

**IRSJA Presentation Spring Meeting 2023**  
**Jungian Clinical Practice Through the Lens of Affect, Feelings, and Defense**  
**In Defense of Defenses**

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**Introduction:**

What I've put together for you today comes in three courses, starting with an *amou*s *bouch* to whet your appetite; This appetizer is a four-word alternative title to my talk namely: "In Defense of Defenses. That's a taste of things to come.

For the first course, I'll briefly review the work I've been doing over the last 4 decades with a certain group of patients who--between infancy and 5 years of age--have suffered early trauma--in other words, so early that their experience is still largely unformulated and their ego's are still islands in an archipelago--not yet a coherent center. Trauma at this early stage introduces unbearable levels of pain, overwhelming anxiety, and what Janet called "vehement" levels of anger and violence into the inner world of the very young child. Co-regulation of these vehement emotions has never happened, so the child must regulate itself and powerful dissociative defenses become necessary to do this.

In my early work (*The Inner World of Trauma*) I identified these archaic and typical defenses and discovered that they operated as a "system" which I called the "Self-Care System." This system I believe is what Freud called a "kern-complex" a core complex of the dissociating psyche, devoted to helping the traumatized child dissociate from its impossible affects. It contains defenses that are more "primitive" than the ego-defenses we commonly think about in personal complexes where we can assume a more or less coherent ego. Here's the best image I've found to express the archetypal nature of these defenses. It's Wilhelm Blake's painting called "The Good and Evil Angels Struggle for Possession of a Child."

**[Slide of Blake's Angels]**

I don't have time to give you the full *bone fides* of these "powers" today, but in short, the dark angel on the left is characterized by his **violence** while the bright angel on the right specializes in comforting **illusions**. Both serve the ultimate project of dissociating the terrified "child" you see here, from consciously feeling the pain it suffered. The problem comes that in order to accomplish this they must attack the whole affective system leading to a *generalized fear of affect*--especially

the vulnerable and dependent feelings that are a natural part of every child's life. So the child in this image represents the wounded feeling-child, the empirical child, carrying the memory of trauma in its little body, but unable to feel it. Over the years I have discovered that linked with this injured, orphaned child is something of the child's innocent, pre-traumatic core of aliveness. This is the innocent child and an image of the human soul. Healing comes when this innocent core of the child is contacted in therapy and allowed to suffer some of its hurt in the presence of a compassionate other. In any case all trauma therapy goes through this dual "child"--if we can find a way to access it--which means finding a way around the powerful angels of violence and illusion that both protect and persecute this child.

Practically speaking this means finding our way to feelings-in-the-moment and this requires various forms of body-sensitive work, exquisite attention to the transference, creative-arts methods that invite the imagination of the child into presence, and finally, as Jung taught us, active imagination. In other words experiences, not explanations or interpretations. Some of our colleagues at this meeting are doing creative work in this area. Two in particular (Lourdes Hernandez and Nora Swan Foster) have recently published cases in the JAP that illustrate the process of getting "underneath" or "around" the "systems" of defense to the "child" layer. Nora talks about putting on an "invisibility cap" to slip around the ever vigilant light and dark "angels" in the system. I highly recommend their papers. Some of my own work has been inspired by their example.

Michael Fordham also discovered the powerful dissociative defenses I've described. He called them "defenses of the Self" to indicate that they were organized by some underlying principle of survival in the psyche operating before ego-formation. And he speculated that they were operative in cases of early infantile autism, where the child seals itself off from a hateful mother and becomes completely un-responsive. Fordham never spoke of defenses of the Self as part of a dissociative system, nor did he imagine them appearing in dreams, which I am convinced they do all the time. This fact strikes me as a remarkable testament to the psyche's imaginal powers. Dissociation is known to be an attack on the symbolic process, and yet in these patients' dreams, we have the dissociative powers being symbolized.

Ok, so that's the first course. Many of you are familiar with this part of my work and I won't repeat it here--except to provide a brief case-vignette to bring out what I want to emphasize today which is how murderous and violent these defenses seem to be towards the weak, vulnerable and wounded parts of the self. I have

been shocked to discover, in my work with these peoples' dreams, how much "killing" goes on inside, including, God forbid, the killing of children. I put the word "killing" in quotes because often in dreams, the violent parts simply want to kill the connections to the child layer--to kill consciousness of them--not to literally murder them.

In a second course of my remarks today, I'll try to link the violent aggressive energies that infuses the defensive system to a "*dissolving disintegrating force*" that originates in the earliest unformulated experience of infancy and functions to keep thoughts, affects and sensations dis-aggregated and isolated from one another so they don't "mean" anything. This part of my talk will rely on some of Donnel Stern's work<sup>i</sup> on unformulated experience and I'll relate this to Jung's idea of "collective complexes."

Then in a third course, I'll tell you a couple of good stories about some very questionable recommendations from Marie Louise von Franz (and from Jung himself) about how to handle violence and destructiveness in our patients. Because these beloved great ancestors of ours had no understanding of *how the unformulated experience of infancy shows up in later material as violent defenses*, they had to fall back on archetypal demonology to explain what they were seeing. They got the demons right. They just didn't realize that behind the demonic personae there were defenses and that these had a personal history. In working with demons clinically, it helps to know something about how these demons came into being. They are not just personifications of evil or the "dark side of God." They were born in a personal history of child-abuse and their violence is not so much their essential evil as it is the child's instinctive aggression recruited by the dissociative system to dis-connect the child from impossible feeling. If we don't know there's a human process in these demons' development, it leaves us hamstrung when it comes to working with violent affects in our patients. It also leaves our field without an adequate theory of destruction--something Gustav Bovensiepen also laments in a recent JAP article.

### **A Case: Mike and the Mad Bomber**

Because an actual case is often worth a thousand theoretical words, let me introduce you to "Mike," a 40 year old high school football coach referred by his wife for "anger issues" which amounted to repeated road-rage incidents. But the main problem now—and the issue his wife was most worried about-- was that Mike was starting to have uncontrollable fears and anxieties about losing his new-born baby son—an infant who had been born with a condition of severe jaundice

and was especially fragile. The baby was out of danger now and at home. But Mike still couldn't stop worrying and obsessing. He spent many sleepless nights standing over the baby's crib, checking his breathing, crying over the imagined loss of him.

In his initial sessions, Mike was so dysregulated by storms of affect and fragmented scraps of traumatic memory that he had to talk to me while pacing back and forth like a caged animal. Gradually, over several weeks, he settled down and we began to explore his early history which included regular naked beatings with a wooden paddle by his militaristic father from the age of 2 onward. In these abusive episodes, Mike refused to cry and, as he put it, never gave his father the satisfaction of "breaking him." Devoted to his mother, Mike became inconsolable at 18 months, when his younger brother was born. He acted out, ran away to neighbors, and broke things in his rages. Severe punishment always followed, such as being collared and attached to a dog chain in the front yard to keep him from running away or destroying things when the parents were away.

As often happens with patients who have suffered repetitive catastrophic trauma in childhood, Mike told this story without affect. He could not be sad or angry about the way his parents had treated him. He couldn't even feel that what he went through was bad enough to deserve my compassion. This changed as the space between us warmed up emotionally.

Often Mike would present some horrific detail about his childhood with a dismissive macho attitude of black humor and a cynical laugh--like the dog-chain incident. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he would see the painful look on my face, as I took seriously the humiliation that he must have experienced as a little boy. This gave him permission to feel some of his own pain and the result was increasingly that he could let himself drop into his own grief and sadness, laced with rage from his childhood humiliations. The inner "boy" began regularly to enter the space between us. His road-rage incidents lessened. One day, about a year into our work, he brought this dream:

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We're in a huge hotel. I am a body-guard for this child who seemed sacred or special in some way--almost like the Christ Child. He's in an adjoining room. Somehow *the child doesn't know who he is*. I can feel the presence of an evil person--someone who has come for the boy and is very close by. I become vigilant....alert! Then there's an explosion set off by the "Evil One". I run into the child's room. He's 5-7 years old. The explosion occurred next

door to him. The child is in shock. I recognize him and know who he is...the images of his life flash by me.

I sit down next to this boy knowing the explosion was only meant to tease. If they really wanted to kill this child they would have. I now start to shake this boy. "Who are you!" I shout. *"Do you know who you are?"* His eyes remain fixed, then roll up in the back of his head. I see a little smile on his face. Perhaps I have made contact with him. But he won't look at me. I feel so frustrated. I leave the room crying out of helplessness. I can't make contact with this child!

Then in a final part, I'm trying to tell this dream to a man upstairs. A woman present has instructed me to tell him the whole story. I'm relieved at the prospect of this but am blocked...like I've had electro-shock or amnesia...*I can't remember the boy's life story.* I think perhaps I should go back for his history but I'll never escape the "Evil one" if I do. I wake up in a sweat.

This dream, and others like it, were my first glimpse--back in the 1980's--of how dissociation works to keep traumatic experience from being remembered--and how it does so with the aid of violent, angry affects which try to "kill"-- blow up or annihilate -- the offending feeling-memories. I came to realize that this figure was "created" as it were by the dissociative system out of the rage the child cannot bear to experience towards his abusers. I got this from Ronald Fairbairn<sup>ii</sup> who asked the question. "what does the abused or neglected child do with its desperate neediness on the one hand and its rage and anger on the other?" The answer, in his words was as follows:

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The child seeks to circumvent the dangers of expressing both [needy] and aggressive affect towards his object by *using a maximum of his aggression to subdue a maximum of his libidinal need* (p. 115)."

This results, says Fairbairn in an unconscious attack by an "internal saboteur" upon the immature needs and vulnerability resident in the inner world. In other words, *aggression becomes the "engine" that drives the dissociative system.* It's where the "splitting" energy for the most primitive defenses, comes from--funneled back into the inner world to attack and oppress the vulnerable libidinal parts of the personality.

The relationship between childhood vulnerability, and how it constellates what Fairbairn calls the Internal Saboteur seemed clear in Mike's case. In the

transference, he was allowing himself to feel the genuine grief, sadness and pain of his early childhood self. For the first time ever, he was letting this inner child “out” of the system and this is apparently what antagonized mad bomber to strike.

What intrigued me was not only that the violent defense itself was personified in Mike’s dream (as the “Evil One,”) but that the inner struggle that the dreamer was having between the inner “child” and its persecutor was also portrayed. The dream ego wants to make contact with the shell-shocked boy in the dream--but can’t because of the extent of the trauma-trance. Later, the dream ego wants to “tell the whole story to a man upstairs”--a reference to me, Mike thought, because that’s where my office was--but again he’s prevented because of “electro-shock or amnesia or something”--a clear reference to dissociation. He thinks perhaps he should go back into the dream for the boy’s history but he’ll “never escape the evil one” if he does. So as healing begins, the pitched battle with defenses begins also.<sup>iii</sup>

In any case, as our process evolved, Mike was feeling a lot more in his body. His eyes were tearing up frequently now in his sessions. Whenever this happened he would leave his chair, rage and clench his fists, and pace around the room--then sit down again to more tears---then more rage and pacing. Vulnerable feelings and the violent defenses against them back and forth--over and over again. This was a workout for him and for me and for the “evil one” in his psyche who was slowly transforming into a more trusting guardian.

We might think of this as a process through which extreme, archetypal affects were getting humanized and co-regulated toward becoming differentiated feelings that Mike could actually talk about and reflect upon. You might say he was becoming more “emotionally literate.” In my holding presence, 880 volts of Mike’s angry affects, were getting transformed to 440, then 220, then 110 or usable electricity. Jung’s articulation of the difference between affect on the one hand and differentiated feelings on the other is helpful here. Early in his authorship, Jung said that “the essential basis of our personality is affectivity” (CW 3, para78) and then later clarified that *affects and emotions* are not yet *feelings*. They are the primitive *precursors* to differentiated feelings. In a letter to a colleague in 1950 he said:

“Affectivity is emotionality and I would like to distinguish it strictly from feeling, which, if differentiated, is a rational (value) function, whereas affects always remain spontaneous products of nature. *Only in its undeveloped, primitive state is feeling contaminated with emotions*, this

being the distinguishing mark of *undifferentiated feeling*.” (Vol 1, p. 544; Italics mine)

That’s quite a statement is it not? “*Only in its undeveloped primitive state is feeling, contaminated with emotions.*” Jung didn’t like feelings “contaminated” by emotions because in his view, feeling was a rational function connected to the valuing capacities of the ego and hence a conscious *function-type* in his four-fold typology. (I think this has led to lots of misunderstanding among our colleagues outside the Jungian camp who generally see feelings as the “window to life”--not limited to a rational function and limited to one of four function-types.) Nor did Jung talk about the therapeutic processes through which the primitive emotions are transformed into differentiated feelings. That’s what Mike and I were doing in the Sturm und Drang of our sessions.<sup>iv</sup>

OK, now for the second course. Four years ago in a plenary talk I gave at the Vienna IAAP Congress, I re-visited these archetypal defenses and suggested that the central problem for these patients is their overwhelming *affects* and the struggle to regulate these affects without the help of a caretaking other—a struggle they are helpless to manage without powerful dissociative defenses. In a metaphor that expressed this idea I said that these early-trauma patients were people whose “hearts had been broken before they had hearts to break.”

That metaphor captures the injury to these patients’ earliest feeling-life, before coherent ego-development and what Winnicott calls psycho-somatic “indwelling.” If the “heart is broken” at this earliest phase of development then--thanks to dissociative defenses--the components of experience remain largely “unformulated.” That’s Donnel Stern’s<sup>v</sup> word for how our experience can remain fragmented--dis-aggregated--in pieces that don’t add up to mean anything. Experience “happens” but it doesn’t necessarily happen “to me.” It fails to take on emotional significance. And it is kept that way by dissociation. At this level of inner chaos, we don’t narrate our stories....we don’t have words for them yet and we avoid “spelling them out.” Stern points out that unless we have a reasonably complete story about our trauma--a narrative based on formulated experience--then in some profound way the trauma never happened, and this is the way dissociation wants it.

Psychoanalysis has developed to the point where we no longer take simple experience for granted. We realize that whole, integrated experience doesn’t just emerge and automatically become part of our history. It has to be constructed. More specifically (attachment theorists would remind us) it has to be “co-

constructed” with an attuned, relational “other.” Not all of us have such attuned, relational others in our childhoods.

Peter Levine has outlined the major components of normal experience that eventually will need to become integrated in our lives. And he shows how trauma interrupts this process through dissociation. He summarizes these components in his SIBAM model: Sensation, Image, Behavior, Affect, and Meaning.

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These five components of our experience are the unformulated “atoms” that slowly form the “molecules” of conscious experience through a process of coming together as formulated experience that we can reflect upon. Jung described how this process occurred as he struggled with his emotions in 1913. When he was in the depths of despair after his break from Freud, he was so overwhelmed by primitive emotions, that he had to practice Yoga exercises just to keep himself together. Slowly as he let himself drop into the unformulated chaos of his vehement emotions, images started to appear. Images from the mind provided “meaning” to the affects from the body and Jung was inwardly calmed and reassured. He went on to describe how *images--impregnated with affect--* were the basic building blocks of the imagination....what John Perry called “affect-images.”

But if trauma strikes in infancy at the stage of unformulated experience then powerful dissociative defensive operations become necessary to go on living. These defenses organize as a “system that holds us together” like a suit of armor with a very fragile person inside--two angels and a child. Why is this system of dissociation so necessary and where does it get its psychic energy? Well, it’s necessary because the host-personality fears unbearable affect becoming conscious as feelings! If everything is kept atomized then whole experience is not generated. Nothing formulates or means anything. We can’t feel and we can’t remember.

Then there’s the question of where the splitting energy comes from. Apparently Jung never really asked that question. Psychic splitting was for him a “just so story”--the psyche was by nature “dissociable.” But we know from nuclear physics that the splitting of the atom requires huge energy. So perhaps also in the psyche. I’ve already mentioned Ronald Fairbairn’s conviction that the child’s early aggression is the “engine” of dissociation. Wilfred Bion seems to agree. He called the splitting energy “attacks against linking” and like Stern, he said that with enough aggression in the psyche, experience can be kept from formulating as “alpha function”--kept atomized in what he called “beta bits”.



## **Big Bang Analogy**

Those of you who follow cosmology and astro-physics will appreciate the following analogy about the origin of the universe. Modern cosmology teaches us that right after the big bang there was only a super-heated plasma of elementary particles like protons and electrons--all fragmented and unable to get together because of the heat in the early universe--trillions of degrees Celsius. As the universe cooled, protons began to get together with electrons and the most rudimentary atoms were formed. The first was Hydrogen--one proton and one electron. Hydrogen has mass, so gravity began to pull the vast fields of hydrogen atoms together in what became the first stars and galaxies. Thermo-nuclear fires started. Matter began to “formulate” and the universe lit up like a Christmas tree.

So back to the psyche. At first, the infant’s experience is atomized, unformulated. With the mother’s holding and containing, and reverie, experience begins to formulate. The infant’s universe “cools” so to speak. Affects get together with images, sensations get connected to soothing words; meaning emerges, conscious memory becomes possible. Eventually language aids the process. But what if trauma strikes the child’s world of experience just as it’s beginning to formulate? What would this do to the “formulation” process?

In other words, what would be the psychological equivalent to the 3 trillion degrees of heat in the early cosmos. What are the “vehement emotions” in the traumatized infant psyche that keeps everything atomized, dissociated? Well, different psychoanalytic theorists suggest different sources of such “heat”. Harry Stack Sullivan suggests anxiety. What Sullivan calls the “self-system” rejects all experiences that might be associated with anxiety. Henry Krystal suggests impossible psychic pain connected to the overwhelmingly painful affects of early infancy. Fairbairn and Bion suggest aggression. I think all three are probably involved....pain, anxiety, and anger, depending on the stage of development and the extent of the trauma.

But at some point, I believe, anger takes over. It seems convincing to me the energy for the psyche’s severe dissociation comes from the *free-floating aggression in the infantile psyche*, always ready at hand to attack the links among the components of experience and to keep everything “atomized.” If this is true, then aggression as the primary agent of dissociation, may have a much more prominent role to play in psychological life than Jung imagined.

## Two Levels of Dissociation

By now it has probably become apparent that I'm talking here about two levels of psychological trauma and two levels of defense. At the level of aggressive dissociation, unformulated experience and attacks against linking, we're talking about a deeper, earlier layer of trauma and defense than embodied in personal complexes. And Jung was aware of this difference, although he didn't discuss the role of violent aggression in dissociation as I am doing here. If you remember, Jung spoke of personal complexes as little formulated molecules, constructed of a dis-agreeable feeling-tone, plus associations to that feeling--including images--then each molecule "personified" and "split off" into the unconscious via dissociation. The "splitting off" would represent the defense, but the fact that complexes were already formulated combinations of affect and image, meant that their exile from consciousness could be milder than dissociation. They didn't have to be banished with such vehemence. When a complex is repressed you feel the loss of a part of yourself. When it returns you may blush with embarrassment but eventually, you feel more whole and integrated.

Not so with the dissociation operating after trauma at the level of unformulated experience. In 1919, Jung wrote about two kinds of complexes:<sup>vi</sup>

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Certain complexes arise on account of painful or distressing experiences in a person's life." These, he says, "can leave lasting wounds behind them and result in parts of ourselves becoming alienated from the ego." (These are personal complexes, and their presence is experienced as a "loss of soul.") "But there are others" said Jung "that come from quite a different source...the collective unconscious. *At bottom they are irrational contents of which the individual had never been conscious before.* ...So far as I can judge, these experiences occur...when something so devastating happens to the individual that his whole previous attitude to life breaks down... The patients are seized by wierd and monstrous thoughts, the whole world seems changed, people have horrible, distorted faces, and so on. [Hence, primitives experience this level of the complex as *possession by a spirit* ] (Jung, 1928, para. 594)

It is interesting, that Donnel Stern uses almost identical language to Jung's in describing the essence of severe dissociation as distinguished from repression. Here's Stern describing the initial insights that led to his book:

[I then realized that] unformulated experience bore the same relation to dissociation that fully formed unconscious content bears to repression. *That is, unformulated experience is material that has never been brought into consciousness, not material that has been ejected from it.*

Here are the two men's statements side by side: **[Slide]**

Jung: *"But [some complexes have a] quite a different source...the collective unconscious. At bottom they are irrational contents of which the individual had never been conscious before...."*

Stern: *"unformulated experience is material that has never been brought into consciousness, not material that has been ejected from it."*

OK, well this is where the penny dropped for me. Jung's explanation was structural and mythological. Stern's explanation was developmental and based on the findings of early infant observation. For Jung, impossible material that couldn't be integrated came from the collective unconscious. That's the reason it hasn't been in consciousness before--it's from a deeper non-ego layer. For Stern it's simpler. The material has simply never been assembled. It remains in pieces like it started. Because only formulated experience can become conscious as differentiated feeling and as explicit memory. Archetypal affects remain connected to part-objects (archetypal objects) and remain unconscious.

If we tried to put these two insights together we might come up with something interesting: archetypal images could be thought of as the form in which early unformulated experience begins to formulate--for all of us--traumatized or not. Then the idea would be that our earliest experience formulates as demons and angels--not as persons. We get a mythological history before we get a personal one. Hopefully the archetypal stuff gets humanized before too long. But it is possible for a child to disappear into the arms to the dissociative angels and never come out. This is especially true in our culture today where social media and drugs encourage our kids to stay in the archetypal world or the "unformulated world" forever. Monika Wikman's comments yesterday about Archetypal Addictions Anonymous describes this tragedy. As Eric Hoffer once said "you can never get enough of what you really don't need."

This combination of Jung and Stern's perceptions--almost 100 years apart--about the most powerful dissociative defenses, gave me a way to think about a dramatic

event in Jung's personal history--and his explanation for it--that never completely satisfied me. If you recall the story, in 1913, Jung thought he was menaced by a psychosis. His psyche was deeply "complexed" but it wasn't just a personal complex. It was a collective one. He was deeply depressed after the violent rupture of his relationship with Freud. He was dreaming violent images of dead bodies in rivers of blood--his killing of Siegfried--the devastating flooding and freezing of all Europe. Menaced by these violent collective images, he reports that he felt huge relief when WWI broke out in 1914. Now he knew where his "never before in consciousness" images were coming from, he thought. The collective outside, now picked up by the violent collective images of his dreams.

Well maybe. Certainly Jung's explanation makes sense. We know that we can intuit events in the outer collective and have violent dreams about them. God knows Jung was brilliantly intuitive. We also know that if we have early unformulated childhood trauma--as MDR makes clear Jung did-- the triggering occasioned by later trauma amplifies the effect of early un-remembered trauma. I witnessed that in the World Trade Center disaster. People with early unremembered childhood trauma had far worse and more lasting PTSD than those with "good enough" early life histories. We also know that Jung was not "out of the woods" with his WW I explanation. He went on to do a lot of early memory-recovery work, playing in the sand, turning himself over to the young boy in himself--formulating his unformulated experience--even in the writing of his autobiography at the age of 83 he commented how much he didn't want to "spell out" what had happened to him....a little demon he said was "absconding his words and running off into the forest."

### **Demonology and Killing in Dreams According to von Franz**

OK, now for the third course. By way of introduction to this part, it would be important to note that while Jung did not have a theory of the primitive defenses linked to earliest life trauma, and how these defenses can take over a personality when such trauma is "triggered" in adulthood, he did have a *theory of demons*.

One of Jung's favorite demons was the negative animus and it plays a major role in what I'm going to share with you now from some writing by Marie Louis von Franz. In this segment, the negative animus turns up as an inner voice instructing the host personality of a disturbed patient to kill a child. Another version of Mike's mad bomber. Reading this reminded me of my early training at the New York Jung Institute where one time in supervisory seminar, a dream was reported where the dream ego was urged by an inner voice to "kill" a child. While we

seminar members were struggling with this dream, our esteemed supervisor said “Well, perhaps something in this dreamer needs to die!” That stopped me in my tracks! This supervisor was a senior analyst and had actually worked with Jung himself and so I took everything she said with great seriousness. But I could never quite accept this idea. It just didn’t feel right. I’ve been “ruminating” on it ever since, and so I’m bringing it up for another “chew” with you today.

In any case, von Franz reminds us in her essay that Jung’s method for coping with demonic content when it emerges, is active imagination. Fair enough. We interview the demons and try to discriminate among the spirits that confront us. In this context of discriminating the Spirits, von Franz talks about the various voices from the unconscious that might recommend some course of action in a dream or fantasy--even killing.

“We have to take these voices very seriously,” she says, “but not necessarily literally.” And then she gives this example:

“[Schizophrenic patients] take the voices too seriously. When a voice tells them, “Kill somebody,” they go and kill that person. ....We had a case recently in Switzerland involving a schizophrenic in an asylum. He was seemingly good-natured and they let him do the gardening. He made friends with the chief doctor's little girl, who was nine years of age.... One day he took a big knife and slowly chopped off the child's head. When asked why he had done it, he said, “I heard the voice of the Holy Ghost telling me, ‘Kill the child.’”

“I thought a lot about that case. I said to myself, “Now, what would I do if he was working with me?” I thought, “Well, it's very simple. Probably it *was* the Holy Ghost and what he should have killed was his own childishness.” (p. 36).

“Wait a minute!” interrupts a member of her audience. “I have a problem with that!” [do you mean you’d entertain the notion that the voice is indeed from the Holy Ghost?]. A dialogue ensues and von Franz reassures her questioner....

“[Look, she says] This is an extreme case with the schizophrenic man. I'm sure that if I had heard a voice saying, “Kill that child!” it would have never occurred to me to kill her. [In a case like this] first you would have to discriminate the Spirits by engaging them in dialogue....who was this speaking? Was this a good or evil spirit....was it my animus who wants to suppress my childlike spontaneity--in

which case I would not obey--or was it to be taken seriously? And I would have at once thought symbolically about what that child must mean. What must I kill in myself?" It would have never occurred to me to exteriorize the message from the unconscious.

This reassures the disturbed questioner somewhat, but von Franz keeps coming back to the idea of the oracular inner voice and its lethal directives. To the continued consternation of her questioner, she concludes:

"I think if such a strong voice comes through, it does really want something killed. For instance, you know how you have to sometimes kill something in yourself—for instance, you have to say, "Now finish with those bad habits. Perhaps one slips into a childish habit that one has really outgrown, but there is a big temptation to slip back into it. ...then blood has to be spilled. There are situations where one has to kill. And then one has to just say, "Finish. No more! No more sentimentality. Pull up your socks!" That's killing the child. Thank God it happens not very often though, because it's a horrible thing to do, but it has to be done. That's just living life."

So my early supervisor and von Franz would have shared the same view about the oracular messages from dreams. Neither of these wise women, in my view recognized the destructive role of dissociation in the economy of our feeling life, and how these aggressively infused defenses could be portrayed as true demons in our dreams and imaginations.

### **Case: Marie-Louise von Franz, Barbara Hannah and Jung**

This next case, another one of von Franz's, is reported by her in *The Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales*. Her case is a good example of how anti-feeling defenses operate in the Self-Care System, and what it looks like trans-actionally when the ego of a patient *identifies* with these defenses. Here's the story:

She and Barbara Hannah each had a difficult case-- women with what was known in those days as a negative animus--and each was having trouble coping with their patients. Dr. Jung was supervising both of them and so offered to meet with their patients personally. Ms. Hannah's patient was grateful for Jung's help and went home and painted a beautiful picture. By contrast, Von Franz's patient called up the medicating psychiatrist and told him everything Dr. Jung had said against him, plus a bit more, "making mischief with it."

Von Franz then describes Jung's reaction to this enactment. "Dr. Jung said that this was very important because if one gave psychic energy to anyone one should always see what they did with it. If there was a slight, or momentary recovery, even if that collapsed again, one could go on giving charity or giving concern, giving energy to the case; while if it had a contrary effect then one would know that one was feeding the demon of that person and that the person didn't get what one gave. He did not condemn my case, but it was as if her evil animus was sitting in front of her mouth and whenever one gave her a good bit, he got it. In effect the demon got fatter and she got thinner.

In such a case, if one goes on treating the person with Christian charity, love and concern, one is acting destructively, and that is a mistake which many naïve young psychiatric doctors make. ... Such people don't notice that they are feeding the devil and making the patients worse instead of better. Therefore if one sees that the devil snaps up everything one gives, one can do only one thing--turn off the tap and give nothing.

Von Franz goes on to say that in this case, her patient's animus was working everywhere against life...for what she called a psychological death atmosphere--pure destruction. It is that spirit of "no life and no love" which has always been associated with the essence of evil. *It is destructiveness for its own sake, which everybody has in himself to some extent.* But some people are completely possessed by it, as was this woman. This kind of death-devil is best simply starved to death. And so, what was von Franz to do with this patient? Well, her supervisor told her what to do.

"Dr. Jung told me--it was my very first case and I was terrified to do it, I even disobeyed for a week before I could make up my mind--to kick that lady out of analysis, telling her what a cheating, lying devil she was. But one is kind of lovingly attached to one's first case, so for a week I hesitated, and then I did it. The plain result was that from then on she was much better. (!) After many years of no treatment she was practically all right! The kick in the pants did it, and after eight years I even got a letter from her thanking me. (172)

OK, today, we'd call this a pretty egregious acting out-- "enactment" would be the more conscious version. And we'd hope to do better in several respects. First, conceptually. Von Franz sees her patient as "possessed" by an "anti-life" force of pure negation--a "death devil" working everywhere against life, towards a psychological death atmosphere--pure destruction...the "essence of evil." She doesn't see this as a dissociative defense. With this assumption, "starving it to

death” is the best approach....death to the death devil! Here’s the problem. Death devils are usually like Afghani war Lords protecting their women and children. We don’t want to insult them! In fact, we want to appreciate their service, if we ever hope to be allowed access to the imprisoned children. It’s a little like trying to ingratiate yourself to the Mandelorian in order to have a relationship with baby Yoda.

It makes a difference for clinical practice how we see this. If we think that genuine evil has taken possession of a person it’s one thing. Then we need an exorcism. On the other hand, if violent affects allied with a dissociative defense have taken over--then it’s quite another. If we realize that this woman was in the grip of a powerful dissociative defense--one that had probably taken her over very early in her life in order to prevent her from feeling, and if we realize--with Fairbairn, that aggression is the engine of the dissociative organization--then we have a new and more sympathetic understanding of her destructiveness. She is indeed identified with a violent agent of dissociation in her “system” and this is indeed a true “inflation” that needs to be punctured. But if we were to imagine reclaiming her for her true life from the grip of this defense, it would mean helping her to dis-identify from these “demonic” energies--not driving her into more identification with them by calling her a “lying cheating devil.”

In other words, *the evil of human destructiveness is not just a “given”--an instinct--an archetype. It is often a defense.* Or to put it more accurately, human destructiveness--such as illustrated in von Franz’s case--is the result of archetypal aggression and rage recruited for defensive purposes. It’s not that there’s no aggressive instinct behind it. But the aggressive instinct is employed for something else. While it’s true, as Jung says, that “man’s warlike instincts are ineradicable,” (get quote) it’s also true that “man’s warlike instincts” *are employed so we don’t have to feel things.*

Anyone who doubts this, need only look at our contemporary American scene where the killing of children, the hatred of each other, and the rape of the planet has become an epidemic of violence--organized, I believe so we don’t have to face the feelings that accompany these realities or recognize our complicity in them.

Well, OK, I suspect that by now most of you are pretty full. I hope not too many of you have indigestion! In any case, I think we’ll skip desert. Or maybe some good conversation together will *be* our desert.

Thank you!



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<sup>i</sup> Stern, D. B., 1997; *Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to Imagination in Psychoanalysis*, New Jersey, Analytic Press.

<sup>ii</sup> Fairbairn, W. R. D., 1981; *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*; Routledge, Kegan Paul; London and Boston.

<sup>iii</sup> I find this a remarkable thing. I had always understood that severe dissociation was supposed to be an attack on the symbolic function--to put it out of commission--ending access to feelings; ending access to the imagination. And yet, in this and other dreams I have observed over the years here we have the demonic dissociative defenses personified. It's as if, when the imagination begins to function again, and feelings begin to become conscious, dissociation appears--in the form of these demonic figures attacking vulnerable affect.

This fits with some remarks Jung made about demons. Reported by ML von Franz in an unpublished talk called "Confrontation with the Unconscious", Jung was reportedly asked in a letter whether he believed in a demonic aspect of the psyche. "Yes," said Jung, "I believe there is such a thing as the demonic element, and it appears as *the first impact of the unconscious*." "In other words, says von Franz, "when something from the unconscious comes up, its first impact on consciousness is always demonic. Even the Self is hostile, she says, and dangerous in its first impact. You have to stand your ground to transform it."<sup>iiii</sup> I remain doubtful about this explanation. Instead of the Self's hostility I think it's more likely that when early unformulated emotional content emerges for the first time it is likely to be paired with an archetypal defense armed with aggression--like the mad bomber in Mike's dream.

<sup>iv</sup> **Blake's Good and Evil Angels**

Mike's inner world with its primitive emotion and the defenses that tried to regulate it are imaged in this illustration by Wilhelm Blake called "The Good and Evil Angels Fight for Possession of a Child."

You can think of it as an archetypal version of Fairbairn's "Internal Saboteur," represented by the Dark Angel on the left, and also an image of the "libidinal ego," or inner child, fleeing into the arms of the Bright Angel on the right. I like to think of these light and dark angels here as split, opposing sides of the original Lucifer, the "Light Bearer" [Slide] before his division into two and his fall from Heaven into Hell [Slide]. That split and the subsequent Fall is described as a trauma in Heaven that followed Lucifer's sneaking a look into God's mind to find out about the future, only to discover that God was planning something that appalled and disgusted him--namely God was planning to coming down into time and space and incarnate in the body of a man! A mortal body subject to disease that emitted waste products and other disgusting things. So Lucifer led a rebellion of thousands of other angels and they fell from heaven and ended up in the nether regions of Hell [Slide] as the great nihilists, Beelzebub-- Lord of the Flies. Dante's name for this monster is "Dis." Perhaps you can imagine my excitement when I discovered this. That the Lord of Dissociation lives in a gated, compartmentalized enclave of un-remembered pain called "Hell." Can you imagine? That the Lord of Dissociation is named "Dis?"

In any case, if Lucifer Dark represents Violence and Negation, persecuting the inner child; Lucifer Light is protective and a weaver of illusions albeit what Winnicott calls "necessary illusions" or what Martha Stark calls "relentless hope." Fantasy in the service of defense. So Dis and Bliss. Violence and Illusion. Both are dissociative defenses. Both are devoted to preventing this inner child from developing conscious feelings about its impossible pain.

Phillip Bromberg has an interesting idea here. He talks about two discreet modes of information processing. One mode, the "subsymbolic" is organized around bodily experience of emotion while the other, the symbolic is organized at the level of cognitive awareness. "When emotional experience is traumatic (more than the mind can bear) dissociation comes in and makes sure the experience remains unsymbolized cognitively. However in enactments, trauma-derived emotional schemas make themselves available to consciousness through a "dyadic dissociative process" and when processed relationally lead to self-reflective functioning and symbolic capacities. (Waking the Dreamer, pp 36-7)

<sup>v</sup> Stern, Donnel, 1997, *Unformulated Experience: From Dissociation to Imagination in Psychoanalysis*, The Analytic Press; Hillsdale, New Jersey.

<sup>vi</sup> he went to London and gave a lecture, later published as *The Psychological Foundations of Belief in Spirits* (CW 8, 1928), para. 594.