Darkness Unveiled

On the Nature and Role of Evil in the Work of Carl Gustav Jung
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On the Nature and Role of Evil in the Work of Carl Gustav Jung


University of Amsterdam
Religious Studies - Master Mysticism and Western Esotericism

Master Thesis

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1 Introduction

1.1 The problem of evil

The problem of evil has fascinated many writers, theologians and philosophers for centuries. ‘Why does evil exist? What is its nature? If there is a God, why does he allow evil?’ These are some of the most prominent questions ever asked. One of the answers, given by the Christian theologian and philosopher St. Augustine (345-430), still resonates today. His theodicy focuses on evil as a necessary by-product of the free will endowed to us by God. If we can only choose the good our choices would be severely limited. To be free, evil has to be one of the options of choice. Evil for Augustine is an absence of good and resides only in man and his anti-divine will.

Leibniz (1646-1716) states in his Theodicy that despite our suffering, we live in the best of all possible worlds. The world comprises a system of universal harmony and God allows some evil in order to gain greater good and to prevent larger evils from happening. Kant (1724-1804) leaves aside the theological or cosmological explanations by positing evil as a purely ethical concept that has its beginning and ending in a perversion of the moral consciousness of man.

Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) takes this problem of evil to a psychological level. Beginning his career as a psychologist and psychiatrist, he later combined the fields of psychology with mythology and symbolism. Along with his method of active imagination, the claim that God can be found in our psyche, and the significant role of the unconscious in his analytical psychology, his therapeutic practice can be viewed as a refined form of applied esotericism. Jung struggled with the idea of evil his whole life.

A major part of his work revolves around the concept of polarity. Some would say that evil is just one of the poles on the axis of good/evil. Although true to a certain point, evil assumes a special place in Jung’s teachings. In his work we see a constant preoccupation with it; a great deal is written about it, although not systematically and not consistently. This gives cause to a more rigorous investigation.

Often the charge of "psychologism" is made against him for his attempt to express religious, esoteric and metaphysical statements in purely psychological terms. Jung’s concept of evil was similarly criticised. However, Jung was very adamant in stating that evil is not just something that exists in our

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1 A theodicy is a treatise that tries to account for the existence of evil in a world created by a benevolent and omniscient God.
4 Löwith, ‘Philosophical Concepts’, p. 222. Kant spoke of ‘radical evil’ by which he neither meant absolute evil, nor a willing of evil for its own sake, but something rooted in man.
5 Hanegraaff, Western Esotericism, p.111.
6 “The reduction of spirituality to psychological categories”. I will use this definition given in Hanegraaff, New Age Religion, p. 358, footnote 137.
7 I. Hoeller, The Gnostic Jung, p. 35
8 Hanegraaff: New Age Religion, p.513: “Jung not only psychologized esotericism but he also sacralised psychology, by filling it with the content of esoteric speculation”. I will focus more on this statement in Section 12: Psychologism.
consciousness. Moreover, he resolutely denied the Christian doctrine of *privatio boni*, which states that evil, unlike good, is insubstantial.

Clearly Jung did not agree with either Augustine or Kant in placing evil purely in the hands of mankind.

This raises questions concerning the nature of evil in the work of Jung. He uses the term ‘evil’ when he is referring to shadow contents in the unconscious mind, when he is pointing to moral issues and psychopathology and when he is speaking of a more ontologically independent evil. Is Jung simply not clear on the matter of evil? In his book *Aion* he says: “With a little self-criticism one can see through the shadow – for as far as its nature is personal. But when it appears as an archetype one encounters the same difficulties as with anima and animus. In other words, it is quite within the bounds of possibility for a man to recognize the relative evil of his nature, but it is a rare and shattering experience for him to gaze into the face of absolute evil”.

**Research questions**

The above considerations bring me to the following questions: what exactly is the nature and role of evil in the work of Jung? Is evil for Jung purely a relative concept which only exists in our psyche? Or could we say that the concept of evil with Jung is twofold and can be divided into relative and absolute evil?

**1.2 Methodology**

Due to the nature of the above questions I felt that a systematic approach that stayed close to Jung’s own ideas would be best suited to answer them. Another approach that I could have chosen is to examine Jung’s concept of evil from a critical-biographical standpoint, investigating how his own life might have shaped his definition of evil. Because Jung experienced many confrontations with evil and spent his life trying to come to terms with it, this would certainly have been an interesting exploration.

However, because the focus in my research lies on discovering the manner in which Jung defines the concept of evil and the role it plays in his work, an exegetical examination of his writings seemed like the best research method. Therefore I have chosen not to focus on my own interpretation of Jung’s theories and have refrained from a more critical assessment of his statements. Neither will I provide the reader with a critical historiography in which I hold Jung’s theories to a historical light or examined Jung’s evil in the context of (other) great thinkers throughout time. Although I have made some comparisons between Jung’s definition of evil and concepts of evil of, for example, Nietzsche, Freud and William James, this is not done consistently nor extensively and I have refrained from providing too much detail in these matters. To not exceed the scope of this thesis I have limited myself to mostly presenting the reader with a thorough exegesis of Jung’s work. For a more critical view of Jung and his ideas I recommend the work of Richard Noll, that I have only touched upon in section 4.3.

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8 *Privation of good.*
9 *Jung, Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology.*
10 *Jung, Aion,* p. 10.
1.3 Action Plan

To provide answers to my research questions, this thesis will give an extensive overview of how evil manifests itself in Jung’s work. After the introduction above on the problem of evil in Section 1, Section 2 introduces the main Jungian concepts of the personal and collective unconscious and the Self and will show where these concepts originated. Following this general outline, Section 3 investigates psychopathology and shows how Jung felt that the eruption of unconscious content in an unbalanced individual can have an evil effect and lead to mental illness. This section also shows that according to Jung the symptomatology of mental illness is at the same time a natural attempt at healing. I will investigate if the evil discussed here is of a relative nature. The second part looks at the phenomenon of daimonia, personifying the gripping quality of the archetypes, and examines whether these daimons are inherently evil.

Section 4 is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the concept of the personal shadow, probably one of the best known elements of Jung’s teachings. This idea of a dark alter ego in humans has captured the imagination of many. In the second part I will analyse his 1936 essay ‘Wotan’, in which Jung speaks of the collective shadow of the German people and how this shadow facilitated the rise of National Socialism in Germany after the First World War. This essay was one of the reasons that Jung was criticized for psychologizing evil; he suggested that suppressed content in the German psyche was to blame for allowing Nazism to bloom. Partly because of this essay, Jung was accused of Nazi fraternization. This section provides a bridge towards the third part of Section 4, in which I discuss Jung’s own perceived shadow and his suggestions for dealing with it.

Section 5 considers morality. First I investigate the influences of James, Nietzsche and Freud on Jung’s conception of the role of evil in morality. I then examine his essay ‘Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology’, in which Jung displays a very empirical and pragmatic outlook on evil. Dealing with moral issues and psychopathology, the article claims essentially that what is good and evil is dependent upon the situation we are in. Both in this essay and in ‘Wotan’, Jung does seem to psychologize evil. In these Sections 3 to 5, we mainly see a concept of evil that is of a relative nature. Nevertheless, it would be premature to conclude from this that Jung generally considers evil to be relative.

Following these considerations we enter into the play of opposites in the psychological law of enantiodromia and witness how evil operates within this regulative function in Section 6. Evil as depicted in The Red Book is the theme of Section 7. Jung suffered a near psychosis, mainly during the years 1913-1916, in which he struggled with his unconscious. Using a system of active imagination he began conversing with the alternate personalities living deep inside of him, while recording these dialogues in what later became The Red Book. Some fragments of these encounters are analysed in order to discover the nature of the evil that Jung comes up against.

The last part of my thesis consists of Sections 8 to 11, in which I investigate those publications of Jung in which he posits evil as an inherent part of God and reality. In these works I expect to find, along with a relative definition of evil, an additional, more absolute definition of evil. Section 8 focuses on the Gnostic influence on Jung’s conception of evil and his Gnostic ‘Seven Sermons to the Dead’. Here Jung posits a new God image in the form of Abraxas, who incorporates both good and evil within him. Section 9 will subsequently assess Jung’s long correspondence with the Dominican priest Victor White, in which they argued over the nature of evil. Jung resolutely denied the Christian doctrine of privatio boni. I will examine whether this is indicative of an absolute conception of evil with Jung.
In his 1952 article ‘Answer to Job’ Jung elaborates on the same matter, stating that God is both good and evil, and even claiming that evil is the missing fourth element of the Trinity. Section 10 explores this article extensively and attempts to find an absolute definition of evil within it. Section 11 deals with the mysterious figure of Mercurius, the alchemical conception of the God image. My investigation finally concludes with Section 12, that focuses on the complicated question of ‘psychologization’, elaborating on Jung’s precise definition of this concept and what this says about the nature of evil in his work.

Through extensive analysis of the above works, this thesis aims to draw some appropriate conclusions concerning Jung’s concept of evil.

1.4 Secondary literature

In order to investigate my research questions, I made special use of the vast amount of literature Jung himself wrote, published in the Collected Works. His books Aion, Memories, Dreams, Reflections and Psychology and Religion gave me ample background to Jung’s life and main themes. Other works of Jung, like The Red Book, ‘Answer to Job’ and ‘The Seven Sermons the Dead’, are specifically treated in the different sections. The publications of Wouter Hanegraaff provided me with valuable background information and gave me a larger perspective on how Jung should be viewed in a historical context.

I am also greatly indebted to the work of Liliane Frey-Rohn, especially her essay ‘Evil from the Psychological Point of View’ in the book Evil, Studies in Jungian Thought. She was particularly helpful in providing me with an analysis on the psychological workings of evil in the psyche of the individual, society at large and the question of evil in morality. This book also contained Karl Löwith’s ‘The Philosophical Concepts of Good and Evil’. I used this essay in my introduction to briefly give the reader an idea of some of the prevailing conceptions about evil and to have some ideas to juxtapose Jung’s conception with. I chose to not further elaborate on these theories because I felt it would exceed the framework of this thesis.

Of paramount importance in my quest was Murray Stein’s Jung on Evil. Not only does this book provide an extensive overview of the main works in which Jung discusses evil, but the introduction offers some interesting viewpoints on how Jung perceived evil. When I first came upon this work I was apprehensive, as I felt it could render the present thesis superfluous. However, of its two hundred pages only twenty focus on Stein’s own interpretation. The remainder comprises fragments of Jung’s own work, and as such were, and are, open to my own interpretation. Although Stein poses some interesting questions in his twenty-page introduction, such as ‘Is the unconscious evil?’, ‘What is the source of evil? ‘What is the relation between good and evil?’ and ‘How should human beings deal with evil’? I do believe my thesis is of additional value. Rather than just offering the reader relevant passages and drawing conclusions in a separate section, I take the reader by the hand and guide him or her through the maze of Jung’s oeuvre, sometimes indicating some very paradoxical statements. Apart from this ‘hands-on approach’, my research questions are different; I attempt to examine Jung’s concept of evil by focusing both on its relative and absolute nature.
2 Jungian Concepts and Origins

To coherently investigate the problem of evil in Jung’s work we must first understand some of his basic concepts. We will start where most of these ideas originated. Some of the prominent and early influences on Jung were the German Romantic mesmerists with their focus on the day-time and night-time aspects of nature: waking life with its rational thought and discursive language versus the sleep state in which the soul comes forward with its symbolic and poetic form of communication. Fascinated by this phenomenon, student of medicine Carl Jung chose to specialize in the field of psychology. During these studies Jung frequented spiritualistic séances, even writing his dissertation on these séances with his niece Helene Preiswerk. This study, ‘On the Psychology and Pathology of So-Called Occult Phenomena’ (1902), was modelled on the work of the Swiss psychologist and parapsychologist Théodore Flournoy (1854-1920). His description of a somnambulic case in From India to the Planet Mars, published in 1900, was in its turn modelled on Julius Kerner’s The Seeres of Prevorst (1845). The connection between these works show that the kind of polarity thinking so dominant in Jung’s work originated from the German Romantic mesmerists. With Jung, “die Nachtseite der Natur” and the spirit world became the unconscious. The spirits that Jung gave his attention to in the spiritualistic séances became unconscious personalities or complexes. Jung focused on these complexes that live just beneath the conscious surface. These structured mental groups of convictions associated with a certain idea, had a certain energy and appeared to have a will of their own. In cases of mental illness their will was often contrary to the will of the conscious person.

In Flournoy’s work on Mrs. Miller he traced most of her observations back to cryptomnesia, the phenomenon of someone unconsciously copying things that he or she had previously seen or experienced. Jung acknowledges this phenomenon. At the time of writing ‘On the So-called Occult Phenomena’ he similarly explained most of the fantasies of the medium Helene Preiswerk as cases of cryptomnesia. Later, when treating patients, Jung began to notice that many of their fantasies had a mythological component that seemed to come from a collective layer in the unconscious. He discovered even deeper, more primitive forces and structures of the psyche. In his work Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido from 1911, Jung makes a long journey through world mythology in which he shows mythological parallels with Ms Miller’s fantasies, that she was probably not familiar with. By doing so Jung shows a collective aspect to her fantasies, forming the bridge towards his theory of the collective unconscious and the archetypes.

The collective unconscious became paramount in Jung’s work. This additional suprapersonal unconscious lies beyond the personal unconscious and is a universal realm in which we are all immersed. This realm can be seen as an inherited structure of the brain and incorporates the instincts. An instinct is an inner necessity, a natural impulse towards certain modes of behaviour that

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11 Hanegraaff, Esotericism, p. 283.
12 Jung, ‘On the Psychology and Pathology of the So-Called Occult Phenomena’. Helene Preiswerk’s pseudonym is ‘S.W.’.
13 Hanegraaff, Esotericism, p. 283.
14 Noll, Aryan Christ, p. 49.
15 Jung interestingly discusses a passage in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra where he unconsciously copied a piece of a ship’s log written by Just. Kerner in 1686: in ‘So-Called Occult Phenomena’, p. 82-83.
are more or less the same everywhere in all persons and are not individually acquired. This deeper stratum is also the home of the archetypes. These archetypes are inborn possibilities of ideas, *a priori* conditions for the production of experiences, perceptions, myths and fantasies that are closely similar for all individuals. These primordial images or fantasy-ideas depict the eternal experiences of the inner world of the collective unconscious. During the experiences deriving from apocalyptic visions that Jung had had, and the subsequent quest for his soul that he described in *The Red Book* between 1913 and 1930, he further explored this subliminal area in our unconsciousness and formulated his theories. Section 7 will elaborate on these experiences.

Throughout his life Jung advocated the experience of the inner world of the unconscious and the integration of its contents. He continually questioned the persistent focus of the Enlightenment on the rational side of existence and the forsaking of the irrational and symbolic ‘night-side’ of mankind that came with it. For Jung, this one-sided focus led to an imbalance in the psyche of mankind which caused much trouble.

Jung borrowed the idea of the archetype from St. Augustine, who saw them (in Platonic tradition) as metaphysical ideas, paradigms or models, while real things are copies of these model ideas. According to Jung they are somewhat comparable to the Kantian categories, although he felt that these categories were rather simplified and numerically limited compared to the original archetypes.

Jung’s collective unconscious makes itself known through ancient symbolism. These symbols are culturally transmitted through mythology, which is the externalization of psychic content; the “archetypes in play.” The most salient examples of these Jungian archetypes include the shadow, the anima and animus, the trickster and the mother and father archetype.

All archetypes have a bipolar nature, meaning there is a tension of opposites within them. Depending on the individual in whom the archetype is working, one side or the other predominates. These opposites are mediated by the *Self*. This Self is the symbol of wholeness that is always striving for a natural balance of forces; it seeks its own goal and does not depend on external factors. The English word *self* is hardly able to convey what Jung meant by the German word *Selbst*: it is at the same time the unconscious innermost centre of personality and a psychic totality. According to Jung, the path to wholeness lies in the bridging of the outer “persona” (the mask you put on for the outside world, adjusted to society’s norms and values) with the deepest layers of the psyche: the collective unconscious and its archetypes. The Self is the self-regulating force of the

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18Here Jung notes that the actual term ‘archetype’ is to be found in Dionysius the Areopagite and in the Corpus Hermeticum.
24Tacey, *Darkening Spirit*, p. 95.
psyche that constantly seeks a balance between these opposites and the opposites within the archetypes themselves. This Self draws us towards self-growth; the path of individuation. Though some consider Jung an irreligious man, for Jung this Self is not a substitute for God. He even called the Self the “God within us.”

Jung calls himself an empiricist and believes he can demonstrate the existence of a totality supraordinate to consciousness. This totality is experienced by the subject as something numinous. Jung says it never takes the place of God, although it might be, as he calls it, “a vessel for divine grace.”

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29Jung, *Two Essays*, par. 399.
3 Psychopathology

3.1 Mental illness

Many psychologists and psychiatrists never concern themselves with a collective subconscious realm. They focus only on the personal unconscious for the explanation of evil. The neurologist Sigmund Freud saw the personal unconscious (the ‘id’) as essentially made up of sex and aggression. In dealing with his patients Freud mainly focused on overcoming this dark and unknown realm. Freud saw evil as an eruption of suppressed content and did not believe in metaphysical evil. Still, for a while he was immensely fascinated by the devil and demons as a result of working with Jean-Martin Charcot in the 1880s on alleged cases of possession. Resulting from this collaboration and other research, Freud’s conclusion was that “the Devil is clearly nothing other than the personification of repressed, unconscious drives”. For him, the devil embodied the counter-will that was created by unconscious repression, mainly of sexual drives. He was dismissive toward religion, seeing it only as a psychological phenomenon, a mere illusion; God and the devil being only projections of the psyche. Everything evil came from the unconscious. This is not consistent with the beliefs of Carl Jung. As more recent scholarship has shown, Jung was less influenced by Freud than is usually thought. Next to the Romantic mesmerists, one other prominent inspiration for Jung was the psychologist and philosopher William James, who was much more sympathetic towards religious beliefs. James did confront and acknowledge the radical nature of evil: “...it may be that there are forms of evil so extreme as to enter into no good system whatsoever...the evil facts are as genuine parts of nature as the good ones”. James states that the Evil One can be directly and intuitively experienced. This is mirrored in Jung’s conception of evil. Jung did agree with Freud that possession was a psychological and not a spiritual manifestation. Jung saw possession as a neurotic or even psychotic state, in which shadow contents override the ego and control the personality.

Here we see evil as psychopathology; unconscious contents such as complexes, archetypes and instincts can wreak havoc on the conscious personality and lead to mental illness if they are suppressed and not integrated.

Jung felt that the symptomatology of mental illness is at the same time a natural attempt at healing. The compensatory function of the unconscious always works toward wholeness of the individual. As already mentioned, this happens not only in the mentally unbalanced but also in healthy individuals. Jung stated that everyone goes through this process of transformation, where contents from the personal and collective unconscious are being brought to consciousness, with the aim of attaining psychological wholeness. Because this so-called evil within the unconscious also

31 Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 5.
32 Frey-Rohn, From Freud to Jung, p. 302-303.
34 Hanegraaff, Esotericism, p. 282.
35 Hanegraaff, Esotericism, p. 282.
36 James, Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 164-165.
37 Russel, Mephistopheles, p. 232.
38 Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p.149.
houses the tools for psychological transformation, I find it safe to conclude that we are dealing here with a relative evil.

### 3.2 Daimonia

Jung was fascinated with the instinctive force of the archetypes, stating that under certain circumstances they have a possessive or obsessive force that can compel a person to act and can therefore be conceived as *daimonia*\(^{39}\).

For centuries demons and devils were seen as the personifications of evil. According to Freud, primitive peoples project their frustrations, aggressions and fears about death onto imaginary demons\(^{40}\). Throughout history mankind has used devils as scapegoats for overpowering human emotions.

Jung, speaking of the medieval concept of the ‘daemonic’, likewise sees demons as “*intruders from the unconscious, spontaneous eruptions of unconscious complexes into the continuity of the conscious process. Complexes are comparable to demons which fitfully harass our thought and actions; hence in antiquity and the Middle Ages acute neurotic disturbances were conceived as possession*”\(^{41}\). For Jung, demonism is synonymous with possession (“daemonomania”), and he describes it as a peculiar state of mind in which psychic contents temporarily override the ego and take over the personality, suspending free will\(^{42}\).

These demons or daimons should not be seen as inherently evil, however. Concerning the primitive peoples spoken of by Freud, their demons are instrumental in the mourning process and are eventually transformed into revered ancestors\(^{43}\). This reversal of evil into good we similarly see in the case of possession. Often the unconscious content that takes control of a personality has a compensatory function that finally leads to a more balanced individual. Thus, possession can also lead to wholeness; the daimonic can be either creative or destructive.

This serves to remind us of the gripping quality of Jung’s archetypes, especially the shadow. With the daimon evil is projected onto an external devil, whereas the shadow is a “*relatively autonomous ‘splinter personality’*”\(^{44}\) that carries the dark aspects deep within the person\(^{45}\). The more this splinter personality is dissociated from the consciousness of the individual, the more it appears as an autonomous entity that seizes the person, who appears to be controlled by a stranger, an ominous ‘other’.

This demonic quality of the archetypes can also take an epidemic form: an induced collective psychosis of a religious or political nature, such as occurred in the twentieth century\(^{46}\), and on which Jung elaborated in the essay “Wotan”. Here we see the strange phenomenon of *Ergiffenheit* that many Germans were subject to before and during World War II. Section 4 will elaborate on these

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\(^{39}\) Jung, *MDR*, p. 347.

\(^{40}\) Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 848.


\(^{42}\) Jung, ‘Definition of Demonism’, par. 1473.

\(^{43}\) Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p. 848.

\(^{44}\) Jung, *MDR*, p. 387.


\(^{46}\) Jung, ‘Definition of Demonism’, par. 1474.
personal and collective shadows.

Similarly for the early Greeks, the daimon was both evil and creative; it could destroy but it could also offer spiritual guidance, depending on how a person related to it. In this way it resembled the primitive demon described by Freud. In antiquity the daimon was seen as an intermediary being, a spirit medium between the inaccessible divine and the human. Possessing both heavenly and earthly attributes, they are immortal and elevated while also representing nature and human passions.

During the Christianization of the ancient cultural world a dualistic split occurred between the good and evil side of the daimon. While to begin with the daimonic transcended good and evil, two camps now formed: angels, allied to God, and demons, on Satan’s side. The good angels retained the qualities of messengers of the gods, while the devil and all his tribe were attributed with parapsychological knowledge, lustfulness and vitality.

Jung also indicated the ancient roots of this train of thought, referring to Synesius (c. 373–c. 414), the Christian bishop of Ptolemais and pupil of Hypatia. In Synesius’ book *De insomniis* he speaks of the *spiritus phantasticus*, or the medium between the eternal and the temporal that unites the opposites in itself, participating in “instinctive nature right down to the animal level, where it becomes instinct and arouses daemonic desires: [...] all classes of demons derive their essence from the life of fantasy. For they are in their whole being imaginary, and are images of that which happens within.” For Jung this *spiritus phantasticus* refers to the fantasy activity that transcends the opposites of the thinking and sensation/feeling function. This third transcending element is both creative and receptive at once, Jung claims, following the philosopher Schiller (1759–1805), who calls it the “play instinct”.

Jung speaks of the “creative fantasy”.

As we will see in Sections 9 and 10, Jung often criticized Christianity for its focus on the pure and good aspects of Christ and God. He often interpreted the faith according to his own psychological theories. For Jung, the unclean demons and evil spirits that need to be expelled in the New Testament gospels of Luke and Mark, are actually the dark aspects in humanity itself.

Coming back to my research questions, what can we say about the nature of these daimons? To say that they represent absolute evil would be misguided. In my opinion the evil they represent is far more of a relative nature. First, they are evil only under certain circumstances. Second, although daimons are often impersonal and experienced as a primal force of nature, they are not exactly entities in themselves but represent a fundamental and archetypal function of human experience; an existential human reality. In the end they are in their whole being imaginary, as Jung said.

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48 Von Franz, ‘Daimons’, p. 36.
51 Jung, *Psychological Types*, par. 174-175. Here Jung quotes Synesius. (No page references are given in the German text for these quotations. Jung used a Latin translation by Ficino. For more information: footnote 81 CW6).
52 Jung, *Psychological Types*, par. 171-172.
4 The Archetype of the Shadow

4.1 The Personal Shadow

One of the most prominent representations of darkness and evil in the work of Jung is the phenomenon of the shadow. Jung used this term to speak about individual evil. On the path of individuation the shadow is the first archetype one comes up against and the easiest to experience. This is because its contents largely come from the personal and not the collective unconscious. Nevertheless the shadow is one of the most disturbing elements for the ego; it stands for everything the ego abhors. For as the ego-consciousness forms our persona, it needs to rid itself of the character traits, feelings and judgments that deviate from the morals of society. These contents are banished to our unconscious, where they form our shadow. The exact manner in which this universal archetype manifests itself differs from person to person, but everyone has their own personal shadow. It is usually of the same sex and it always balances the ego.

Can we say that this shadow is evil personified? Jung said: “If the repressed tendencies, the shadow as I call them, were obviously evil, there would be no problem whatsoever. But the shadow is merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward, not wholly bad. It even contains childish or primitive qualities, which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence, but - convention forbids.” Moreover, Jung repeatedly pointed to evil as the seat of creativity. Jung finds that wherever new things are created, they will inevitably conflict with and sweep aside the old; therefore the creative force is both productive and destructive. The evil that this shadow personifies can therefore be called a relative or ‘so-called-evil’. In this way it resembles the daimon.

It is greatly advantageous to know one’s shadow, because it keeps a person in touch with his body and his primitive, natural side. The shadow thus plays a leading role in the complementary relationship between the conscious and the unconscious part of our psyche. This idea of complementarity was not new. Before Jung, Nietzsche had already indicated the complementarity of value-concepts. He had already shown that the concept of good always pairs with the concept of evil, and that love and hate complement each other. In Nietzsche’s Zarathustra the shadow comes forth as “the ugliest man” who is the murderer of God and who compensates the wise man. In his ‘The Wanderer and his Shadow’, the protagonist is a deflated, lonely wanderer who is balanced by his shadow: an earthly figure concerning himself with the small and immediate things, the “everyday matters.” The necessity of the dark again is highlighted: “The Wanderer: [....] You must know that I love shadows even as I love light. For the existence of beauty of face, clearness of speech, kindliness and firmness of character, the shadow is as necessary as the light. They are not opponents — rather do they hold each other’s hands like good friends; and when the light vanishes, the shadow glides after

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56 Jung, Psychology and Religion, par.134.
57 Frey-Rohn, ‘Evil’, p. 188.
60 Nietzsche, Zarathustra, p. 186-190.
it. The Shadow: Yes, and I hate the same thing that you hate – night. I love men because they are the votaries of life. I rejoice in the gleam of their eyes when they recognise and discover, they who never weary of recognising and discovering. That shadow which all things cast when the sunshine of knowledge falls upon them – that shadow too am I. Both the Nietzschian and the Jungian shadow seem to be necessary for balance and hold much beneficial wisdom. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that the shadow is harmless. Jung says: “Man is less good than he imagines himself to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.”

Often the shadow meets with a lot of resistance because it rouses strong emotional reactions. It takes great moral effort to gain self-knowledge and to become conscious of our own dark side. The shadow, even when it embodies a ‘positive’ thing like creativity, becomes hostile when it is ignored or repressed by our consciousness. It can then have extremely destructive effects. Jung warns us that our dark traits and tendencies split off from our awareness and manifest themselves as projections onto other people or events. What irritates, frightens or angers us in another person is usually what we unconsciously reject in ourselves. In Aion Jung writes: “Projections change the world into a replica of one’s own unknown face.” By externalizing what is actually our own negative side, we are yet forced to deal with it. This can be a daunting task, because we perceive these dark aspects as belonging to the other person, seeing them or their behaviour as ‘evil’, thus distancing ourselves from what is actually our own ‘badness’. Often such a person becomes seriously hindered because he or she does not recognize their own hand in the drama. However, according to Jung, the shadow is inescapable. It has a certain autonomy and an obsessive, or even possessive, quality by which it exerts its grip on us. Moreover, the power of evil is seductive. It holds a secret attraction, a magnetic power that fascinates us. The more we reject our dark elements, the more we find ourselves enslaved by them.

This is why Jung incessantly warned against rejecting our shadow. However frightening this dark inhabitant may seem, we need to look it in the eye and assimilate it into our consciousness. Otherwise we lose a significant part of our awareness. The encounter with this dark side of our personality is often unnerving and not only for the moral difficulties described above. There is an accompanying danger in experiencing the shadow. The contents of the personal unconscious are often merged with archetypal contents of the collective unconscious. When the personal shadow is brought into consciousness, it often drags along archetypal elements of the collective unconscious. These latter contents often show themselves as horrible and grotesque fantasies and dreams. This can be very daunting and can become problematic, especially for those persons who have a tendency towards the pathological. In such unbalanced minds this creates the fear of “going mad.” As already described, sometimes this does indeed happen and one becomes lost in the dark underworld. When this occurs extensive therapy may be required, or even institutionalization. In spite of the dangers
involved, Jung stressed the importance of consciously including the personal shadow in our daily life, because continuously denying it inhibits personal relationships and blocks the creativity of the soul. An individual relationship with the divine also becomes impossible.\(^{70}\)

Although the shadow is not harmless and can be truly frightening, we have seen that it is not completely bad. In addition to casting a dark shadow it carries within it the light of creativity and provides us with great opportunities for growth. The evil that the shadow incorporates is therefore in my opinion of a relative nature.

4.2 The Collective Shadow

So far we have focused on evil as a personal and subjective matter. The individual shadow can be either good or evil; it is relative and complementary to the conscious mind. But Jung’s concept of evil encompasses more than the personal shadow and psychopathology. Behind the shadow of the personal unconscious lies the collective unconscious with its universal archetypal contents, incorporating universal evil.\(^ {71}\) As well as experiencing the personal shadow, an individual can also come up against the collective shadow or archetypal evil. This is much more frightening than the personal shadow, but without experiencing it there can be no true self-realization on Jung’s path of individuation. This evil leads us to the lost aspects of our soul by showing us our buried possibilities.

In the last section we have seen the destructive effects of denying the personal shadow. The compensatory function of the unconscious towards the conscious psyche can then lead to neuroses and even psychoses in unbalanced individuals, causing possession by evil.\(^ {72}\) This can happen to one person but also to large groups of people when the unconscious wreaks havoc on a collective level. According to the Jungian view, sometimes the collective shadow personifies itself in a leader; the examples of Napoleon, Lenin, Mussolini or Hitler come to mind. Everything that has been rejected by the cultural consensus and judged as bad and immoral comes to life in these leaders. They come to incorporate the image of evil and develop a very powerful and radiant demonic charisma. In his book *The Undiscovered Self* Jung warns us that when a society at large refuses to deal with the darker aspects of reality and its own nature, a collective shadow evolves in the form of a mass delusion.\(^ {73}\) The more vehement is society’s refusal to acknowledge it, the more the ‘other’ entity darkens. In this case the masses become gripped, even possessed by the figure of the ‘other’.\(^ {74}\) Often it is projected onto certain groups such as natives, communists, foreigners: so-called scapegoating. Members of this group are then no longer perceived as human beings but as evil personified. They are dehumanized, often resulting in atrocious acts carried out by the very people who claim to be just and good. So it is not only the personal shadow that needs to be integrated into consciousness. Society as a whole needs to become aware of its dark side and integrate it into its culture and

\(^{71}\) Frey-Rohn, ‘Evil’, p. 176.
\(^{73}\) Jung, *Civilization in Transition*, par. 490.
\(^{74}\) Frey-Rohn, ‘Evil’, p. 179.
religion. According to Jung, individuation of the West needs to take place.

Wotan

To best explain the mechanics involved in the collective shadow, we will examine an essay Jung wrote in 1936 on the rise of National Socialism in Germany: ‘Wotan’. In this essay Jung describes how the German people were seized by the archaic and savage Wotan archetype.

Before analyzing ‘Wotan’, we will first look at the circumstances in which the essay was written. After World War One (1914-1918) Germany was a land in ruin and a large part of the German people were in desperate need of a spiritual rebirth. Jung lived during a period in which many German intellectuals were drawn to an anti-rationalist, anti-democratic ideology associated with a pagan prehistory that had been disturbed by Christian influences. This made fertile ground for the rise of the National Socialist party, which advocated Volksgemeinschaft, or folk community. In 1933 they seized power.

During this time Jung’s professional life was thriving. In 1933 he was 58 years old and at the pinnacle of his career. He was highly admired for his contributions to the field of psychology and much sought after as a commentator on developments in Germany at that time. After some time, however, speculation arose about Jung’s stance toward the Nazis, mainly because of his controversial presidency of the International General Medical Society for Psychotherapy, founded in 1933, and his editorship of its organ, the ZentralblattfürPsychotherapie. The organization consisted largely of Germans sharing a conservative-nationalist philosophy and was therefore seen as a Nazi instrument. Furthermore, his essay ‘Wotan’, first published in 1936 in the literary journal Neue Schweizer Rundschau, was another weapon in the hands of the critics, because with its focus on völkisch mythology, it seemed to give a favorably romanticized image of National Socialism.

For Jung, the symbolism of mythology was crucial for the understanding of the unknown areas of the human psyche. As we can see in The Red Book, in Jung’s own individuation process his archetypal images came from mythology. It is not surprising therefore that Jung takes Wotan, a figure from Germanic mythology, as his protagonist in the explanation of ‘Germanic individuation’. Because of the rise of Christianity with its immense moral force, the German people had been denied their pagan roots for too long. The primitive German psyche had been split in two, one half civilized and the other repressed, causing an imbalance in the psyche. These repressed contents had been forced into the German collective unconscious and had lain dormant ever since, awaiting

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75When speaking of the collective shadow Jung focussed mainly on the Western society.
76Sherry, Carl Gustav Jung, p. 148.
77Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 13.
78Sherry, Carl Gustav Jung, p.137.
79Sherry, Carl Gustav Jung, p. 114.
80‘Wotan’ was first published in: Der ‘Neue Schweizer Rundschau’, Neue Folge, Ill. Jahrgang, Heft 11, März 1936. Unfortunately I have not been able to get hold of this original German version but have used the 1946 German republication.
81Jaffé, From the Life and Work, pp. 79-80.
82Bishop, Dionysian Self, p. 303.
83Jung, ‘Role of the Unconscious’ in CW10, par. 20: ‘The tremendous compulsion towards goodness and the immense moral force of Christianity are not merely an argument in the latter’s favour, they are also a proof of the strength of its suppressed and repressed counterpart – the antichristian, barbaric element’.
redemption\textsuperscript{84}. With the growth of natural science and industrialization came the decline of Christianity. Suddenly the blonde beast of barbarism could begin to stir itself in its underground prison. This short but potent article subsequently shows us how the ancient god Wotan, god of storm and frenzy, riding on a chthonic wind of destruction\textsuperscript{85}, replaces the Christian God. Wotan, personifying everything barbaric, brutal and savage that has lain hidden in the forest of the unconscious, blows his dark shadow over Germany and seizes the German people\textsuperscript{86}.

As with the self-regulating force of the individual psyche, this eruption of mass instinct was a symptom of the compensating action of the collective unconscious. At the end of ‘Wotan’ Jung says: ‘Wotan’s reawakening is a stepping back into the past; the stream was dammed up and has broken into its old channel. But the obstruction will not last for ever; it is rather a reculeur pour mieux sauter [to draw back in order to make a better jump], and the water will overleap the obstacle’\textsuperscript{87}. The point of the process is to arrive at a higher level. The persona had been crushed by this powerful archetype; one could say the German people were on a path of individuation\textsuperscript{88}.

Comparing Wotan to Dionysus\textsuperscript{89} and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, Jung claimed that the German people were ergriffen: seized or possessed by this archetype. This was bound to lead to disaster. When an archetype seizes a person or a group this impedes discernment of moral distinctions. In Nazi Germany we clearly see that dubious higher values were pursued with no attention paid to the consequences. Individual shadow merges into collective shadow and evil is unleashed on a mass scale. People no longer feel responsible for their actions and moral awareness becomes blurred\textsuperscript{90}. These conditions make it possible for certain kinds of behaviour, normally suppressed or repressed, to flourish: betrayal of friends, lying and cheating, even rape and murder\textsuperscript{91}. Madness erupted and the Nazi shadow not only darkened the German soil, but turned it blacker than black. Jung’s conclusion to all this is that instead of blaming the German people we must see them as victims of this potent archetype: ‘We who stand outside judge the Germans far too much, as if they were responsible agents, but perhaps it would be nearer the truth to regard them also as victims’\textsuperscript{92}.

Although Jung does not posit an archetype of evil as such, we could say that he assumes the existence of archetypal evil if we define this evil as an ever present potentiality in each of us. In Wotan we see all the manifestations of the collective shadow (in the individual, in Hitler and in the...
masses) come to life. We have seen the obsessive quality of this ‘other’. It has been argued that the collective shadow is the archetypal shadow and therefore the archetype of evil. The collective shadow is more than the sum of all individual shadows and, because of its transpersonal nature, it comes close to an archetype of evil. Can it therefore be seen as absolute evil? Although it most resembles the concept of absolute evil thus far, if we remember that the nature of archetypes are as experiential potentialities and capacities, then an archetype of evil would only indicate a universal human psychical tendency and capacity towards evil, but not to any absolute condition of it.

4.3 Jung’s own shadow

The essay ‘Wotan’ was one of the main reasons that Jung was criticized for having a very dark shadow himself. It sparked accusations of being a Nazi sympathizer, even portraying him as a secret ‘Architect of the Holocaust’. These allegations cast a shadow over the legacy of Jung’s work. The conception of the collective shadow as an Ergreifer seemed to result in a loss of personal integrity and responsibility, denying the German people complicity; an easy ‘washing the hands of the blood poured on by forces beyond our control’. Although Jung’s alleged Nazism was never proven, the manner in which he continued to “psychologise” the situation in Germany, apparently disregarding its dangers, did seem to condone the ongoing political developments according to some. Apparently Jung displayed paradoxical attitudes towards the Nazis. His theories of a distinct difference between Jewish and Aryan psychology were frowned upon by many. Still, Jung never spoke of these differences in any anti-Semitic sense.

It was felt the National Socialist movement held some attraction to Jung because of his völkisch worldview and love of pagan symbolism and myth. We could indeed say, during the time of writing ‘Wotan’, that Jung was ergriffen as well, along with the majority of the German people. Just before writing ‘Wotan’, in his 1935 Tavistock Lectures, he said: ‘Would you have believed that a whole nation of highly intelligent and cultivated people could be seized by the fascinating power of an archetype? I saw it coming, and I can understand it because I know the power of the collective unconscious. But on the surface it looks simply incredible. Even my personal friends are under the fascination, and when I am in Germany, I believe it myself, I understand it myself, I understand it all, I know it has to be as it is. One cannot resist it’. And: ‘The worshippers of Wotan, in spite of their eccentricity and crankiness, seem to have judged the empirical facts more correctly than the worshippers of reason’. It is obvious that Jung himself was very much affected and impressed by the circumstances; even admitting as much when in 1946 he remarked to a Rabbi: “Yes, I slipped up”.

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95 Sherry, Carl Gustav Jung, p. 2.
96 Noll, Aryan Christ, p. 274.
97 Noll, Aryan Christ, p. 274.
99 Jung, Symbolic Life, par. 372.
101 Bishop, The Dionysian Self, p. 321 and footnote 41: In 1946 Jung said to Rabbi Leo Baeck: ‘Jawohl, ich bin ausgerutscht’. Gershom Sholem wrote this in a letter to Aniela Jaffé, who published it in From the Life and Work of C.G. Jung, pp. 97-98, where Sholem says: ‘Baeck reproached him with all the things he had heard. Jung
After the war Jung shows a radically different point of view. In his essay ‘After the Catastrophe’, Jung says: ‘Now Germany has suffered the consequences of the pact with the devil, she has experienced madness and is torn in pieces like Zagreus, she has been ravished by the berserkers of her god Wotan, been cheated of her soul for the sake of gold and world-mastery, and defiled by the scum rising from the lowest depths.\textsuperscript{102} A radically different point of view indeed.

One of Jung’s most vehement critics is the scholar Richard Noll. He called Jung “The Aryan Christ” in his book of the same title,\textsuperscript{103} painting a picture of him that is very different from that of Jung’s (supposedly very romanticized) autobiography, \textit{Memories, Dreams, Reflections (MDR)}. Noll claimed that Jung thought himself to be a religious prophet focused on establishing of a polytheistic religious cult centred on his own personality and teachings\textsuperscript{104}. This new order would be rooted in the German Romantic natural philosophy and \textit{volkish} beliefs\textsuperscript{105}, which offered the experience of visions of the pagan gods of antiquity\textsuperscript{106}. Noll claims that many of Jung’s theories are not meant to be “psychological” at all. This was just a deceptive front for his proselytising of a “magical, polytheist, pagan worldview”, hoping that the term “psychological” would lead to a better and wider acceptance of his theories in a secularized world. Jung, in Noll’s view, has singlehandedly attempted to undermine orthodox Christianity with his pagan views\textsuperscript{107}.

The polytheist element came from Noll seeing the archetypes as “gods” of the unconscious\textsuperscript{108}. Jung’s alchemical Bollingen Tower\textsuperscript{109} Noll calls a “pagan sin altar” where he met up with his close companion Toni Wolff (with whom he was having an extramarital affair) in “orgiastic abandon”\textsuperscript{110}. Because of Jung’s extra-marital affairs Noll claims that Jung was a practitioner and evangelist of polygamy\textsuperscript{111}. Noll is also quite shocked by Jung’s belief in reincarnation\textsuperscript{112} and the influence of spiritualism on his early ideas. What Jung called active imagination, his technique of entering into dialogue with the archetypal images from the collective unconscious, is seen by Noll as a “spiritualist technique of visionary-trance induction” by which he contacted “spirits and gods of the Land of the Dead, who, under various pseudonyms of psychological jargon, remained his travelling companions along the trails of life”\textsuperscript{113}.

It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate these claims of Noll’s any further. They can be seen as rather outlandish, although it must be said that scholars tend to overlook the extensive and original historical contextualization Noll offers on the ideas that provided the basis for Jung’s

\textit{defended himself by an appeal to the special conditions in Germany but at the same time confessed to him: “Well, I slipped up” – probably referring to the Nazis and his expectation that something great might after all emerge.”, p. 98.}

\textsuperscript{102}Jung, ‘After the Catastrophe’, in \textit{CW10}, par 436. This essay was published (together with ‘Wotan’) in ‘Essays on Contemporary Events’ in 1946.

\textsuperscript{103}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p.208.

\textsuperscript{104}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p.xiv.

\textsuperscript{105}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{106}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. 268.

\textsuperscript{107}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. xv.

\textsuperscript{108}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{109}Noll started building his Bollingen Tower on Lake Zürich in 1923; it was a stone structure depicting many of his visions in paint on walls and carved in stone.

\textsuperscript{110}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{111}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{112}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, pp. 20-21.

\textsuperscript{113}Noll, \textit{Aryan Christ}, p. 23.
Jung’s psychology seems to place a disproportionate emphasis on darkness, evil and alienation. Because of this fascination with evil, critics have sometimes mistakenly suggested that Jung wanted us to “go over to the dark side”. Reading Jung more attentively, one must conclude otherwise. What Jung stressed time and time again was that the need to become aware of evil is a practical necessity. We must recognise the subtle ways in which it influences our thoughts and actions. The dark side either transforms or destroys us. By taking a homeopathic cure (taking a small amount of poison) we guard ourselves against the destructiveness of evil. Remaining passive towards it poses the greater danger because this cultivates unawareness; befriending evil is the only way to escape its grip. Otherwise its possessive nature drags us down into destructiveness. What Jung preached was not a substitution of good by evil. When properly integrated, good is replaced not by evil but by a larger authority: wholeness.

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5 Evil and Morality

5.1 Nietzsche, Freud and James

Since Jung has been greatly influenced by Nietzsche, we will briefly glance at his ideas. According to Nietzsche, civilization itself is responsible for the neuroses in mankind. People are no longer faithful to themselves but allow themselves to be oppressed by culturally imposed rules. For Nietzsche, to follow traditional morality is not a moral course; man himself should be the measure of his own values. He only becomes genuine when his moral decisions are grounded in his emotions and in his will to live. Christianity and its values are especially to blame for the prevailing hypocrisy of his time and the “denaturalization of natural values”.

Both Nietzsche and Freud criticized civilization and its cultural canon. Evil seen from this viewpoint seems to be equal to instinct-repression. For them, everything which impairs the instincts and thus the vitality of the individual is evil. Evil, then, is identical with collective morality rather than being opposed to it. Jung does not take it that far. He is more closely aligned with William James in pairing the moral suffering and neurosis of humanity with the one-sidedness of the individual. Jung and James do not emphasise the role of society as such, but concentrate rather on healing the bond between ego and Self. Men and women should honour the rules of society, but ultimately individual integrity must come above collective morality.

As an antidote to mass-mindedness Jung advocates a genuine religious experience, a direct relationship between an individual and a higher power. Here Jung echoed the philosopher Kierkegaard (1813-1855), who also indicated the existence of a religious plane at some remove from a generally accepted moral plane. On this religious plane the individual cultivates an inner, subjective relationship with God and feels himself personally responsible towards this God.

Jung says: ‘The individual who is not anchored in God can offer no resistance on his own resources to the physical and moral blandishments of the world. For this he needs the evidence of inner, transcendent experience which alone can protect him from the otherwise inevitable submersion in the mass’. True personal religious experience gives a person an internal reference point, the “Self as God within”, contrary to the one of the outside world, making him more free and autonomous.

Man finds his own morality when ‘...the basic root and driving force of morality are felt by the individual as constituents of his own nature and not as external restrictions’. This connecting to the God within is part of the individuation process and so must occur individually. Absolute principles do

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120 Bishop, Dionysian Self, pp. 132-133.
123 Jung, Undiscovered Self, p. 30-31: It must be said that Jung makes a distinction between a creed and a religion; a creed being more a collective belief system that can have the same effect as a mass movement. Here he means explicitly religion in the sense of a personal experience with a higher being.
125 Jung, Psychological Types, par. 357, as cited by Paul Bishop, Dionysian Self, p. 133.
not lend credibility to the uniqueness of the particular case in which a specific moral choice must be made: sometimes personal and collective moralities clash. Think about a conflict of duty, where traditional morality can conflict with the inner voice of conscience. What is felt to be “good” on a personal level is sometimes seen as “evil” by the moral code, or vice versa. The Old Testament provides us with some chilling examples, Jung felt: when God ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac, Abraham was willing to go against the universal maxim “thou shalt not kill”.

Some think that evil should be sublimated or suppressed, thus rendering it ineffective. Freud in his later writings advocated strengthening Logos against the powers of Ananke (ominous fate). He recommended training the intellect and trying to strengthen the bond with collective morality. Others, like Nietzsche, advocated a personal alliance with evil by wholly embracing the Dionysian aspects of life. Not only the superhuman should be embraced but also the evil of the subhuman, the blonde beast. Both solutions are rather one-sided, Jung would say. We have seen time and again that Jung warned against ignoring evil. Freud’s solution would therefore not have appealed to him. We must take into account that evil with Jung was more powerful than with Freud. For Jung, evil comes not just from the personal unconscious, as with Freud, but is also the expression of the “autonomous, timeless and universal collective unconscious”.

Jung was greatly influenced by Nietzsche but felt that his view identified too much with evil and resulted in too little morality. Again, it is William James that most seems to appeal to Jung. For James, a religious, stable and complete person was not one who was morally perfect but who unconditionally accepted the unconscious self and its dictates. Only the person willing to surrender to the unconscious and the transpersonal can achieve salvation: “Evil is not evaded, but sublated in the higher religious cheer of these [twice-born] persons.”

Jung likewise advised people to appoint evil a certain right to live and give up the need to be purely good. He said that “the disadvantages of the lesser good” are balanced against “the advantage of the lesser evil”.

From the viewpoint of traditional morality it is very hard to accept that evil leads to good in the form of psychic totality and wholeness. But however frightening evil may seem to be, Jung felt we must acknowledge and confront it to reach the lost contents of our souls. By realizing our own evil and imperfections we simultaneously accept our own guilt, or, in religious terms, our sin. This sin is actually a felix culpa (happy fault) because without it there can be no redemption. Jung writes: “We must be aware of thinking of good and evil as absolute opposites...Recognition of the reality of evil necessarily relativizes the good, and the evil likewise, converting both into halves of a paradoxical whole.”

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129 Russel, Mephistopheles, p. 231-232.
131 James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 488, footnote 1.
132 Jung, Mysterium Coniunctionis, p. 428.
133 Frey-Rohn, ‘Evil’, p. 188.
134 Frey-Rohn, ‘Evil’, p. 199. This idea of redemption is further treated in section 10.2.
135 Jung, MDR, p. 329.
leads to evil. Because good and evil seem interchangeable within the concept of morality, in my opinion we see here again a concept of evil that is of a relative nature.

5.2 Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology

In Jung’s ‘Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology’ (1959) he says: “When someone speaks of good or evil, it is of what he calls good or evil, or what he feels as good or evil”\(^\text{136}\). And: “It should be remembered, first, that good and evil are only our judgement in a given situation”\(^\text{137}\). Here we could certainly say that Jung relativizes evil because he suggests that under certain circumstances evil is good and good is evil, and he is against laying down an absolute morality.

Jung stressed that his attitude to evil is not theoretical or philosophical, but empirical. As a therapist he was dealing with the ordeals of his patients, the manifestations of their evil. Paradoxically, he said: “But because I take an empirical attitude it does not mean that I relativise good and evil as such”\(^\text{138}\).

Although evil exists and is recognizable, in a particular situation this evil might paradoxically benefit a patient. Contrary to accepted wisdom, good can sometimes cause grave harm in the wrong place at the wrong time. This is why Jung warned against making a priori judgements. Doing something evil can be beneficial and even necessary for a patient because only after suffering an evil act will he or she finally know the extent of the evil they must be saved from. Through confrontation with the shadow a person can experience their own light, and childlike innocence can grow into a more mature personality. Jung thinks the Church likewise understands this paradox, when speaking of the felix culpa (a happy fault that ultimately leads to more good) of Adam and Eve. Without sin there would be no redemption. Nevertheless evil is evil, and Jung suggested that we might as well get accustomed to thinking in paradoxes\(^\text{139}\).

Here again Jung warns against conventional morality, because it pretends to know with certainty what is right and wrong in any given situation. For Jung these judgements are not absolute\(^\text{140}\). Again, Jung is somewhat imprecise in his statements. When speaking of the atomic bomb and the destructive power this gives when falling into evil hands, he states that the evil in the world we live in is terribly real. He says: “If you regard the principle of evil as a reality you can just as well call it the devil. I personally find it hard to believe that the idea of the privatio boni still holds water”\(^\text{141}\). Jung is saying that sometimes what is evil is dependent on the situation and on human judgement, and sometimes evil is just evil, which does seem paradoxical indeed.

The following elaboration sheds some light on the matter. He goes on to say that first of all, good and evil are principles. Not ‘just’ principles though: the word, deriving from ‘prius’, means a ‘first’ or ‘in the beginning’. What we experience as evil or sin depends on our subjective judgement, but a principle exists and has existed ‘long before us and extends far beyond us’ and its deepest qualities

\(^{136}\)Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 858.
\(^{137}\)Jung, “Good and Evil’, par. 883.
\(^{138}\)Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 866.
\(^{139}\)Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 868.
\(^{140}\)Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 869.
\(^{141}\)Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 879.
are unknown to us. The ultimate principle we can think of is God. “Good and evil are principles of our ethical judgment, but, reduced to their ontological roots, they are ‘beginnings’, aspects of God, names of God”\textsuperscript{142}. In encountering such an aspect of God a person is at the mercy of it. It has a numinous quality that cannot be humanly conquered. Jung compares the awe one feels before it with Rudolf Otto’s \textit{tremendum} (fear) and \textit{fascinosum} (fascination). Such a principle is for Jung supraordinate and stronger, mightier than man\textsuperscript{143}. The reality of good and evil lies in the things and situations that happen to you with great intensity, those very things that Jung experiences as numinous.

In short, in this essay Jung primarily speaks of evil as something that cannot exist outside of consciousness but is primarily a category of conscious thought, a judgment of the ego\textsuperscript{144}. According to this view good and evil are a pair of opposites that are necessary for the ego to differentiate experience\textsuperscript{145}. Evil then is relative. This is what I expected to discover in this essay, although paradoxically Jung also sees good and evil as fixed realities, principles deriving from God. Both Christ and Antichrist are products of one and the same God. In this view, evil is embedded in God’s nature, in the nature of reality\textsuperscript{146}, and therefore seems to be absolute. In the following sections we will see if this holds true.

\textsuperscript{142} Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 864.
\textsuperscript{143} Jung, ‘Good and Evil’, par. 864.
\textsuperscript{144} Stein, \textit{Jung on Evil}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{145} Stein, \textit{Jung on Evil}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{146} Stein, \textit{Jung on Evil}, p. 16.
6 Evil in the play of opposites

Although the concept of evil is a fascinating one to focus on, we must not forget that it is also part of a much larger Jungian theory. He believed that everything in our reality consists of opposites that constantly strive for balance. These opposites are a major part of Jung’s thinking. Volume 20 of the Collected Works is an extensive index of Jung’s work and lists one hundred and nineteen pairs of opposites. Some of these are obvious: the spacial opposites, for example above/below and inside/outside; directional opposites of left/right, north/south, east/west and the temporal opposites of day/night, early/late, as well as opposites concerning values: evil/good, virtue/vice, costly/cheap. Others are less well-known: action/non-action, chaos/cosmos etc. Others relate to alchemy: albedo/rubedo, gold/silver, ego/toad, et cetera. Lastly, some relate to psychology: anima/animus, ego/shadow, extravert/introvert, matter/psyche, etc. All these pairs fall under the influence of a somewhat strange phenomenon: enantiodromia. This concept Jung derived from the Greek pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, who concentrated his philosophy on the constancy of change. The term enantiodromia is a composite of two Greek words: enantios (“opposite”) and dramein (“to run”, dramas, “running”); so enantiodromia is a “running to its opposite” or a “running counter to” something. This relatively little known term in Jung’s work nevertheless plays a large role in his idea of how balance in life is regulated. The law is unfailingly valid and ‘the most marvellous of all psychological laws: the regulative function of the opposites’. When consciousness focuses too much on one opposite, eventually an equally strong countertendency develops in the unconscious, which in time breaks through into conscious life. The more a particular attitude is repressed, the more it acquires a possessive character and the closer it comes to conversion to its opposite, i.e. to enantiodromia.

This mechanism explains why it is important that the ego does not identify with one of the opposites; it then loses its integrity and succumbs to one-sidedness, leading to an often violent swing to the reverse. This experience of enantiodromia is always overwhelming and is accompanied by a lack of control, which is why it is far better avoided. One can become conscious of this process, but Jung warned that the exact workings of the mechanism often remain a mystery: ‘I must emphasize, however, that the grand plan on which the unconscious life of the psyche is constructed is so inaccessible to our understanding that we can never know what evil may be necessary in order to produce good by enantiodromia, and what good may very possibly lead to evil’. When an excessive focus on the good happens, a violent swing towards evil can occur. Considering the utter lack of control that this mechanism produces, we could say this enantiodromia awakens the daimonic qualities discussed in Section 3.2.

The polarity of good and evil is inherently part of human life that can only be experienced within the

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147 Jungian Center, ‘Enantiodromia’.
148 Jungian Center, ‘Enantiodromia’.
149 Jungian Center, ‘Enantiodromia’.
150 Jung, Two Essays, par. 111.
151 Jung, Psychological Types, par. 709.
152 Jung, Structures and Dynamics, par. 425.
153 Jung, Archetypes, par 397.
tension between these two opposites.
Keeping my research questions in mind, viewed within the framework of Jung’s theory of opposites, evil does not have an existence of its own and is therefore in my view not absolute. It is a fixed moiety of a pair of opposites, where good and evil are two sides of the same coin.
7 The Red Book

In treating his patients Jung came across many unbalanced psyches. Jung himself also struggled with his unconscious; he suffered from a near psychosis during the years 1913–1916. For In 1913 Carl Gustav Jung, already an established psychologist and psychiatrist, entered upon a tumultuous period. He began to experience eruptions from his unconscious in the form of a series of apocalyptic visions. Terrified that he was going insane, he started writing the visions down in an attempt to cope with them. Through a system of active imagination he began conversing with the alternate personalities living deep inside of him. By confronting them in this way he managed to integrate them into his consciousness and started to heal himself of his one-sidedness. These experiences were later gathered in The Red Book. Here Jung describes the search for his lost soul during which he had to merge the well-developed rational side of his mind (‘the spirit of the times’) with the undeveloped side of feeling and intuition, that of his soul (‘the spirit of the depths’) to become psychologically whole again.

Jung wrestled with the dark contents of his unconscious. The spirit of the depths symbolized not only the darkness, but also small, day-to-day inconsequential things. In this regard it was like the shadow in Nietzsche’s ‘The Wanderer and his Shadow’, incorporating creativity and fun along with the darkness.

Although Jung did not have a specific archetype of evil, he did associate other archetypes with it, such as the Wise Old Man, The Trickster, Animus and Anima and of course the Shadow. From each of these archetypes Jung encountered his own personal manifestation during this period. Philemon, his Wise Old Man, was his guide through the unconscious. He too has a darker side, but the two most telling manifestations of evil came to Jung in the form of Salome and The Red One. Jung meets his soul or Anima in the form of the daughter of Philemon called Salome. In this guise the soul is depicted as a horrible, vile woman who is (as his daughter) subordinate to Philemon, who represents Jung’s higher wisdom. Towards the end of The Red Book it becomes obvious that even Philemon does not trust his own daughter. He says: “Fear the soul, despise her, love her, just like the Gods. May they be far from us! But above all, never lose them! Because when lost they are as malicious as the serpent....Cling to the soul with love, fear, contempt and hate, and don’t let her out of your sight. She is a hellish-divine treasure to be kept behind walls of iron and in the deepest vault. She always wants to get out and scatter glittering beauty. Beware, because you have already been betrayed. You’ll never find a more disloyal, more cunning and heinous woman than your soul.” Finally Jung does learn to partially accept Salome, but he never lowers his guard, and there is sound reason for this caution. Jung feels that besides wisdom, the unconscious harbors something ‘wild’ and dangerous as well. The soul, or as he later calls it the Anima, is to him ultimately untrustworthy.

154 Professionally Jung was doing well, but the publication of his book Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido (1912) marked the end of a long collaboration and friendship with Freud, who did not agree with the ideas described in this work. Deeply affected by the Freud’s dismissal, Jung isolated himself. This probably made him more susceptible to the visions that started during this period. For more information see the introduction of The Red Book by Sonu Shamdasani, as well as Jung’s Memories, Dreams Reflections, pp. 231-232.


157 Russel, Mephistopheles, p. 232.

Later in the book Jung meets a red horseman called The Red One, whom he identifies as the devil. This devil advises him to dance through life, but the serious-minded Jung says that dancing is only an expression of lust or madness. The Red One replies that dancing is also possible for the sake of joy, and states that he in fact is joy. Jung realizes from this that he must learn to balance his overdeveloped rational side with this joy. He needs to descend from the isolated tower of his mind and engage in the pleasures of feeling and of relationships. The fact that joy presents itself personified as the devil reveals Jung’s ambivalence towards it. The danger of accepting joy is that it can lead to Hell: “The devil has an evil element. But joy? If you run after it, you see that joy also has evil in it, since then you arrive at pleasure and from pleasure go straight to Hell, you own particular Hell, which turns out differently for everyone”\textsuperscript{159}. A man can be swept away and lose himself in joy but has to take the risk in order to gain its benefits.

Paramount in \textit{The Red Book} is the theme of sacrifice. In the vision of the Sacrificial Murder Jung enters a dark, dreary valley full of snakes. The air smells of horrible deeds. He comes across a small dead girl covered with terrible wounds. She is lying on the ground with her skull partly smashed, blood all over the boulders on which she lies. Next to her stands a veiled woman who commands Jung to eat her liver. He is horrified by this and refuses, but when she explains that she is the soul of the dead girl and he must atone for this crime by eating it, Jung relents and swallows a piece of the liver. The woman then lifts her veil; she turns out to be Jung’s soul\textsuperscript{160}.

In his interpretation Jung claims that the girl is the image of God. The vision symbolizes our need to slay God, because we have inflated His image by placing an overweening faith in Him. This inflation weakens the soul and makes us immune to the suffering of others: in the name of God many atrocities have been committed. Now we have to compensate for this. Jung claims that the ritual of communion (here the eating of the liver) is the necessary evil needed to free humanity of inflation with an archetype or of possession by a god-image. Sacrificing perfection is necessary to come to a higher level of consciousness.

In the beginning of \textit{The Red Book} Jung already points out that we need to stop relying on an external image of God or Jesus. It is the end of religion as we understand it and it is time for a personal spirituality. We have to do this ourselves, to find our own path. Not salvation but individuation\textsuperscript{161} is the goal: “The way is within us, but not in Gods, nor in teachings, nor in laws. Within us is the way, the truth and the life”\textsuperscript{162}. By eating the flesh of Jesus and drinking his blood, the image of Jesus as an almighty being is slain. Although the act seems barbaric, with it Jung regains some of his lost compassion\textsuperscript{163}.

The theme of sacrifice is also found in the archetype of the slaying of the Hero. For Jung, God is not only the good and the beautiful but also the ugly and the bad. God is ambiguous. He is formed by the merging of the two opposites. To let this new God be reborn in our hearts, first we must slay the Hero. The Hero is the enemy of the God because He represents perfection\textsuperscript{164}. This is why he has to be

\textsuperscript{159}Jung, \textit{The Red Book}, p. 261.
\textsuperscript{160}Jung, \textit{The Red Book}, p. 290.
\textsuperscript{161}Jung calls the process of personal development ‘individuation’ in his work after \textit{The Red Book}.
\textsuperscript{162}Jung, \textit{The Red Book}, p. 231.
\textsuperscript{164}Jung, \textit{The Red Book}, p. 244.
sacrificed, as a means of embracing the bad along with the good. Jung later elaborates on this theme in his *Answer to Job*, discussed further in Section 10, where the Hero that must be slain is the Christ symbol.

The Red Book commences with: “The years ... when I pursued the inner images were the most important time of my life. Everything else is to be derived from this. It began at that time, and the later details hardly matter anymore. My entire life consisted in elaborating what had burst forth from the unconscious and flooded me like an enigmatic stream and threatened to break me. That was the stuff and material for more than only one life. Everything later was merely the outer classification, the scientific elaboration, and the integration into life. But the numinous beginning, which contained everything, was then”\textsuperscript{165}.

From this experience all of his later work was born. He immersed himself in his underworld, wrestled with his archetypal demons and became more whole as a person by reconciling the opposites inside of him.

The style and content of the Red Book is reminiscent of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Both works focus on finding new meaning in a modern world where the traditional institutions whose role this had been are almost gone. Where Nietzsche concluded that “God is dead”, Jung advocated a new God image that can be reborn in the psyche\textsuperscript{166}.

In the examples mentioned above we clearly see that what manifests as evil is not really evil and thus, in my view, not absolute. The only true evil is not to be found in these archetypal images that Jung confronts but rather lies in the denial of these figures in the soul and clinging to perfection, because this obstructs the path toward wholeness. The recurring theme of the *Red Book* is transgression of our psychological boundaries; sacrificing perfection in order to arrive at a higher level of consciousness. In the end Jung’s goal is to find a new God image that harbours both good and evil within it. This new God Abraxas comes forth out of the union of God and Satan and is to be born in the psyche\textsuperscript{167}.

This theme is elaborated upon in Jung’s ‘Seven Sermons to the Dead’, examined in the next Section.

\textsuperscript{167}Shamdasani, intro *The Red Book*, p. 205.
Jung felt deeply attracted to Gnosticism. He felt drawn to the Gnostics because of their paradoxical way of thinking and their acknowledgement of the suffering in the world. In addition, Jung’s emphasis on the interior world and experience and his own inner journey can certainly be called Gnostic. He often used Gnostic myth with its figurative language to explain his own psychology because he saw it as the primordial language best suited to the psychic processes. Gnosis corresponds with the non-rational way of thinking, consisting of intuition arising from the soul, and uses symbolic imagery to express itself. This way of thinking stands in antithetical contrast with the rational, which is the tool of the ego.

Gnostic tradition posits the Creator as imperfect, not as omnipotent and omniscient; the cosmos was never a harmonious whole. Instead, Creation was characterized by an underlying fundamental flaw. This rang true with Jung, who did not believe either in a perfect God or creation. Although Jung feels that the roots of Christianity lie in Gnosticism, Christians generally deny any form of evil as arising from the divine. Jung insistently pointed to the reality and the immense magnitude of evil. He felt that the West, beginning with Christian theology, did not take evil seriously in seeing it as something that only arises from the unconscious of mankind. In Civilization in Transition he wrote that evil “is of gigantic proportions, so that for the Church to talk of original sin and to trace it back to Adam’s relatively innocent slip-up with Eve is almost a euphemism. The case is far graver and is grossly underestimated.” Here we see a clear indication of the concept of evil being more than just relative.

Jung saw the Gnostics as seers who dealt with images from the unconscious and focused on the attainment of wholeness. Between 1918 and 1926 Jung had studied the Gnostic writers. This was not an easy task, because they were considered heretics and most of what was left of their doctrine was written down by their opponents, the Church fathers. To attain gnosis the Gnostic had to turn away from the false and evil system of reality. Only then could truth and meaning be discovered. Jung translated their Gnostic insights to fit his psychology: to attain union with the unconscious, the extraverted ego must first become painstakingly aware of its alienation from the Self. A person must first truly grasp the inadequacy of this outer life. Only then can he achieve individuation and become a more mature person.

Gnosticism, always denounced by the Catholic Church, has gained wider publicity since the recovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts in Egypt in 1945. In 1953, after a joint effort with the Dutch professor Gilles Quispel, Jung received and studied one codex of these manuscripts.

Focusing on the Gnostic influences on Jung’s concept of evil, we invariably arrive at his mystical
‘Seven Sermons to the Dead’, first written as a draft and incorporated into the Red Book in 1916. This was the only part of the Red Book that Jung printed and distributed at the time, and only amongst a select group of friends. Much later, in 1961, he made it available for a wider audience and incorporated it into Memories, Dreams, Reflections. According to Jung it was dictated to him by spirits who came to his house in 1916. Originally the authorship was ascribed to himself, then to his guide Philemon in a transcript in The Red Book and later to Basilides, a second century Gnostic teacher, some of whose terminology he uses, for example God as Abraxas.

‘Seven Sermons to the Dead’ can be described as a ‘psychological cosmology in the form of a Gnostic creation myth’. Despite its form, Jung actually writes about psychology, not metaphysics. It can be seen as a summary explication of The Red Book. The whole process described in The Red Book led to the birth of a new God in Jung’s soul, Abraxas, who comes forth out of the union of God and Satan. This is the main theme in ‘Seven Sermons’ too.

The ‘Seven Sermons’ begins with a description of the Pleroma, the fullness of the first state of existence. The Pleroma consists of opposites that cancel each other out. We humans carry those same opposites within us, but in us they are not cancelled out. If they were, we would stop ‘existing’ and dissolve into the Pleroma. We exist because of these opposites, this differentiation, because the very ground of our nature is distinctness. These opposites continue to exist so long as we remain unaware of the unity of everything. This illusion of duality actually serves as a guide towards an awareness of the wholeness or fullness of the Pleroma. The illusion will fade away when awareness of the Pleroma is attained.

In the first of the ‘Seven Sermons’ Jung names a list of opposites: Fullness and Emptiness, Effective and Ineffective, Living and Dead, Difference and Sameness, Light and Darkness, Hot and the Cold, Force and Matter, Time and Space, Beauty and Ugliness, The One and the Many, et cetera. We see here an enumeration of different paired opposites that actually cancel each other out in the Pleroma, but not in us. Good and evil are also on this list.

All of these paradoxes and opposites give Gnosticism the impression of being dualistic. Jung was also considered dualistic because of his interest in these matters and for his emphasis on evil. But since the goal of life is to strive for an awareness of oneness, to achieve unity and fullness of being, Gnosticism is essentially closer to being monistic. For Jung we can say the same. He often stressed the importance of incorporating the bad along with the good and of becoming aware of all our different facets. His goal was not the perfection that Christianity advocated, because that led to the psychic impoverishment of its followers. Wholeness was the objective and good and evil are simply two aspects of a whole. Gnosis, for Jung, was individuation. He felt that the process of confronting

178 Jung, MDR, p. 189.
180 Jung, MDR, p. 378.
182 Hoeller, Gnostic Jung, p. 71.
184 Jung, ‘Seven Sermons’, p. 381.
185 Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 7, p. 15.
186 Slavenburg, ‘De Codex Jung’.
and assimilating the shadow was a Gnostic process\textsuperscript{188}.

In the Sermons, Basilides teaches the dead:

“When we strive after the good and the beautiful, we thereby forget our own nature, which is distinctiveness, and we are delivered over to the qualities of the Pleroma, which are pairs of opposites. We labor to attain to the good and the beautiful, yet at the same time we also lay hold of the evil and the ugly, since in the Pleroma these are one with the good and the beautiful. When, however, we remain true to our own nature, which is distinctiveness, we distinguish ourselves from the good and the beautiful, and therefore, at the same time, from the evil and the ugly. And thus, we fall not into the Pleroma, namely, into nothingness and dissolution”.

Therefore with good and evil both in the world and in ourselves, we should not give in to one-sidedness but acknowledge that we contain both opposites within us. Evil is the necessary opposite of good and cannot be denied or pushed aside.

Our God-image should also contain both good and evil. The first ‘Sermon’ begins with “The dead came back from Jerusalem, where they found not what they sought”\textsuperscript{189}. The message Jung gives is obvious. The dead (meant not as physically ‘dead’ but more ‘unconscious’ or ‘spiritually dead’\textsuperscript{190}) wanted knowledge of God and apparently Christianity did not provide them with sufficient answers. Therefore they now turn to the Gnostic Basilides for the whole picture, screaming: “Where is God? Is God dead?”\textsuperscript{191} Here we see Jung’s conviction of the need for a new God-image, because the one-sided image of the God of Christianity will ultimately lead to its downfall.

For Jung, God exists as a part of the Pleroma. And “Everything that discrimination taketh out of the Pleroma is a pair of opposites. To God, therefore, always belongeth the devil”\textsuperscript{192}. God and Satan are the pair of opposites that first emanated from the Pleroma.

Above God, the Sun (Helios) and the Devil stands Abraxas. He is a force more indefinite and powerful than God and the Devil: “Had the Pleroma a being, Abraxas would be its manifestation”\textsuperscript{193}. And “Hard to know is the deity of Abraxas. Its power is the greatest, because man percieveth it not. From the sun he draweth the summum bonum; from the devil the infimum malum; but from Abraxas LIFE, altogether indefinite, the mother of good and evil”\textsuperscript{194} What is actually being said here is that God is not almighty but just one part of a greater whole. Abraxas is the greater power. This shocks the dead to the core, for they are Christians.

The fourth sermon speaks of the existence of many devils and gods. From a psychological perspective a parallel may be drawn between these entities and the archetypes of the collective unconscious. The roles of these archetypal gods are not unlike those of the ancient deities Osiris, Isis, Jupiter or Venus. They do not just exist in the spiritual realm; through our projections upon other persons they gain access to our reality. Therefore not only gods partake in the life of humans, but humans partake in the life of the gods\textsuperscript{195}. In Sermon IV Jung writes:

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\textsuperscript{188}Hoeller, Gnostic Jung, p. 23.\\
\textsuperscript{189}Jung, ‘Seven Sermons’, p. 378.\\
\textsuperscript{190}Hoeller, Gnostic Jung, p. 65.\\
\textsuperscript{191}Jung, ‘Seven Sermons’, p. 382\\
\textsuperscript{192}Jung, ‘Seven Sermons’, p. 382.\\
\textsuperscript{193}Jung, ‘Seven Sermons’, p. 383.\\
\textsuperscript{194}Jung, ‘Seven Sermons’, p. 383.\\
\textsuperscript{195}Hoeller, Gnostic Jung, pp. 124-125.
\end{flushright}
“Numberless gods await the human state. Numberless gods have been men. Man shareth in the nature of the gods. He cometh from the gods and goeth unto god”. This is a very important conclusion in Jung’s work; he believes that since mankind has the power to self-destruct and also has the dual nature of the Father, that “man will be essentially God and God man”. Christ himself says in John 10:34: “Dii estis” (Ye are Gods). That is why it is so important for humans to become aware of their shadow, so they can cease projecting its contents onto others. The closing sermon states that man in this world is Abraxas, creator and destroyer of his own world. “This Star is the god and the goal of man”. After death the soul travels towards this Abraxas.

As in Section 6, evil is here a fixed moiety of a pair of opposites. In the Pleroma both exist as elements of a whole and cancel each other out, and they are represented in the formidable figure of Abraxas. Only when removed from this supernatural realm does differentiation into a separate form of good and evil take place. Nevertheless, from the beginning creation was characterized by an underlying fundamental flaw. This suggests that evil is an inherent and absolute part of creation. It seems as if though Jung speaks of absolute evil here. However, we have seen that despite the form of ‘Seven Sermons’ as a Gnostic creation myth, Jung was writing about psychology and not metaphysics. What needed to be created was a new God image in the psyche. ‘Seven Sermons’ was, as mentioned, first part of the Red Book. It draws forth on the themes described there. The death of the soul described above can psychologically be understood as the death of the unconscious state. To transform this to a personal level, God and the devil represent the good and the evil within ourselves and Abraxas represents the archetype of the Self, the representation of all that we should strive for.

9 The Jung-White Letters

As we saw earlier in the discussion of ‘Wotan’, Jung thought the twentieth century was the most violent and evil in the history of civilization. One of the most important reasons for this was because the Western psyche had identified with the good and the light for too long. He blamed Christianity for this and asked himself how the existence of evil is reconcilable with a God that is omniscient and omnipotent. Either some things are beyond God's control, which would question His absolute power, or He is responsible for evil so He cannot be wholly good. Christianity dealt with these questions by denying the absolute nature of evil, claiming that evil, unlike good, is insubstantial.

Jung: “As long as Evil is a mu on [non-being] nobody will take his own shadow seriously. […] it is a fatal mistake to diminish its power and reality even merely metaphysically. I am sorry, this goes to the very root of Christianity. Evil verily does not decrease by being hushed up as a non-reality or a mere negligence of Man”.

Evil for Jung must be treated as ‘real’, as a genuine force the world must deal with. The Christian view of evil as a deprivation or absence of good (privatio boni) only strengthens the ego’s tendency towards one-sidedness, according to Jung, thus preventing wholeness. On the whole, the one-sided view hindered God or the spiritual cosmos from realizing itself, Jung felt. This difference of opinion provided the main stumbling block in the friendship and correspondence between Jung and the Dominican father Victor White. From 1945 to 1960 they fervently wrote letters discussing the nature of God, shadow aspects of the Self and the problem of evil.

Although both men wanted to find common ground on these subjects, they both had different epistemologies that made this very difficult. Jung’s theory of knowledge comes from a Neo-Kantian background and he views the soul (psyche) as the most important means of knowing. Reality and experience are always viewed through the lens of the psyche, for Jung. This means that everything is known subjectively, experientially and, as Jung would say, empirically. Father White worked from a radically different epistemology: he followed the doctrine of the Church with its three sources of authority: revelation, tradition and reason. He did add a fourth: experience. This was the area in which the two men could meet. Before Jung met Father White, he felt that theologians would often escape reality and ‘flee’ into statements about the metaphysical realm that could not be substantiated by experience. That is why he felt suspicious of such claims. Nevertheless as Jung grew older he began to see how much people needed the spiritual in their lives, without which they suffered psychologically. The symbolism of Catholicism gained new meaning for him, especially the Christ symbol, which Jung saw as the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the Self. When Father White first contacted him in August 1945, he was pleased and open to discussion.

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198 Tacey, Darkening Spirit, p. 92
199 Lammers, Jung-White Letters, pp. 143.
200 Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 7.
201 Tacey, Darkening Spirit, p. 96.
203 Lammers, Jung-White Letters, xxv.
204 Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, p. 19.
Jung writes to White that for him the concept of *privatio boni* is utterly “*illogical, irrational, and even a nonsense*”\(^\text{207}\). Not only is it misguided but above all morally dangerous, because it belittles and belies evil and denies its reality. The good is deprived of its necessary opposite and is therefore weakened. If evil is an illusion, good is automatically an illusion too. However, the Christian faith clearly hypostatizes good. Jung prefers to steer clear of hypostatizing good or evil. Although he does not deny the possibility of both being metaphysical substances, he abstains from taking an obvious stand because he has no means of truly establishing them as metaphysical. This is no doubt due more to caution than true conviction, because it is actually quite a contradiction with other claims he makes about evil as an absolute\(^\text{208}\).

The topic of the Self was often at the heart of the discussions between Jung and White. The Self, for Jung the God-image in the soul, is the archetype of wholeness and has a double aspect. Although it is all-powerful, it is not all good. Jung warns that it has both a left and a right hand\(^\text{209}\). Christ can be seen as the good half of this Self.

Christ is certainly a valid symbol for Jung, but it is incomplete. This is where the Self differs from the symbol of Christ. The Self is a union of opposites, whereas Christ represents only the good, and his counterpart the devil stands for evil. This however is problematic since it leaves the world in a state of open conflict\(^\text{210}\).

While Yahweh contained within Himself both good and evil, with the incarnation the situation changed according to Jung: God becomes manifest in the form of man. Because man becomes a definite being he is differentiated; he has to be either this or that. Jesus becomes good, and at that same moment the devil is born. Christ must ‘sever himself from his shadow and call him devil’. When Jesus encountered Satan in the desert and withstood his temptation, his shadow was cut off\(^\text{211}\). This split had to occur in order for humanity to become morally conscious.

Jung was convinced that to go from a childlike state of innocence to mature consciousness one needs to struggle with evil and ignorance. If these moral opposites were not present, there would be no morality at all. The irreconcilability of the opposites is symbolized in the cross, expressing both sides in such a way that they can work together\(^\text{212}\).

Even after many years of fervent correspondence Jung did not succeed in altering White’s belief. White kept his Christian faith until his death. In the end, both men felt misunderstood by the other.

Jung’s views were at times paradoxical and inconsistent. He says to White: **“If you assume, as I do, that Good is a moral judgement and not substantial in itself, then Evil is its opposite and just as non-substantial as the first. If you however assume, that Good is Being, then evil can be nothing else than Non-Being. In my empirical thinking the tertium quid [third thing] is always the observer, i.e. the one who makes the statement”** and **“Things are quite simple, if you only could admit, that Good and Evil are judgements, having nothing to do with the incommensurable concept of Being”**\(^\text{213}\). Jung says that if good is substantial, then evil cannot possibly be merely an absence or a decrease of good. On the

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\(^\text{209}\) Lammers, ‘Jung and White’, p. 266.


other hand, Jung apparently believes that neither good nor evil is of an absolute nature. Nevertheless he warns against denying evil and even discusses the face of absolute evil. Jung felt a fourth element should be added to the Trinity. In response to a passage written by White he says: “A necessary fourth would be missing. [...] What happened to this then? To this Christianity has answered, among other things, that real evil is a privatio boni. But this classical formula robs evil of absolute existence and makes it into a shadow which has only a relative existence, dependent on the light”\textsuperscript{214}. At the same time, in ‘Answer to Job’ Jung describes the devil as the shadow side of the Self, which is rather confusing\textsuperscript{215}.

In the same letter he says: “Evil is as substantial as Good, as the devil and his hell are substantial”\textsuperscript{216}. Father White seems to make a good point when he counters Jung on this point: “Evil is as substantial as Good: But neither are in the abstract; doesn’t this beg the question?”\textsuperscript{217}. White fervently disagrees with and is hurt by Jung’s accusations. Christian doctrine does not deny evil, he says, either evil people, things or actions. These are the real evils the people in his community face\textsuperscript{218}. It is indeed the question whether privation theory actually denies the existence of evil in the cosmos or in humans. It certainly denies that it has an ultimate metaphysical being, i.e. it denies any divine derivation\textsuperscript{219}.

After Answer to Job was published (1952), in which Jung elaborates on the dual nature of God, their relationship deteriorates quickly. Their arguments become more heated and chiefly revolve around a disagreement over terms; at times neither man is at his best. In 1955 White writes a very critical review of ‘Answer to Job’, effectively sealing the end of their friendship\textsuperscript{220}. White accuses Jung of ‘Gnostic dualism’ and of positing two Gods. Jung claims that Christianity refutes reality by claiming that good and evil cannot co-exist as equal parts of creation\textsuperscript{221}.

Jung makes some paradoxical assertions when it comes to the nature of evil. On the one hand evil, the devil and his hell are as substantial as good. On the other hand, good and evil are both ultimately insubstantial.

What is most important for our inquiry, however, is that he constantly warns against the denial of the absolute existence of evil, stating that evil is not just a shadow with a relative existence that depends on the light. What exactly it is that he means by this absolute existence of evil remains unclear. Jung clearly states that evil is a real part of the cosmos and of God, not only of the psyche. However, according to Jung, reality and experience are always viewed through the lens of the psyche, which makes it impossible to draw metaphysical conclusions.

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\textsuperscript{214}Lammers, ‘Jung and White’, p. 270.
\textsuperscript{215}I mention this in section 10.2. Jung, Answer to Job, 594-597.
\textsuperscript{216}Lammers, Jung-White Letters, Jung to White 1952, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{217}Lammers, Jung-White Letters, White to Jung, 1952, p.201.
\textsuperscript{218}Lammers, Jung-White Letters, pp. 202-203.
\textsuperscript{219}Russel, Mephistopheles, p. 232.
\textsuperscript{220}Lammers, ‘Jung and White’, pp. 264-265.
\textsuperscript{221}Lammers, ‘Jung and White’, p. 263.
10 Answer to Job

10.1 The Wrathful God

Because of the one-sidedness of God the individuation of the Western world was faltering, according to Jung, and the Western soul was crying out for help. The image of Christ was too spotless and needed a counterpart to restore the balance.222

In 1910 he wrote to Freud: "I think we must give it time to infiltrate into people from many centres, to revivify among intellectuals a feeling for symbol and myth, ever so gently transforming Christ back into the soothsaying god of the vine, which he was, and in this way to absorb those ecstatic instinctual forces of Christianity for the one purpose of making the cult and the sacred myth what they once were – a drunken feast of joy where man regained the ethos and holiness of an animal"223. For most Christians this seemed an ominous message.

During and following the correspondence with White, Jung continued to elaborate on the dual nature of God. He advocated a new God-image, one that made room for darkness. The philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910), who greatly inspired Jung, had already discovered around 1902 the psychological importance of evil in religious experience. Maintaining a one-sided pious religious outlook leads to the rejection and repression of certain essential values. These repressed contents are complementary to the consciousness and cannot be eliminated.224 In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* James says: "...there is no doubt that healthy-mindedness is inadequate as a philosophical doctrine, because the evil facts which it positively refuses to account for are a genuine portion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth"225.

In *Answer to Job* Jung advocates adding a fourth element to the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, but whether this fourth should be evil (Satan or Lucifer) or the feminine (Mary the mother of Christ) remains confusingly unclear in his *Answer to Job*226 and thus offers an inconsistent solution.227 It seems that he actually wanted a quincunx, consisting of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, Mary and the Antichrist. However, the number four was more important to Jung, because it represented wholeness. Next to that, the quaternity depicted the tensions and dynamics of the Self, namely the God within.228 Jung focused mainly on adding evil as a fourth element to the Trinity. In *Aion* (1951) Jung depicts a number of quaternities, using several philosophical and religious traditions to construct a psychological God-image. In this volume Jung states: “The Christ-symbol lacks wholeness in the modern psychological sense, since it does not include the dark side of things but specifically excludes it in the form of a Luciferian opponent”229. Jung preferred, because of what he saw as its greater truthfulness, the Jewish conception of God in the Old Testament Book of Job: Yahweh, the

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225 James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 163.
226 Tacey, *Darkening Spirit*, p. 103.
228 Lammers, ‘Jung and White’, p. 262.
229 Jung, *Aion*, par. 74.
God who bargained with Satan to test Job’s faithfulness. Satan is here a part of Yahweh; he is seen by Jung as Yahweh’s own suspicious thoughts about Job. This God-image is more truthful and psychologically healthier according to Jung than the Summum Bonum God of later Christianity, which seems more inspired by ego idealism. In 1952 ‘Answer to Job’ was published, in which Jung points to the enormously contradictory picture of Yahweh in the Book of Job: Yahweh, who does both good and evil deeds. He investigates the effect this divine darkness has on the modern person with a Christian education. The Book of Job, with its “unvarnished spectacle of divine savagery and ruthlessness”, provides us with a certain experience of God that Jung found very interesting in relation to the nature of God and the concept of evil.

The Book of Job reflects on the existence of suffering and the reason that the righteous suffer. In it God tests Job’s faithfulness in a time of great anguish. Allowing Satan to attack Job, God watches idly by as Job loses everything dear to him. Although Job’s friends keep insisting that it is his sins that have evoked the wrath of God, Job knows that he is innocent. Job is very much aware of Yahweh’s dual nature. He praises his justice, while at the same time trembling before his God because he knows that he shall not be rightly judged. He says: “Thou knowest that I am not guilty, and there is none to deliver out of thy hand”; “I know thou wilt not hold me innocent. I shall be condemned.”; “He destroys both the blameless and the wicked”. At the same time he has the utmost faith in the justice of his Lord: “For I know that my Vindictor lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth.”

On the other hand, he knows very well that none other than his Lord is dealing violently with him without any thought for morals or ethical considerations. The astounding thing about Job is that while he sees that God is at odds with himself, he keeps his faith in God’s unity. He sees in Him both good and evil, both a persecutor and a helper, something unthinkable in man but very possible in Yahweh. Jung says: “Yahweh is not split but is an antinomy—a totality of inner opposites—and this is the indispensable condition for his tremendous dynamism, his omniscience and omnipotence.”

Because Job knows this, he perseveres in trying to defend his ways to God, knowing that God is also his advocate. Job loses his herds and his health, his children are killed and his servants are slaughtered. No comfort is to be derived from his wife and friends, who turn against him in this hour of need. All this is inflicted upon him by Yahweh because of the doubt His son Satan whispers in His ear. Nevertheless Job shows himself morally and intellectually very much the superior to his divine adversary. Even in the face of this horrible adversity Job proves a man of the utmost integrity and faith. Meanwhile Yahweh commits countless unspeakable acts without any compassion or remorse: robbery, murder, injury and denial of a fair trial.

Jung constantly wonders how an omnipotent and omniscient God can be so utterly unconscious. He points to the paradoxical nature of Yahweh that makes Him lament the sinful behaviour of mankind even when He could easily have created better human beings. Even at the outset of the great divine saga God displays his double-faced nature. In the Garden of Eden he first points out the

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230 Tacey, Darkening Spirit, p. 98.
tree and then forbids Adam and Eve to eat from it. He thus becomes the cause of the Fall himself.\textsuperscript{236} Moreover, He expects moral behaviour from man whilst remaining Himself utterly amoral, jealous, moody, cruel and unjust. Yet He continually demands to be loved, honoured and praised as just.\textsuperscript{237} God is too unconscious to be moral. Jung: “Morality presupposes consciousness. By this I do not mean to say that Yahweh is imperfect or evil, like a Gnostic demiurge. He is everything in its totality; therefore, among other things, he is total justice, and also its total opposite.”\textsuperscript{238} Jung felt that because Job stood his moral ground the inner antinomy of Yahweh was revealed. The realization of this dual nature of God elevated Job to a higher consciousness.

When Yahweh becomes aware of this, he stops his attacks. But instead of explaining his behaviour and turning on the false accuser, Satan, he thunders at Job: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without insight?” Remarkable, Jung thought, because the only one who darkens the counsel is Yahweh himself. He then strangely plunges into an account of how all-powerful He is, demanding that this be acknowledged, while Job is already miserably on his knees and does not need further enlightenment. Jung believes that Yahweh needs only to convince Himself of these facts and calls it an “inward process of dialectic.”\textsuperscript{239} God must have seen that it was Satan who fooled him, while Job’s loyalty was unshaken. But God neither acknowledges his own weakness nor Satan’s deception.\textsuperscript{240}

What happens here, according to Jung, is the projection onto Job of Yahweh’s shadow: “Yahweh projects on to Job a sceptic’s face which is hateful to him because it is his own, and which gazes at him with an uncanny and critical eye.”\textsuperscript{241} It is Yahweh’s fear of his own shadow that causes him to scream about his omnipotence to Job. By projecting his shadow side and thus ‘demonizing’ mankind (instead of Satan), he remains unconscious of Himself. Job is actually much more individuated than Yahweh. When Yahweh concedes that he is an ‘amoral force of nature’ and He ‘cannot see its own back’, Job is actually made a judge over God himself. Yahweh’s dual nature is revealed, with Job as witness.\textsuperscript{242} God needs to be feared just as much as loved.\textsuperscript{243} Jung says: “... a mortal man is raised by his moral behaviour above the stars in heaven, from which position of advantage he can behold the back of Yahweh, the abysmal world of “shards.””\textsuperscript{244} Here Jung refers to cabalistic philosophy, in which the shards are the ten counterpoles to the sephiroth of the Tree of Life, the ten stages in the revelation of God’s creative power. These counterpoles personify the evil and darkness that was once part of the sephiroth but became a by-product of the life process of the sephiroth, according to the Zohar. The sephiroth had to be cleansed of the shards by a process often called “the breaking of the vessels”. Through this process evil attained a separate and real existence.\textsuperscript{245} Despite Jung’s interest and admiration for cabalistic philosophy (and occasional use of its terminology) his concept of evil is fundamentally different. In the Cabala evil originates from a disharmony in the Tree of Life, leading to a conflict in the Godhead. Evil then manifests itself outside

\begin{footnotes}
\item [236]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 579.
\item [238]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 574.
\item [239]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 587.
\item [240]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 587.
\item [242]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 608.
\item [243]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 733.
\item [244]Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, par. 595.
\item [245]Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 171, footnote 35.
\end{footnotes}
of the tree and gains an independent existence by forming its own tree. Never is evil an attribute of the Godhead, as is the case with Jung246.

### 10.2 Satan, Antichrist and the Serpent

In the fall of Satan from heaven, witnessed by Christ, Jung sees the casting off of His dark son, His shadow side, by God. Now Yahweh identifies Himself with His light aspect and becomes the good and loving father. In the New Testament good and evil become more polarized as Christ and Antichrist247. Satan’s role disappears, though he returns later in the form of this Antichrist248. Darkness and evil disappear from God when He becomes man. It is nevertheless strange how a good and loving father demands human sacrifice, moreover that of his own son, in order to ransom mankind from the old debt. This seems proof once again of Yahweh’s vindictiveness and irreconcilability towards his creatures, claims Jung249, while Satan seems to escape any form of real punishment and, despite his fall, holds onto a position of power250. Whether it is Satan or the Antichrist, Jung would refer them both to Lucifer, the elder brother of Christ; both of them sons of Yahweh251.

Over and over again Jung points to the necessity of the existence of evil in elevating not only mankind but God himself to a higher moral status. In the Judeo-Christian myth the Garden of Eden represents the state of unity of man with God and with the world. Although it was a state of childlike innocence and bliss, it was an unconscious state, and therefore incomplete. God then sought for something higher and more evolved, and as a consequence the fall from Paradise became a necessity. The old had to make way for the new. The serpent personifies the evil that coaxes Eve to eat the ‘fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’252. This is seen as a fault that brings suffering into the world. However, the fault was necessary, according to Jung, because it precipitates the move towards a higher consciousness. The serpent is actually a fragmented aspect of God. Yahweh’s rage and punishment of humanity can in this way be seen as a reaction to the serpent’s wicked ruse and the following disobedience of man and woman. But an all-powerful and all-knowing God would surely stop the serpent in its tracks. This is why Jung claims that God endorses the fall in order to realise his own complex nature through the suffering of mankind253.

Jung departs from the Western tradition’s view of God as omniscient and omnipotent. Instead, in ‘Answer to Job’, he shows us a God who is inherently flawed and needs humanity to become whole: “He needed them as they needed him, urgently and personally”254. Eventually God becomes aware of Job’s moral superiority. This is why he needs to catch up, as it

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247 Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 16.
251 Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 16.
253 Tacey, Darkening Spirit, p. 94.
were, and become man himself. Through man God enters into the play of the original pair of opposites of good and evil, placing great responsibility on human shoulders. This shows the great difference between the traditional religious viewpoint and Jung’s depth psychology. Although Jung does not wish to replace Christianity by psychology, he does wish to indicate what remains unacknowledged by religion: redemption is not solely gained through Christ but is a stage in the path towards wholeness that every man and woman must walk for themselves and in their own way.

In this manner Jung Gnosticises the process of redemption. Each person becomes the instrument for reconciliation; the process of redemption has already been given with life itself, regardless of the religious inclination of the person. Jung: “Since he has been granted an almost godlike power, he can no longer remain blind and unconscious.” Life is all about the incarnation of God into humanity and “the metaphysical process [of incarnation] is known to the psychology of the unconscious as the individuation process.” This is the cause of the Incarnation according to Jung; its purpose is the differentiation of Yahweh’s consciousness. God Himself was on a much-needed path of individuation.

Jung said the predicted second coming is not of Christ but of His adversary, Satan. This is more than a prediction, warns Jung; it embodies the psychological law of enantiodromia previously discussed. The spotless figure of Christ demands the coming of its opposite in the form of the Antichrist in order to restore the balance.

Jung emphasises that we need to darken our understanding of God and the cosmos by seeing them as paradoxical realities of both good and evil. Only then can the Western world move forward on its path of individuation.

In the first sections we examined evil chiefly as a relative phenomenon. The last section on the ‘Seven Sermons’ has already provided us with a rather different view. In ‘Answer to Job’, the vision of evil becomes ever more imposing and overwhelming. Here Jung shows that darkness is a force beyond the will of the ego and is in fact a divine drive towards evil. God has a need to incarnate his own darkness and destructiveness, which is part of his divine nature. This offers us a vision of the absolute home of evil, of its ultimate source, as an integral part of God.

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256 Tacey, *Darkening Spirit*, p. 94.
260 Jung, *Aion*, par. 77.
11 The Dual Nature of Mercurius

The concept of evil is treated further in Jung’s alchemical studies. Jung was heavily influenced by alchemical wisdom. He was convinced that the old Gnostic tradition never entirely disappeared, but he found it hard to discover continuity between Gnosticism and his contemporary world. When he was confronted with alchemy he knew instantly that he had found his historical link: “Grounded in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages, alchemy formed the bridge on the one hand into the past, to Gnosticism, and on the other into the future, to the modern psychology of the unconscious”261. He believed that Gnosis had continued through the teachings of alchemy and had subsequently found its way into depth psychology. Focusing mainly on the spiritual side of alchemy, Jung found striking similarities with his psychology of the unconscious, feeling that the alchemical process of transmutation corresponded perfectly with the psychological process of self-discovery or individuation. The transformative process of base metal into gold, or leading from darkness into light, was accompanied by symbolic imagery, just as Jung’s process of self-discovery also dealt with symbolic images from the unconscious262.

Jung saw psychic and physical life as a process in which both good and evil need one another to exist at all. Their existence does not depend merely on human judgment but is an inherent part of reality. Evil not only exists in consciousness. Because of the tensions between the opposites they are in constant flux or play, in continuous change and transformation. Without these energetic tensions between the poles there would be no dynamic movement. Remove one element and the structure collapses. This is why Jung was extremely interested in alchemy and its account of the transformation of the elements263. Jung was widely read on the subject. He saw correspondences between Christ and the alchemical protagonist Mercurius. This complicated figure plays the role of the dark brother of Christ and firstborn son of God, comparable to Satan. However, he is not only the counterpart of Christ but also the counterpart of the Trinity as a whole, as a chthonic triad. He is thus equal to one half of the Christian Godhead; indeed the dark chthonic half that is eliminated in the Christian Christ symbol. Nonetheless Mercurius is not simply evil but of a dual nature; he is both good and evil in one264.

Jung cites many early modern sources, such as this passage from the “Aurelia Occulta” that best summarizes the nature of Mercurius: “By the philosophers I am named Mercurius; my spouse is the [philosophic] gold; I am the old dragon, found everywhere on the globe of the earth, father and mother, young and old, very strong and very weak, death and resurrection, visible and invisible, hard and soft; I descend into the earth and ascend to the heavens, I am the highest and the lowest, the lightest and the heaviest; often the order of nature is reversed in me, as regards colour, number, weight, and measure; I contain the light of nature, I am dark and light; I come forth from heaven and earth; …”265.

Standing behind both Christ and the devil, he is reminiscent of the enigmatic Lucifer. Mercurius is not only a triad and a unity; his true nature is actually a quaternity. Although this seems confusingly

261Jung, MDR, p. 201.
262Hanegraaff, Western Esotericism, p. 84.
263Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 17.
264Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, par. 267-272.
265Theatr.chem., IV (1659), pp. 501ff, as cited by Jung in Alchemical Studies, CW 13, par. 267.
paradoxical, Jung reasons in favour of the concept of Mercurian wholeness. Mercurius is often depicted as a square inside a triangle inside a circle, which is a symbol of totality. As such, he is analogous with the unconscious that contains everything within itself. In alchemical writings Mercurius is used and represented in many different ways. Not only is he used to denote the chemical element mercury or quicksilver, but also as Mercurius the god (Hermes) and the planet. One of the primary meanings of Mercurius is that of a secret ‘transforming substance’ or ‘spirit’ of all creatures. This is comparable to Jung’s concept of the Self. The unavoidable internal contradictions in the God-image, the opposites within, are reconciled in the alchemical coniunctio oppositorum: the unity of opposites. This is the way that man can serve God; by man becoming conscious of himself, and God becoming conscious of his creation.

Considering this spirit of Mercurius that for Jung represented the spirit of the unconscious psyche, what can we say about its nature? We have seen that the Mercurial unconscious is not simply evil. Mercurius is certainly destructive at times, as well as dangerous and deceptive, but its evil cannot be called absolute. Mercurius is more like the shadow-brother of Christ and as such he is compensatory to the conscious attitude, which often consists of Judeo-Christian virtues.

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12 Psychologism

As we saw earlier in this thesis, Jung was criticized for psychologizing evil. According to Jung, this criticism has its roots in the outward focus of the Western civilization. This last section before the conclusion tries to shortly explain Jung’s view on this matter.

Besides placing too much emphasis on the good, Christianity focusses too much on the outward person, thought Jung. Christ is seen as an outward phenomenon, leaving the mysterious connection to the inner life untouched. Jung juxtaposes the humanity of the West with that of the East. The Westerner is ego-bound and focuses on outer objects and things, remaining largely unaware of the deeper layers of reality, whereas the Easterner experiences the outer world as a dream where all things must be relativized, remaining closely connected to the deep root of being.

The symbol of Christ incorporates both an ideal and the sin that he took upon himself. Both are thus posited outside of mankind. This leaves the soul of man empty of meaningful content because both the Highest (Christ) and Lowest (sin) values are missing in it, inviting humanity to evade responsibility.

In the Eastern Self, says Jung, everything is within, both the Highest and the Lowest. This gives the Self enormous importance, in contrast to the Western Self, which is not valued but empty and depreciated and has “all God outside.”

Jung feels that this Western condition with its outward focus is the reason that he is often accused of “psychologism” when speaking about the reality of the soul or psyche. Jung seems to turn all religion inside out and to relate psychic elements to divine beings. This is often seen as blasphemy because it is felt by many that religious experiences are not ‘only’ psychological.

Scholar of Western esotericism Wouter Hanegraaff hits the mark when he says: “Jung not only psychologized esotericism but he also sacralized psychology, by filling it with the content of esoteric speculation.” With Jung, all derives from within the psyche, both psychological and sacred content. Jung says: ‘My point of view is naturally a psychological one, and moreover that of a practising psychologist whose task it is to find the quickest road through the chaotic muddle of complicated psychic states. [...] I also differ from the metaphysician, who feels that he has to say how things are “in themselves”, and whether they are absolute or not. My subject lies wholly within the bounds of experience.” Though it is never a matter of ‘just our experience’ with Jung; experience is very real to him.

Jung did not deny the absolute existence of evil but said he could not speak of such things. Our powers of conception are limited and so is our language to express these numinous phenomena. Often expressed anthropomorphically, they cannot pass the test of rational criticism. For Jung, however, religious ideas are based on numinous archetypes; on an emotional foundation that reason

270 In the Introduction and 4.2: ‘Wotan’.
271 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, pp. 8-9: in footnote 2 the editors explain the use of the term ‘soul’ by Jung: In English translations Jung’s German *Seele* is translated as either ‘soul’ or ‘psyche’. By ‘soul’ is meant not the Christian concept of soul as the transcendental energy in man, but rather the totality of all psychic processes.
272 Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, pp. 9-10: Jung remarks between brackets: (“a little more Meister Eckhart would be a very good thing sometimes!”)
cannot contest. These psychic facts might be brushed aside by logic but cannot be eliminated\textsuperscript{275}. The concept of evil must be viewed in the same manner as these religious concepts. It is the same with the concepts of good and evil, God and the devil. Jung did not always speak consistently of whether or not these concepts have metaphysical reality. He considers them myths, but for Jung myths are not just inventions or fantasies but psychic experiences that are very real indeed. Hanegraaff is very correct in saying the psyche is sacred with Jung\textsuperscript{276}. The psyche for him is too vast to be limited to psychology alone. So when Jung says evil is a \textit{psychic} reality he does not mean ‘just’ a psychic reality\textsuperscript{277} but a real, intense and overpowering one\textsuperscript{278}.

\textsuperscript{275}Jung, ‘Answer to Job’, paras. 554-556.
\textsuperscript{276}Hanegraaff, \textit{New Age Religion}, p.513.
\textsuperscript{277}Jung, \textit{Psychology and Alchemy}, pp. 8-9.
\textsuperscript{278}Russel, \textit{Mephistopheles}, p. 231.
Conclusion

The extensive reflections above make one thing extremely clear: a clear-cut theory on the nature of evil with Jung cannot be given. Therefore to make a claim for clarity in this respect would be deceptive. However, I will give an overview of the conclusions I have been able to draw so far.

To return to our original question: can we divide the concept of evil in Jung’s work into relative evil and absolute evil? In the case of relative evil it can be a simple yes. Most of the evil we have found in the work of Jung is of a relative nature. The unconscious remains a frightening and mysterious part of the human realm but it is not inherently evil. What the German Romanticists called the night-side of nature was dark and unknown and therefore fearful, and perceived by many as evil, although in fact it is not. It can cause great anxiety and, when its contents erupt, can lead to psychopathology as we have seen in Section 3. Nevertheless it is valuable and indispensable for our being. When looking at the phenomenon of the daimonia we have seen that they are evil only under certain circumstances. Although they are often impersonal and experienced as a primal force of nature, they are not exactly entities in themselves but represent a fundamental and archetypal function of human experience; an existential reality in man.

Because the unconscious also houses the tools for psychological transformation, it is safe to conclude that for Jung the unconscious realm is not evil as such. With Freud the unconscious was a realm made up of mostly sex and aggression, which had to be overcome. For Jung the unconscious harbours creativity, assertiveness and life force.

Section 4 on the shadow elaborates on this point. We have seen that although the shadow is not harmless and can be truly frightening, neither is it wholly bad. Although it can be a very dark shadow indeed it also carries within it the light of creativity and provides us with great opportunities for growth. The evil that the shadow incorporates is therefore of a relative nature. Considering collective evil, we have seen that its transpersonal nature comes close to archetypal evil, which is however not the same as absolute evil. It closely resembles the concept of absolute evil in that it has a possessive, autonomous and gripping quality that is often beyond our control. However, if we remember that the nature of archetypes consists of experiential potentialities and capacities, then an archetype of evil would only indicate a universal psychic tendency and capacity towards evil, not an absolute form of it. Human evil, personal and collective, is either subjective and dependent upon our judgement and the moral framework of the times, or the evil we encounter serves an important compensatory function.

When the existence of evil is consistently denied, autonomous forces assume control as our own is relinquished. The evil then leads its own life; it becomes a daimon, possessing and haunting us. It seems to have an absolute nature but in fact it does not. In a genuinely balanced personality evil is acknowledged but - or rather because of this - it loses its compelling hold over us. In addition to casting a dark shadow, evil for Jung carries within it the light of creativity and provides us with great opportunities for growth.

When we examine Jung’s ‘Good and Evil in Analytical Psychology’ in Section 5, it can be argued that evil can have both a relative and an absolute status. The concepts of good and evil, as principles, are
parts of God and are therefore fixed realities, but to what we allocate them is relative, being dependent on our judgement of a certain situation. When the principles of good and evil are parts of God then they must have a metaphysical reality, and thus they could be called absolute. Here we see an evident contradiction in Jung’s work. He claims that evil is both ‘just’ a category of human judgement, while at the same time evil exists because of the nature of God. Jung would probably answer that the nature of evil is indeed paradoxical: both statements are true and both needed in order to attain full paradoxicality and hence psychological validity. However, the absolute status of evil can only be maintained as existing inside God, not separate from him. The following sections shed more light on this issue.

Within the framework of Jung’s theory of opposites treated in Section 6, we can see that evil is posited as one of a pair of opposites. The polarity of good and evil is inherently part of human life, which can only be experienced within the tension between two opposites. Good and evil are two sides of the same coin and both are needed for wholeness. God is whole and transcends good and evil, but in our differentiated world the opposites must assert themselves. As such, evil is rooted in the nature of reality itself. If one is absolute, then both are.

The Red Book examples in Section 7 show us that what manifests itself as evil is not really evil. The only true evil is to be found not in these archetypal images that Jung confronts but in the denial of these figures within the soul, because this obstructs the path towards wholeness. Furthermore the stagnation caused by one-sidedness results in the evil acquiring an autonomous existence. As we saw with the play of enantiodromia, the more severely repressed it is, the darker and stronger the evil becomes.

In The Red Book a constant psychological transgression of boundaries must take place. Christ has to be slain, perfection itself has to be slaughtered. Throughout Jung’s work this is a central theme: embracing evil for the sake of wholeness. In the end Jung’s goal is to find a new God image that harbours both good and evil within it. This new God comes forth out of the union of God and Satan and is to be born in the psyche.

The ‘Seven Sermons’ in Section 8 elaborates on this theme. Apart from evil being a psychic reality, Jung was also conscious of evil as a numinous power that exists at the deepest metaphysical levels of reality. We read that from the outset creation was characterized by an underlying fundamental flaw. The non-Gnostic religions claim that humanity needs to reject evil in order to find salvation. Jung did not believe in this. To receive salvation (for Jung this becomes individuation) neither the power of God nor that of the devil is sufficient. One has to reach above and beyond to the frightening and grandiose God-Devil that Jung calls Abraxas. It seems that Jung speaks here of absolute evil. However, we have seen that despite its form as a Gnostic creation myth, Jung was writing about psychology and not metaphysics.

Jung’s evil is ‘real’ but this does not mean that he claims the existence of evil as an independent metaphysical entity. To understand this seeming paradox we must especially examine his concept of ‘truth’ and ‘reality’, what brings us to the criticism of ‘psychologism’ made against Jung. If this criticism held true, evil in his view would only exist as a psychological category. But as we have seen, he also claimed that evil is rooted in the nature of reality itself.

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279 Stein, Jung on Evil, p. 15.
280 Jung, Alchemical Studies, par. 256.
281 Hoeller, Gnostic Jung, pp. 82-83.
In the last Section 12 we have seen how Jung calls himself an empiricist, meaning that he afforded the psychic factors and manifestations he dealt with a real existence. For Jung it would be a misconception to think that a thing is true only if it presents itself as a physical truth. If they were physical facts they would fall under the natural sciences, and would then be instantly dismissed as ‘mere’ miracles. The reality of the spiritual meaning that underlies these religious statements can never be adequately shown through explanatory methods. Evil is above all a psychic reality in the life of the individual and in society, and as such it has a genuine, indisputable existence. The psyche is sacred for Jung and too vast to be limited to psychology alone. When he therefore says that evil is a psychic reality he does not mean ‘just’ a psychic reality but a real, powerful and omnipresent one.

The Sections 9, 10 and 11 on the White Letters, Answer to Job and Mercury further speak of evil as an inherent part of God. In Section 9 Jung makes paradoxical statements in his letters to Father White concerning the nature of evil. On the one hand evil, the devil and his hell are as substantial as good. Yet at the same time good and evil are both ultimately insubstantial. Evil does have a numinous and metaphysical status but only as a part of God, not outside of Him. God does have a shadow side but this still is an integral part of God. His adversary is within himself. Defining absolute evil as a metaphysical entity of the same nature as God, we have to admit that Jung does not speak of evil in this way. Jung wanted to refrain from making metaphysical statements, because he had no means to corroborate such views. Still, he does constantly warn against denying the absolute existence of evil, saying evil is not just a shadow with a relative existence that is dependent on the light.

Section 11, with its alchemical Mercurius, likewise shows that the existence of good and evil do not just depend upon human judgement; they are an inherent part of reality. As such, evil does not only exist in the human consciousness and is definitely more than a relative judgement. However, this does not automatically point to an absolute nature of evil. Mercurius is more like the shadow-brother of Christ and as such he is compensatory to the conscious attitude. ‘Answer to Job’ in Section 10, shows us a darkness that is a force beyond the will of the ego and amounts to a divine drive towards evil. We could define Jung’s theodicy by saying that the need for God to individuate himself is the reason for the existence of evil, and the reason also for mankind’s participation in it. God has a need to incarnate his own darkness and destructiveness, and this is all part of his divine nature. This leaves us with a vision of the absolute and ultimate source of evil; God.

I was initially happy to discover many passages within these texts that indicated a more absolute nature of evil. Nevertheless the existence of absolute evil in Jung’s work proved difficult to ascertain. My cautious conclusion is that Jung does have an absolute conception of evil alongside a relative concept, but only as part of a paired opposite and as such evil does not have an existence of its own. Jung did not want to see evil as a free-standing part of nature, because this would lead to dualism. This is something Jung wanted to avoid; he stressed the need for wholeness: wholeness of the psyche, wholeness of the Godhead. He therefore could not and did not believe in an eternal conflict between evil and good. Jung believes good and evil are derived from the same source, i.e. God, and must ultimately be united.

Reasoned in this way, absolute evil in the sense of metaphysical evil does not exist, at least not

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separate from metaphysical good. Nevertheless, the existence of evil in the world is real and we have an absolute experience of it. Evil is a basic truth of reality and human existence and is certainly of an existential nature.

The inconsistencies we have seen in Jung’s conception of evil are unfortunately not resolved in his work. This has made my quest a fairly challenging one. It turned out that a clear-cut theory on the nature of evil with Jung cannot be given. I have therefore abstained from making too bold assumptions. Still, I believe I have shed some light on the issue of evil in Jung’s work, showing that there are indeed absolute manifestations of evil in it alongside the relative ones. Additionally I have exposed existing paradoxes within certain statements that impose conditions on the definition of absolute evil in his work.

At the very least, writing this thesis has been an interesting journey.
Selective Bibliography


Franz, Marie-Louise von, ‘Daimons and the Inner Companion’, Parabola 6, no.4, 1981 (Fall), pp. 36-44.


