

Waking Up: Terrorism and Depth Psychology¹

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On the morning of 9/11, Americans woke up into a world where what had been in the shadows had violently taken center stage. Like a dream--or rather a nightmare--what had been marginalized burst forth into consciousness. Jungian and archetypal approaches to the dream are equally applicable to the cultural nightmare we are in, allowing us to do culture work as dream work. In a depth approach, we would proceed with sustained openness, cautious not to reduce elements of a dream to a single reductive interpretation, closing inquiry prematurely. Rather we would allow each image to reveal multiple resonances that sound out from each particular dream image in relation to the others, for instance, the World Trade Center towers and the hijacked planes. If 9/11 were a dream, I can imagine Jung wondering about how the attitude of those whom the towers represented constellated such an assault. He was fond of seeing such things as compensatory; psyche's autonomous taking down of what has been unduly elevated.

We would be asked to listen into what the terrorists or those like them say. Depth psychology pays particular attention to story, as stories convey the depth of experience. What are or might their stories be? We would need to acknowledge that we had not listened closely to them previously, and struggle to

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change our stance so that we can begin to hear them. Indeed, says Jung, "the unconscious mirrors the face we turn toward it," having to speak in ever more frightening ways when ignored. What was the face we had turned toward those represented by the terrorists, the face we find mirrored back by their violent and unswaying determination, their martyrdom for what they see as a religious way of life?

If we look at the literature in depth psychology we will find this approach to what is surprising to the ego, to what breaks in unbidden, to forming relation where schism has prevailed. But we will not find the terrorists or the colonial situation under which their peoples have labored named as such in our literature. The colonized *are* present in the depth psychology literature, but the phenomenology of their experienced worlds is not described. Rather they are diagnosed and denigrated as "primitive," "having a childlike mentality," easily suffering from "*abaissement du niveau mentale*" (a lowering of mental level), unaccustomed to abstract thought, concrete. Amidst these detractions we will find them in depth psychological literature, as spectacles of dying yet romanticized cultures; not up to the demands of the modern. Indeed, such a derogation of those outside of Europe is part of the colonialist shadow in depth psychology itself (see Samuels, 1993).

While we will not find in Jung, Freud, or Winnicott a phenomenology of the terrorists' world, a depth psychological approach to their dynamics has existed for five decades. Writers such as Cesaire, Memmi, Fanon, Ahmad, Maalouf, Freire, Martin-Baro, and Juergensmeyer have described the psychological dynamics that have resulted from the world behind the world of

depth psychology: colonialism and now the morph of colonialism into the rapacious and exploitative aspects of globalization.

I turn to these writers to begin to describe the psychological and imaginal world in which those like the terrorists live: what is the colonized psyche like, what are the psychodynamics of terrorism, what is the world like that they find themselves in? I also turn to these writers to acknowledge them for the depth psychologists they are. I ask us as depth psychologists trained without a focus on those whose psyche and experience have been shaped by being the object of colonialism, to reach to them to learn.

9/11 As Nightmare

The World Trade Center Towers. They were targets that Islamic fundamentalists obsessively focused on over years. We can free associate: symbolic of American economic might that has exerted its will and power in the Middle East to feed our voraciousness for oil. Symbolic of the enemy being seen not as only the military, as in the targeting of the Pentagon, but capitalist, secular society. A sense that all or many Americans are involved in the secular lifestyle that they feel has been engulfing their local, religious cultures. Thus it is Americans, and those who support her economic hegemony, that are the enemy, "justifiable" targets.

The terrorists. Gene Knudsen Hoffman (2001), the founder of the Compassionate Listening project, says, "an enemy is one whose story has not been heard." Let me create a montage that begins to suggest some of the story of many in the "Third World" who have turned to terror over these decades, and

then, specifically, to those driven by Islamic fundamentalism. Hopefully, their voices will stir our own empathic imagination about others whom we see live in a world quite unlike our own.

Aime Cesaire, poet from Martinique and France, prepares us, saying that we are not describing isolated men, but millions of people.

I am talking of millions of men who have been skillfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement....[men who feel about themselves] 'that I am a brute beast, that my people and I are like a walking dung-heap that disgustingly fertilizes sweet sugar cane and silky cotton, that I have no use in the world.' (quoted in Fanon, 1967, pp. 7, 98)

Frantz Fanon, born in Martinique, a doctor of psychiatry, was one of the most important theorists of Africa's struggle for liberation. In 1952 he wrote of his own experience being mistaken for an Arab.

Whenever I see an Arab with his hunted look, suspicious, on the run, wrapped in those long ragged robes that seem to have been created especially for him...Many times I have been stopped in broad daylight by policemen who mistook me for an Arab, when they discovered my origins, they were obsequious in their apologies; 'Of course we know that a Martinican is quite different from an Arab.' (1967. p. 91).

While Fanon writes predominantly about the complexes of his Black brothers and sisters, many of his words can be used to comprehend the inner experiences of Arabs caught in the headlights of colonialism and globalization.

Fanon is clear: "Terror is the weapon of choice of the impotent" (1967, p. 9). To understand the inferiority complex that fuels this sense of impotence, he

turns our attention to what he calls a "double process" that begins in economic terms and becomes internalized, or better, he says, "epidermalized" as inferiority. He argues that next to the ontogenetic approach of Freud, we must place a sociogeny to understand the black man's alienation. Were he to use Jung's words, he would say that liberation must occur on the subjective level as well as the objective level, and that it would be a grave mistake to think of these as automatically interdependent.

For the black man to become free psychologically he must "free himself of the arsenal of complexes that has been developed by the colonial environment" (p. 30). A central part of the arsenal has to do with the equation of whiteness with beauty and intelligence. "In the man of color there is a constant effort to run away from his own individuality, to annihilate his own presence" (p. 60). What is needed, says Fanon, "is to hold oneself, like a sliver, to the heart of the world, to interrupt if necessary the rhythm of the world, to upset, if necessary, the chain of command, but in any case, and most assuredly, *to stand up to the world*" (p. 78).

Every colonized people--in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality--finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. (p. 18).

He is clear that it was the European's feeling of superiority--now donned by many White Americans--that co-creates the feeling of inferiority of the colonized.

I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me that I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world. (Fanon, p. 98).

Further, the colonialist himself "reaches the point of no longer being able to imagine a time occurring without him. His irruption into the history of the colonized people is deified, transformed into absolute necessity" (Fanon, 1969, p. 159).

Albert Memmi, born in Tunisia in 1920, philosopher and novelist, is the author of The Colonizer and the Colonized. Memmi describes how colonization *disfigures* both the colonized and the colonizer. For the colonized, colonialism constitutes a "social and historical *mutilation*," [my italics] severing a people from their own history, culture, and language; substituting the oppressors' holidays and costumes. Both past and future are denied, locking the colonized into a present reality of being perceived as subservient, weak, backward, evil. Indeed, one becomes painted in a dehumanized fashion to justify the oppressor's dominance and exploitation. There is an illusion created that the colonized can be assimilated into the society of the oppressors, enjoying the rewards of the dominant system. Once assimilation is rejected, "the colonized's liberation must be carried out through a recovery of self and of autonomous dignity," ending former attempts at imitation and self-denial. As we witness 9/11, we can see that the recovery of self can attempt to happen "with a vengeance."

Eqbal Ahmad, a Moslem whose family suffered from the partition of India and Pakistan, helps us understand how colonialism has changed its façade.

While overt European occupation of many areas in the world has been ended, a closer look will reveal simply a changing of faces of those in economic control. The rich in former colonies, says Ahmad, study in and emulate the West, returning to their homes to carry on an apartheid where they are separated from the poor of their own countries, and connected themselves to Western power and influence (2000, p. 112). Although the overt oppressors are no longer in residence as white colonialists, oppression continues, economic and social justice remain out of reach for the majority, as markets are controlled by an elite group tied to Euro-American corporate investors. Such worldwide economic apartheid fuel the roots of terrorism, which Ahmad summarizes as the desire to be finally heard, a way of expressing long-felt grievances, feelings of anger, helplessness and alienation, a sense of betrayal, the experience of suffering violence at the hands of others, a sense of common loss, common humiliation.

In Afghanistan, as long as America could enjoy the slow attrition of Soviet might by bin Laden and his troops, plane loads of fighters from Algeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Palestine were welcomed, "given an ideology, and told that armed struggle was virtuous" (Ahmad, 2000, pp. 90-91). Can we actually allow ourselves to hear what Ahmad says: "This whole phenomenon of *jihad* as an international armed struggle never existed in the last five centuries. It was brought into being and pan-Islamicized by the American effort " (2000, p. 79). Ahmad argues that bin Laden grew up witnessing the plunder of his oil rich country by Western investors, but that Saudi Arabia was not occupied, the holy sites of Mecca and Medina were untouched. Once American troops entered near those sites during the Gulf War, the reflex that American policy had encouraged during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan--to fight the foreign intruder--was

extended to include America. We have stepped right into the shoes of former colonizers of these areas, attaching several hundred years of colonial suffering under European powers to our more recent economic exploitation and the political maneuvering that was deemed necessary to protect American economic interests.

Amin Maalouf, a Lebanese Christian, a writer, a speaker of Arabic and of French, sums up the resistance to Westernization that is part of globalization.

It is all the easier to imagine the reactions of the various non-Western peoples whose every step, for many generations has already been accompanied by a sense of defeat and self-betrayal. They have had to admit that their ways were out of date, that everything they produced was worthless compared with what was produced by the West, that their attachment to traditional medicine was superstitious, their military glory just a memory, the great men they had been brought up to revere--the poets, scholars, saints and travelers--disregarded by the rest of the world, their religion suspected of barbarism, their language now studied by only a handful of specialists, while they had to learn other people's languages if they wanted to survive and work and remain in contact with the rest of mankind. Whenever they speak with a Westerner it is always in his language, almost never in their own...

Yes, at every turn they meet with disappointment, disillusion or humiliation. How can their personalities fail to be damaged? How can they not feel their identities are threatened? That they are living in a world which belongs to others and obeys rules made by others, a world where

they are orphans, strangers, intruders or pariahs. (Maalouf, 1996, pp. 74-75).

In his own way this is just what the Jamaican father of the shoe bomber, Richard Reid, said to the press after the imprisonment of his son, as he described the impact of racist insults on him and his son while living in England.

Religious fanaticism was not the Middle East's initial or prevalent response to modernization. It was not until other paths, such as democratic rather than authoritarian, corrupt, and inept nationalism, were blocked that "beards and veils started to burgeon as signs of protest" in the 1970's (Maalouf, 1996, p. 82). Maalouf understands this outbreak as satisfying needs for identity, affiliation, spirituality, action and revolt.

Close to home, in the federal penitentiary in Lompoc, California, **Mark Juergensmayer**, the Director of Global and International Studies at UCSB, was able to hear the Islamic terrorists' worldview directly as he visited with Mahmud Abouhalima who was involved in the first WTC bombing. Abouhalima applies the word "terrorist" to the US government in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that claimed the same number of lives, 200,000, as was projected in his attempt to destroy two of the WTC towers. For him, political and economic power that obliterates others' power, that terrorizes citizens, and that may kill indiscriminately are also terrorism. From where he--and millions of others in the world--stands, he is responding to terrorism. Reduced to a state of impotence, he claims that the most the dispossessed can do is send a message. His message sent through the initial bombing of the WTC in 1993 was to protest America's role in creating Israel and dispossessing the Palestinians; its support of a secular government in Egypt, his native country; and, the sending of American troops to

Kuwait during the Gulf War. The bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania took place on the eighth anniversary of our troops' entrance into Saudi Arabia. He experienced his own salvation from the fallen ways of the West through Islam. Abouhalima deeply believes that America's secularism is not in the service of protecting religious freedom, but in the service of undermining religious life, substituting instead a soulless and Satanic culture that is lifeless. Reclaiming and identifying with aspects of a culture that has been besieged and weakened helps embolden identities disfigured by colonialism and globalization.

What we are apt to see as violence coming out of nowhere, is repeatedly described by those called by us "terrorists" as a response to violence that has been inflicted. Dr. Abdul Rantisi, a Palestinian founder of Hamas, explained to Juergensmeyer(2000) that Hamas was attempting to morally educate the Israelis. By actually experiencing the violence themselves, he hoped they could understand what the Palestinians had gone through.

Looking at the Dream Ego from the Point of View of the Characters:

Returning to the dream analogy, we can remember Hillman's warning that we are most likely to identify with the dream ego point of view: for many of us that would be the victims of 9/11. For many others the dream ego's point of view would be those attempting to send their message of violent protest. Thus we saw jubilant celebrations on 9/11 in far too many corners of the world. To go beneath or beyond our habitual identifications, we must inquire into how the dream ego is seen from the terrorists' point of view, in order to see into our blind spot where ego rules. This is not to say that the other characters have all the truth about the dream ego, but that their perspectives radically supplement what the ego can see

about itself. From the montage above it is clear that we as Americans are seen as hostile, foreign intruders; aggressive; hungry for the satisfaction of our own material and economic interests; belittling toward the cultures plundered; uncherishing of human lives from these cultures. We are seen as lost in a sea of materialism, immoral, bent on the usurpation of other governments for our own profit. While we can argue against aspects of this dehumanizing and stereotyped portrait, it is exactly such a perspective that has easily allowed us to become targets. Families holding one of the million young children who have died as a direct result of America's intentional destruction of the water system infrastructure in Iraq and subsequent embargo; or the families of the millions of children dying from AIDS in the third world due to American worship of market economy which protects pharmaceutical profit-taking that keeps AIDS drugs unavailable to those locked in poverty. Or families of those exterminated on the "Highway of Death" during the Gulf War; or those who have grown to adulthood in Palestinian refugee camps, where displacement has been the only reality. Those who have suffered repression and torture at the hands of repressive governments supported by the United States for economic reasons...all these millions experience Americans as Satanic in our disregard for life.

My montage has been taken from different places--the Caribbean, Africa, Palestine, Pakistan, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia. Can one generalize at all about peoples so different? Unfortunately, colonization and globalization have been a molding force from Europe and America that has affected these distinct locales in very similar ways. We find hundreds of local cultures struggling to maintain remnants of culture and religion that have been

nearly erased by the intrusion of dominant cultures. Ever since the various liberation movements dispelled the yoke of European colonialism, America has been in the forefront of this.

Repeating Dreams

If we start from a viewpoint of interdependence, then our well-being is ineluctably bound up with the well-being of those living in "Third World" conditions, those half a world away, and within our own cities and rural areas. 9/11 attests to this spiritual and practical reality. Suddenly we find enemies we hardly know inside our threshold. While we abhor their tactics, let us listen closely to their "messages." While we may argue our individual innocence, let us understand how we are seen and the peril these perceptions lead to. Let us, as Maalouf(1996) advises, examine the way we look at these others: "For it is often the way we look at other people that imprisons them within their own narrowest allegiances, and it is also the way we look at them that may set them free" (p. 22). May we find means of looking, listening, acting and responding that do not reinscribe their representations of us, and the trauma of cultural imperialism that is being fought against. In psychoanalysis we would say we must work through the use of counterprojective identification, surprising the other by acting in ways he or she would not expect, making it difficult and eventually impossible to continue seeing us as the enemy.

Unfortunately, our governmental policy has not worked with 9/11 in this way. We have met outrage at our military presence in the Middle East with far heightened presence. We have met perceptions of our terrorism toward the

Middle East with simple denial and further acts of violence that exacerbate this perception of us. We have met feelings of inferiority and impotence with continued re-inscription of our superiority and might. Unfortunately, Jung would say, since the ego point of view has not shifted, the dream, the nightmare, can only continue to reoccur.

Jung defined individuation as a gradual differentiation from identifications with the collective. In his own historical time, he could see the necessity for individuals to find their own moral compass so that movements like fascism could not sweep whole cultures and continents. We live in a different time, though the necessity to disidentify from taken-for-granted collective norms is every bit as crucial. It is up to each of us to work with the nightmare of 9/11, to listen to the various voices that compose its conflagration.

Dennis Rivers (2002) reminds us of the potential task each German had during the Holocaust to become as aware as possible of what was being done in his or her name by the government of Germany, and to take a conscious stand in relation to what one has come to know. He asks each of us as Americans to pose the same task to ourselves: to seek consciousness about what is done in our name, to create a moral relationship to what we come to know, and to act and live out of these knowings.

We are each gifted, by our history and our character, with particular awarenesses that we can carry, share, and act in the light of. While some of us wake from nightmares of nuclear holocaust and find a way to protest the present US policy to consider the use of nuclear weapons as justifiable in some contexts, others will be able to protest the use of violence in the place of the legal justice system, or the misuse of the many for the excessive comforts of the few. Some

will be able to nurture compassion where hatred has prevailed. Whatever our gift, it is part of our individuation, or our living in honest and direct relation to what Jung called our lifeline, to honor our awareness with our attention, our action, and at times, our protest.

If depth psychology is to help promote psychological understanding of the dynamics of terrorism and the psyches of terrorists, we must open our cannon to works such as those I have borrowed from in creating this montage. Alongside Jung and Winnicott, we need to read depth psychological approaches to the psyche and experience of those not addressed by our favorite theorists. This necessity highlights the Euro-American context of the genesis of the theories we are familiar with, and the circumscribed area of their limits of applicability. To my mind, 9/11 can be a wake up call for depth psychology, inviting us to understand vast areas of human experience and suffering cast into the shadows by our own discipline. But let us note that while we as depth psychologists have ignored the psychological ground of those we label as "terrorists," our methods of working with symptom, dream, and suffering are ideally suited to help with individual and cultural processes of coming to greater consciousness, creating a ground for understanding and compassion, and, hopefully, increasing reconciliation and peace.

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