

Originally published in: *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, Vol. 37, no. 2, 153-171.
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The Erotics of Blame

Greg Mogenson

Blame and Eros

On the surface blame would seem to be a most unerotic phenomenon. When someone blames us we feel repelled, turned off, defensive, guilty, diminished, upset or angry. The bitter accusations of the offended are more likely to inhibit the erotic spirit than to kindle it. Acrimony tends to elicit more of itself from those toward whom it is directed. The blamed take offense at being blamed and righteously declare their innocence. Alternatively, they may take cover behind defenses such as rationalization or denial. Reactions of this kind are instinctual. The shrill voice of accusation and complaint immediately triggers the fight or flight reaction in the animal that we also are. The hands and feet become cold as the retreating blood re-groups in the vital organs. The genitals shrivel up, prepared for battle, not love. The heart beats faster out of fright, not from affection. Clearly, the voice of blame does not sing a mating song.

When one examines the content of an accusation one discovers, as often as not, that it is composed of the projections of the person making it. The fault which a complainant finds with others is often a function of the complainant's own faulty assumptions about his or her relationship with the alleged offender. Upon hearing the charges with which they are assailed, the blamed may feel genuinely incredulous. "Who does she think she is?" "What does he take me for?"

The more haughty an accusation the more likely it is to be based upon a misperception of the person whose failings it claims to know so well. Blame, after all, is not empathy. The accuser does not attempt to see things from the other's point of view. On the contrary, the blameful spirit denies the existence of a multiplicity of perspectives. From the lofty height of Blame's judgmental vantage point, life is imagined in terms of black or white, right or wrong, guilty or not guilty. Anything at odds with the complainant's offended perspective ignites a narcissistic rage. No wonder the indignant are so prone to seeing the spot in their bother's eye but not the speck in their own.

Relationships in which a blameless partner is willing to make endless *mea culpas* in order to be held in esteem by an accuser would seem to belie the anti-libidinous quality which is intrinsic to blame. Individuals with inadequate ego-boundaries, individuals, that is to say, who identify with the projections of others, seem not to be put off by blame, but, on the contrary, to reply to it affectionately. The affection given, however, is more likely to be a frightened, placating, pseudo-erotic gesture than the genuine expression of answering love.¹ True Eros includes the possibility of loathing, revulsion, hate and fear. Indeed, as Hillman has suggested, we could not trust the movements of our love if love could never counsel "no."²

Blame inhibits Eros even in those cases where the content of its accusations are not projections and the accused can clearly be shown to be at fault. It is not simply that being wrong is a turn-off. Nor is it merely that people hate to have their shortcomings lorded over them. Even a blame that readily forgives the fault it finds may discover that love has fled irregardless. Of course, it is tempting to attribute the loveless atmosphere to the pettiness of the personalities involved. Psychology, however, is more impersonal than that. Blame, like Eros, is its own cause, a spirit in its own right. To account for it too personalistically is to de-humanize its human bearers by

divinizing them.³

Although both Blame and Eros are spirits, their affinity extends no further. The values which ignite the one are fundamentally different from the values that enflame the other. While blame waxes hot over the question of fairness, Eros, the child of Poverty and Plenty, has no stake in this question whatsoever. "All's fair in love and war" is the adage by which the immoralist, Eros swears. Though morality, as Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig has suggested, is an ersatz form of Eros, an attempt by society to provide guidelines for behavior when Eros is missing,⁴ the daimon, Eros, does not concern itself with right or wrong--at least not in any socialized or moralistic sense. Morality, in fact, can have a *demoralizing* effect upon Eros, especially when it attempts to proscribe the content of love (as, for instance, Paul does in his letter to the Corinthians). As Nietzsche put it, "Christianity gave Eros poison to drink; he did not die of it, but degenerated into vice."⁵

In our felt experience we are quite familiar with the paradoxically demoralizing effect of morality on Eros. When we recognize that we have wronged the ones who point their fingers at us, there is a feeling that suddenly the rules that were suspended during the reign of Eros have suddenly and without notice been applied once more. Though we accept the condemnation of the offended and vow to right our wrongs we feel a little guilty for not feeling a little more guilty than we do. Is there something wrong with us? Are we lacking in human decency? Are we that narcissistic? Though the situation obviously calls for reparation and atonement somehow we lack the heart to do more than go through the motions. Fortunately, or perhaps, not so fortunately, morality, that ersatz Eros, helps us muddle through. Apologies are given and restitution paid, all according to the spirit killing letter of the rules.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Blame is its post-mortem attitude towards life. While

Eros "never says die" even when it must embrace death to achieve its ends, Blame can hardly wait to perform its exacting autopsies. Before death has even been ascertained, Blame is at the scene attempting to sort out "who done it." "Aha!" gloats the Blameful Spirit, "You have done me wrong." Eros, taken quite off guard, wonders why its accuser did not speak up sooner. "There was quite enough of me to go around," Eros replies, "why, even now you could ask of me your heart's desire." But Blame has a decided preference for funerals and makes a practice of arriving at them early. Indeed, before the desirous one quite knows what has happened, Blame has got it measured for the coffin. The sad irony, however, is that the long-fingered spirit may actually prevent the life-force from reasserting itself by too hastily inquiring into the supposed causes of life's alleged demise. Each of these two spirits imagines life from entirely different perspectives. What the one intends as a valentine, the other reads as a coroner's report.

In contrast to the Blameful Spirit, Eros is not particularly concerned with determining causality. When lovers review the events that led up to their union it is usually with a sense of incredulity. The stories they tell of their first encounters are treasured, not because they explain the attraction, but because of their failure to do so. Though each knew so little about the other, and though their union would seem to have come about against all odds, the fit, for better or worse, is so uncannily accurate. The same holds true for the other interests to which we become attracted and attached. The ideals we live by, the careers we pursue, the hobbies we enjoy, and the places where we holiday are chosen the same way lovers are--impulsively. Our interest is either sparked or it is not. The Eros which "causes" love is its own cause--in all senses of that term.

Though we would like the enrapturing spirit to provide a rational accounting of itself, it is not its way to justify itself with reasons--even when the intellect and reason are the objects of its passion.

An irrational spirit, Eros is as inexplicable as it is spontaneous. This does not mean, however, that a life lived in devotion to Eros is an unreflective life. Socrates, the worshipper of Eros and author of the adage--"the unreflected life is not worth living"--was an exemplar of reflective Eros. In very different ways, Blake, Whitman, Gauguin, Yeats, Jung, D. H. Lawrence and Henry Miller were others. Christ, whose death on the cross was intended to take away the blame of Original Sin, of course, must also be mentioned in this regard. If today, however, it has become more difficult to persist in the follies of Eros until we become wise, it is because the culture of reflection has largely been taken over by Blame. The Blameful Spirit's aetiological manner of reflection deflects the trajectory of Amor's arrow, preventing the reflections that may have emerged teleologically had it stayed on target. Instead of being baptized in the fire of the desire which burns to be lived in the present moment, we attribute it, in the spirit of Blame, to some prior scorching. Like Psyche, misled by her envious sisters into believing Cupid to be a monster, the Blameful Spirit scalds Eros with the lamp oil of suspicion, distrust, and accusation. As Eliot put it, "We only live, only suspire, consumed by either fire or fire."

The Burden of Desire

The patient has not to learn how to get rid of his neurosis, but how to bear it. His illness is not a gratuitous and therefore meaningless burden; it is *his own self*, the "other" whom from childish laziness or fear, or some other reason, he was always seeking to exclude from his life. In this way, as Freud rightly says, we turn the ego into a "seat of anxiety," which it would never be if we did not defend ourselves against it so neurotically.⁶

C. G. Jung

To imagine desire as a daimonic force or divine power, to name it with the name of a God as the Greeks did when they spoke of Eros and the others, is congruent with our felt experience. The

desires which seek fulfillment through our lives are not a function of our conscious willing. We cannot make ourselves desire things that we do not desire, nor can we make ourselves cease to desire those things which we do. This does not prevent us, however, from making vain attempts to gain control. Our desires are a heavy burden, a burden which we are not always willing to assume. They plague us with needs, fill us with tensions, disturb our sleep with wishes and dreams.

It is different, of course, when desires are small and easily fulfilled. Desire is a relatively uncomplicated affair when its reach does not exceed our grasp. Indeed, we may not even recognize that we have been subject to a desire if the tensions which it has given rise to pass quickly enough into gratification.

Rarely, however, is this the case. Our desires are seldom so triflingly small. Many, in fact, are much bigger than we are. At each stage of our lives, from the cradle to the grave, we find ourselves subject to desires so immense that we have difficulty imagining how we will go about fulfilling them. Like the biblical prophets who initially attempted to evade the call of God out of a reticence to endure the ordeal of serving Him, we may attempt to evade the call of our larger personality, reticent to endure the ordeal of serving the desires through which it seeks actualization in our lives.

Who are we to want such things? How can we hope to achieve them? Do we have the stamina, the intelligence, the tenacity, the courage? As we ponder these matters the pleasure of fulfillment seems more and more remote. Desires bid us travel along perilous paths, paths fraught with risk and danger, frustration and pain. Is it worth the gamble? Will the benefits outweigh the costs? Do the desires in question even correspond to what we want?

Though we ask ourselves these questions we are unlikely to answer them unambivalently. Desires, after all, have a double-binding quality. On the one hand, we are damned to suffer some

amount of hardship if we attempt to fulfill them; and on the other, we are damned to suffer the emptiness of the un-lived life if we do not.

So long as the pleasure ego--that infantile part of us that will sacrifice anything to escape pain--does not simply beat a hasty retreat, the imagination may lead the way out of this quandary by suggesting ways in which the desires with which we struggle can be realized. If, however, our faith in the imagination's creative power is lacking in what Blake called the "firm persuasion" which "in ages of imagination...removed mountains," the mind can become overridden with anxious fantasies and catastrophic fears, thereby limiting our sense of the possibilities of fit between desire, self, and world. When this happens, when desire is imagined anxiously, a vicious circle may develop. Intimidated by the sheer immensity of a desire, we imagine the difficulties its incarnation will present in such a catastrophic manner that we come to imagine it to be even bigger and more intimidating than it originally seemed.

This brings us back to blame. Unable or unwilling to cope with our desires, we look for enemies to justify our reluctance to pursue them. While those closest to us, our family and friends, are regularly chosen to play the enemy role, we may also claim to have been thwarted by circumstances, situations, and the absurdities of our fate.

Of course, all this happens quite outside our awareness. We do not realize that we are projecting our failures onto others and that the injustices which we collect are a function of the desires which we are attempting to evade. Projection is an unconscious mechanism. To the extent that it succeeds, we remain ignorant of the fact that we are shirking the desires which our larger personality burdens us to assume.

Such ignorance, unfortunately, is almost blissful. Blaming others immediately releases us from

painful revelations about ourselves. Its the next best thing to instant gratification. Though it does not really help us to feel good (not even fulfillment can promise that), it prevents us from feeling bad. All this and its easy too. Hardly any effort is required. Just by focusing on how others have wronged us we can release ourselves from the oppressive weight of what our lives require of us. What it is we desired in the first place may even be forgotten as our complaints mount.

Blame distracts us from the demoralizing recognition that we lack the courage to live our own passions. It justifies an unlived life by accounting for it through the insufficiencies of others. Instead of facing up to the smallness of our own personalities we project this smallness onto other people. It is not we who are living too small but our imperfect parents, narcissistic spouses, intrusive in-laws and bratty kids. Or, if we do acknowledge our smallness, it is these others, not us, who are responsible for it.

Blaming others for being overbearing, harsh and abusive distracts us from the awareness that we are actually prodded and tormented by the growth promoting desires of our larger personalities.⁷ Instead of aspiring to a more mature actualization of ourselves, we expect others to spare us from this challenge as if we were quite helpless. On the one hand, we accuse friends and family members of expecting too much from us, and on the other, we demand that they want what we want for us. A great deal of the frustration we feel with others is a displacement of the frustration we feel with ourselves when subject to desires which we find difficult to fulfill. Indeed, the allegations which we make against our beloved enemies can often be divided into the intensity of the (unconscious) desires which torment us without remainder. By blaming others we evade the guilt which calls us to live our lives more fully.

Kleinian Reverb

...frustration heightens the sense of guilt...⁸

Melanie Klein

In answer to the question--"...how are we to account, on dynamic and economic grounds, for an increase in the sense of guilt appearing in place of an unfulfilled *erotic* demand?"--Freud writes:

This only seems possible in a round-about way--if we suppose, that is, that the prevention of an erotic satisfaction calls up a piece of aggressiveness against the person who has interfered with the satisfaction, and that this aggressiveness has to be suppressed in turn.⁹

This account of the guilt we experience in the wake of an unfulfilled desire has a ring of truth about it. Who has not felt frustrated and angry with another person, but instead of jeopardizing the relationship by expressing the anger, turned the anger inward instead such that it came to be experienced as inhibiting guilt? Melanie Klein's observations from child analysis suggest that even babies experience complex emotional reactions of this sort. For instance, infants may interpret the frustration which they suffer in the feeding relationship to be the result of their having injured the breast with oral-aggressive impulses. From this, according to Klein, arises guilt feelings and reparative urges. However, owing to the pleasure ego's inability to cope with guilty feelings, "...the loved injured object may very swiftly change into a persecutor, and the urge to repair or revive the loved object may turn into the need to pacify and propitiate a persecutor."¹⁰ In contrast to Freud's account which derives the guilt from inhibited aggression towards an outer frustrating figure, Klein places greater emphasis on the internal world of the child. In the paranoid-schizoid position associated with earliest infancy, the child "explains" frustration to itself--even when the parenting

has been "good enough"--in a bizarre manner. The thought--"I have destroyed mother"--momentarily leads to guilt and reparative urges, but then changes, due to the unbearable discomfort of this conclusion, into the thought--"mother is persecuting me." *In Klein's view, the guilt which accompanies unfulfilled desire is a result of the infant's catastrophic misreading of the condition of the mother.* In actuality, the mother has not been injured or destroyed. She is merely late. Furthermore, she is not persecuting the baby. This is but another catastrophic misreading which serves to protect the child from the aversive guilt feelings which the first misreading gave rise to.

Experiences in family therapy bear witness to the tendency of blame to reverberate in this Kleinian manner. Three daughters imply that their working single mother has failed them in numerous ways. The mother feels guilt and reparative impulses, but like the infants Klein studied, cannot stand the aversive guilt feelings for more than a few moments. As the session continues, the guilt gives way to a feeling of being the victim of her persecutory daughters. The inner experience of the daughters parallels that of the mother. Though each has some awareness of their own culpability and feels guilty for hurting her mother, the guilt, being aversive, is projected upon the mother who is then accused once again of being mean. Caught in the Kleinian reverb, everyone in the family blames themselves for hurts which they erroneously believe they have caused the other, and then, feeling oppressed by this self-blame, experience the person before whom they feel guilty as a persecutor--demanding, neglectful, abusive, rejecting, guilt-inducing.¹¹ As all this spins round and round, the catastrophic misreading becomes increasingly true. They *do* hurt one another and their are bruises to prove it!

If the therapist is able to draw clear boundaries between the family members, the vicious circle can be broken. As each member is exonerated from the blame which they had directed, if only

briefly, at themselves for having needs which are beyond the ability of others to satisfy, their perception of the person they subsequently externalized this blame onto spontaneously becomes more benign. Hand in hand with feeling less guilty comes the perception of being less poorly treated than one had previously imagined. While in the paranoid-schizoid position the infant experiences anxiety about being too much for mother, later, in the depressive-position, comes the sobering recognition that neither the infant nor the mother is all good or all bad, and that both are oppressed, less by one another, than by their own desires.

Abuse and Desire

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.¹²

William Blake

Of course, it is important to recognize the culpability of others when empathizing with those who have been abused. The neglected child, the child who has not been initiated into the desires of his growing personality through encouragement and coaching, does tend to shrivel up in the face of his own promise. And the sexually abused child, the child who has been inundated with desires far in excess of what she can possibly cope with (be they the desires of the abuser or her own prematurely ripened desires)¹³, does find it difficult to incarnate her future passions, having been so forcefully put out of herself by them in the past.

Clarifying the extent to which the relationship of the abused to their own desires has been complicated by other people can play a crucial role in therapy. Each time the therapist winces at the hurt which has been suffered, the abused come to view themselves and the people who have harmed them in a more realistic manner. Contrary to what they have been traumatized into

believing, they discover that they are not the victims of omnipotent gods,¹⁴ but the offspring of pathetic human beings.

This insight, though ultimately liberating, brings the abused face to face with feelings far more painful than the abuse they have hitherto endured, and is usually resisted for this reason. Loath to draw the devastating conclusion that the parent, sibling, or spouse who abused them is actually to some extent deficient in the where with all to love them, the abused may redouble their efforts to convince themselves that they somehow warrant the hurt to which they have been subjected. But as the therapist empathizes with these desperate attempts to shore love up against its ruin, the idealizing defenses give way and the patient begins to mourn.

Freed from the blame which they had previously directed at themselves, the abused experience an improvement in their self-esteem. Having admitted the deficiencies of those they love, they no longer need to put themselves down in order to repress this awareness. The compliant, accommodating posture which Winnicott called the false-self becomes less evident as the true self re-emerges. New enterprises are launched despite the risk of failure. Initiatives which had long ago been given up on in despair are attempted once again. Desire, though still forbidding, no longer seems impossible.

Having noted the therapeutic value of helping the abused to understand the culpability of those people who have played abusive roles in their lives, it must be immediately added, by way of qualification, that this understanding must not be allowed to become fixed into a blameful attitude. Blaming the culpable does not help the abused to differentiate themselves from the abuse which they have suffered. On the contrary, it leads to an even stronger identification with it. Oblivious to the fact that the abuse has stopped, the abused may continue to define themselves as the victims of

the persons they blame or calamities they have suffered. But this lingering sense of having been crippled by abuse is not entirely the effect of the abuse it claims to be based upon. Though the culpable are easily scapegoated, Blame, itself, is a perpetrator, abusing its victims with the life-thwarting fiction that the effects of past abuse will continue into perpetuity. Experiencing life through this fiction may be far more damaging to the abused than the reality of what they have suffered. Indeed, it may lead them to exaggerate their hurt to the point that they claim that their lives have been ruined when in fact they have hardly been begun.

Blame's motive is exactly the same in the lives of those who have been abused as it is in the lives of those who have not been abused: shirking the burden of life. Mislead by the Blameful Spirit, the abused may use the fact of having been wronged as a rationale for malingering. Life, after all, is difficult even at the best of times. By laying claim to the status of "victim" the abused can provide themselves with an excuse not to face the tormenting desires which all people are called to incarnate, regardless of whether they have been abused or not.

Every man, woman, and child on this planet believes that they have been abused, not so much because of the abuse they have actually suffered, but because life itself, as Eliot reminds us, is an "intolerable shirt of flame that human power cannot remove." Though we would all like to take off this garment, and may even attempt to do so by identifying ourselves as the victims of those we blame, our efforts are in vain.¹⁵ The shirt of flame is our own flesh burning with the desires which we have yet to actualize, the life we have yet to live.

The Larger Personality

When a summit of life is reached, when the bud unfolds and from the lesser the greater emerges, then, as Nietzsche says, "One becomes Two," and the greater figure, which one always was but which remained invisible, appears to the lesser personality with the force of a revelation.¹⁶

C.G. Jung

In his paper, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype," Jung suggests that "the initial stage of personal infantilism presents the picture of an `abandoned' or `misunderstood' and unjustly treated child with overweening pretensions."¹⁷ The "overweening pretensions" which Jung identifies with this child correspond to what we have been referring to in this essay as the desires of the larger personality. Abandoned to desires which it does not yet have the mastery to fulfill, narcissistically wounded by the tantalizing image of its own becoming, the child-in-the-patient complains of being misunderstood and unjustly treated by its adult caregivers. The outer adults who the patient blames, however, are less the cause of these seemingly infantile complaints than is the child-in-the-patient's unconscious fantasy of the `adult' it has yet to become. As Hillman has put it, "Each complex projects a teleology about itself: how it will evolve, what purpose it has, how it can be resolved or brought to an end."¹⁸ While this `adult' element in the complexes gives a sense of futurity, promise, hope and goal to the `child,' it is also a great source of frustration. The lesser personality may even feel oppressed by a revelatory encounter with the "greater figure, which one always was." Indeed, as the patient struggles to incarnate his or her "overweening pretensions" into a more adult personality, the child archetype's sense of pure potentiality is attenuated. Like an angry two-year-old hurling away the square peg that it could not quite fit into the round hole, the pleasure ego may try to dissociate itself from the teleological imperatives of the larger personality, overwhelmed by the

difficulties involved in actualizing them. Precisely to the extent that each "corner" of the larger personality exceeds the patient's current dimensions each will seem to take on an alien, persecutory character--hence the patient's tendency to attribute abusiveness to others. But the figures from dream, memory, and outer life which the hurt 'child' blames are less the actual persons they resemble, than personifications of the overweening pretensions or frustrated desires which constitute the patient's larger personality. Though it is important, as we noted above, to consider what others have done to the patient in the past and present, it is equally important to consider the possibility that the patient's blame is a cover for the shame of not assuming the burden of his or her own life. Considering the situation from this angle, of course, is to risk losing a positive transference with the patient. A positive transference, however, may be just as much a defense against the larger personality as is a blameful, negative one. The adults whom the child-in-the-patient idealizes and petitions to for rescue are ultimately less able to supply what is needed than is the nascent adulthood which underpins the "overweening pretensions" which have disturbed the patient's childish ease in the first place. Regardless of whether the larger, more mature personality is projected onto others in a positive or negative manner, cure requires that the projection be assimilated. Only what has been disowned has the power to heal, for, as Jung put it, "One cannot live from anything except what one is."¹⁹

Perhaps it is as a consequence of the psychoanalytic interest in the psychology of childhood that we now find it so difficult to understand the child-in-the-adult as a metaphor of the larger personality. This meaning, which is so much a part of religious imagination, has been lost in this century by psychology's emphasis on the psychic development of actual children. Jesus' remark-- "...unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven"--

has been concretized by the empirical approach of our modern cult of childhood into the most grotesque parody. "Child" is no longer *metaphorical* of the attitude which will allow one to enter the kingdom of heaven. Today, childhood is taken to be the kingdom. Infantile history, measured by the archetypal image or heavenly standard of what it ought to ideally be in order to be "good enough," is the hell that accounts for the malaise of our adult lives.

The problem here, as Jung has pointed out, is the confusion of the "child-motif" with actual childhood.

...lay prejudice is always inclined to identify the child motif with the concrete experience "child," as though the real child were the cause and pre-condition of the existence of the child motif. In psychological reality, however, the empirical idea "child" is only the means...by which to express a psychic fact that cannot be formulated more exactly. Hence by the same token the mythological idea of the child is emphatically not a copy of the empirical child...not--and this is the point--a human child.²⁰

This child within us who is not a copy of our empirical childhood, this child within us who is not a human child, corresponds to what Jung, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, referred to as the "bud" which unfolds at the summits of life such that from the lesser personality the greater emerges. Viewed from this perspective, the childhood traumas which we continue to speak about throughout our lives--be they forensically verified instances of abuse or revivals of early encounters with the overweening pretensions of the child archetype--are not infantile fixation points to which we are prone to regress, but metaphors of psychological expansion and renewal.

When Jesus told Nicodemus that he must be born again, he did not mean that he should lie on a couch or have his actual childhood repaired through some form of reparenting. To become as a child, to be reborn, is to die to these reductive conceptions of childhood and to become, instead, a

child of the supreme personality, a child of God.

When empathizing with reports of hurtful childhood experiences, we must remember that these memories, even if undistorted, are a function of the life demands of the present moment. As Jung put it, although the empirical child may provide the content of the psychic material, it is "only the means...by which to express a psychic fact that cannot be formulated more exactly." A patient remembers past hurt because now, as before, specific realities of his age, stage and personal fatality are serving notice on the pleasure ego. A patient recalls an early trauma because now, as before, she is facing an initiatory ordeal.

Archetypal Reminiscence

A person sinks into his childhood memories and vanishes from the existing world. He finds himself apparently in deepest darkness, but then has unexpected visions of a world beyond. The `mystery' he beholds represents the stock of primordial images which everybody brings with him as his birthright, the sum total of inborn forms peculiar to the instincts. I have called this `potential' psyche the collective unconscious.²¹

C. G. Jung

Our memories of being vulnerable, alone, incapable, hurt and abused, besides being the contents of personal history, are the vantage point for another kind of remembering, an initiatory mode of reminiscence which we might call remembering the future. Freud, though more impressed by the aetiological significance of the experiences of actual childhood, acknowledged the presence, in childhood, of a mode of reminiscence that transcends the narrow limits of what, as children, we personally experienced:

...a child catches hold on...phylogenetic experience where his own experience fails him. He fills in the gaps in individual truth with prehistorical truth; he replaces

occurrences in his own life by occurrences in the life of his ancestors."²²

The stage-fright to which we are susceptible during each phase of our lives is understudied by a primordial sense of *deja-vu*. The child we once were, and to which we again and again return when our experience fails us, is not simply the infantile percursor of the maturity we are having difficulty achieving. The child is as well the midway point between this maturity or adulthood and the ancestors, and it is by virtue of this midway position that it can also be a "father to the man."

Particularly telling in this regard are adolescent boys of the traditional initiatory age. How often it is they who seem to activate the initiatory process with provocative displays of regressive behavior which seem almost deliberately intended to elicit the parental harshness necessary to kill an infantile adaptation which they themselves wish to surpass. And, again, how telling when these same youths angrily revile their parents for responding to them with caring rather than the severity they demand. Family therapists know only too well these *cul-de-sac* of blame.

When the father is absent, and the grandfather too, the initiation process may have to be overseen by inner figures such as we encounter in our dreams. A twenty-year-old man, very much prone to projecting unresolved issues with his father onto his university instructors and shrinking from his academic opportunities, dreamt that he was attempting to untangle a nest of knotted fishing line. Just at the point when he was about to hurl the line away in utter frustration an old man with a lame leg and a blind eye appeared and said to him, "It's a tangle, but a *beautiful* tangle." Looking again at the fishing line, the young man saw it differently. It was luminous with light and, indeed, quite beautiful.

This dream illustrates the mode of reminiscence Freud spoke about in the quotation above. Although infantilized by a critical father-complex which gave the necessary ordeals of life a

negative, persecutory quality, the young man's dream reaches back to a "phylogenetic experience" just at the point at which "his own experience fails him." Despite the absence of an outer initiatory figure, the archetypal figure of the wise old man appears to the young student in his dream and provides him with an attitude that ultimately helped him to endure his frustration and see things through. The more he came to assume the burden of his own life, the less inclined he was to blame his personal father. Although there had been almost no actual analysis of the father-son relationship, the young man spontaneously came to view his father in a more benign fashion.

Dreams are to the abandoned child as the basket of bulrushes was to Moses. Though we are each abandoned to a life that no one can live for us, we are also cradled in the culture. At the limits of our own experience, we draw upon the experiences of those who have preceded us, the ancestors, the dead. As Jung put it (and it is Jung, of course, not Freud, who must be credited with this discovery),

The great problems of life...are always related to the primordial images of the collective unconscious. These images are the balancing and compensating factors that correspond to the problems which life confronts us with in reality. This is no matter for astonishment, since these images are deposits of thousands of years of experience of the struggle for existence and for adaptation. Every great experience in life, every profound conflict, evokes the accumulated treasure of these images and brings about their inner constellation.²³

Just as absence has been called the most compelling form of presence, the abandonment which the child-in-the-patient suffers is belied by the compensatory potential of the collective unconscious. This compensatory potential, or "accumulated treasure," is particularly evident when the abandoned look for someone to blame. The finger of the Blameful Spirit, whether pointed at self or other, is overdetermined by archetypal expectations. As Hillman has put it,

...relationships...are overloaded with archetypal demands. What people expect of mothers and fathers, teachers, friends and lovers is beyond the ability of personal human beings; people ask that archetypal qualities be present in each other which...are present only in Gods and Goddesses.²⁴

As others fail to measure up to the outraged expectations of our inner child, we stumble upon the metaphysical assumptions which underpin abandonment. It is not people we crave, but spirit. Latent in our blame of self and other is a classical proof of the existence of God(s), or better, a classical proof of the existence of the *deus absconditus*, the hidden or absent God(s).

Though Wordsworth has sentimentalized the relationship between the child and God, this relationship has a darker side. Incarnated into a world which affronts its divinity, the child may react with infantile omnipotence--not merely the tranquilized emotions that Wordsworth so wistfully recollects. Clinically revisioned, his poem might better read: Trailing clouds of glory, blaming as we come, we feel abandoned when the responses of others do not correspond to the expectations we brought with us "From God, who is our home."

Jung learned about these god-like expectations from a young woman patient who viewed him as her father and even dreamed of herself as a tiny infant in his arms. Despite reductive analysis and appeals to common sense, the patient continued to cling to her fantasy. Suspecting that there might be some purpose to the patient's fantasy, Jung decided to abandon reductive interpretation and allow the transference to elaborate itself freely. As the treatment continued, the patient's image of Jung changed. In her dreams, he began to be endowed with super-human qualities. Indeed, his image came to resemble an "archaic...nature-daemon, something like Wotan."²⁵ With this development, the transference was able to be resolved and a cure achieved. No longer confined to the dis-

empowering interpretation that the patient was infantilizing herself by viewing him as a father, Jung was able to empower the patient by pointing out that her unconscious "was trying to *create* a god out of the person of the doctor, as it were to free a vision of God from the veils of the personal...."²⁶ As the patient integrated this insight and acknowledged to herself that she had a spiritual nature, despite her rationalistic conscious outlook and atheistic convictions, she was able to relinquish her dependency on Jung. As it is written in the Gospels so it was in the analysis: by becoming as a child she entered the kingdom of her own larger personality.

Scapegoat or Camel?

...imagination, a moving heaven of theriomorphic gods in bestial constellations, stirring without external stimulation within our animal sense as it images its life in our world.²⁷

James Hillman

If, as James Hillman has noted, "archetypal psychology sits on the backs of various animals,"²⁸ what animal has been carrying this essay? Clearly it has not been the Scapegoat. While that creature may be necessary, as in the old Hebrew scapegoat ritual, to remove the evil that neither individual nor group can integrate and transform, it can, as we have noted throughout these pages, be projected onto the people we blame and freighted with the wrong cargo.

In this age of impoverished symbolism, scapegoat psychology is as ubiquitous as blame. Secular man, unable to individuate a relationship to gods he has denied, sacrifices his neighbor in place of himself. Such sacrifice, of course, is not made at the alter of the specific god who is laying claim, but at the alter of that puniness we have been calling the smaller personality.

Critical of secular scapegoat psychology, this essay has been written from the back of a very different beast: the camel. Nietzsche identifies the camel with the "weight-bearing spirit."²⁹ This

spirit, he suggests, wants to know what are the heaviest things and rejoices in its strength by kneeling down to be loaded with them. Jung concurs with Nietzsche on this point. When a camel appeared in the vision of a patient whose animus had just fallen into a deep, black pool of water, Jung interpreted its presence as indicating that the patient was now able to *carry* her depressive mood, for "The camel... is the animal that carries the burden."³⁰

Of course, the burdens which the camel helps us to bear are various. Besides depressive feelings there is also anxiety, desire, guilt, and fear to name just several more. Taken together, the various burdens which the camel bears correspond to that burden which Nietzsche identified as the heaviest of all burdens--the burden of being ourselves.

An eclectic therapist in Jungian analysis who was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with his habit of reflecting upon his current dilemmas in terms of early childhood experiences, and who was also having difficulty seeing through his projections due to his tendency to reflect on relationships in the conceptual terms of systemic therapy paradigms, had the following dream:

My wife is doing a family therapy interview at the psychiatric hospital where she works. A camel walks into the room, kneels down, loads my wife and the family on its back, and walks out!

With the appearance of the camel, the dreamer was better able to carry the eclecticism which had previously been tearing him in twain. Immediately, he realized that it was not a matter of which was right--the analytic or the systemic paradigm, the reductive or the purposive model of analysis. On the contrary, it all came down to *carrying* the burden of these riches. Where before the camel had been a *dead* metaphor, each model competing to be the proverbial straw that broke the dreamer's back, now it was a *living* metaphor, both him and not him.³¹ Just as Jung learned from

his inner figure Philemon that his thoughts had an objective life of their own and moved through the psyche "like animals in the forest,"³² the autonomy of the dream-camel initiated the dreamer into the awareness that the psyche can carry itself. Though his childhood may have been scarred, his family dysfunctional, and his understanding of his own psychology overdetermined by theories sensitive to these external influences, the weight-bearing spirit of the camel was not.

The night before the camel dream the patient had another dream of related interest. A baby knelt down on the floor on all fours as if expecting the dream-ego to sit upon its back. This weight-bearing baby, which clearly pre-figures the weight-bearing camel of the next dream, is reminiscent of the account we have been giving of the child as a metaphor of the larger personality. Though the child may be abandoned, exposed, hurt, and abused, it can bear these afflictions for it too is a camel.

Commenting on the dream of a man who dreamt that he was "with his father, mother, and sister in a very dangerous situation...", Jung writes,

He has fallen right back into childhood, a time when we are still a long way from wholeness [larger personality]. Wholeness is represented by the family, and its components are still projected upon the members of the family and personified by them. But this state is dangerous for the adult because regressive: it denotes a splitting of personality... "loss of soul." In the break-up the personal components that have been integrated with such pains are once more sucked into the outside world. The individual loses his guilt and exchanges it for infantile innocence; once more he can blame the wicked father for this and the unloving mother for that...without noticing that he has lost his moral freedom. But no matter how much parents and grandparents may have sinned against the child, the man who is really adult will accept these sins as his own condition which has to be reckoned with. Only a fool is interested in other people's guilt, since he cannot alter it. The wise man learns only from his own guilt. He will ask himself: Who am I that all this should happen to me? To find the answer to this fateful question he will look into his own heart.³³

Jung's interpretation is to the dream which it discusses as the camel was to our dreamer. For Jung, blame is not only a symptom of infantilism, it is the attitude that produces it. In contrast to the regressed, blameful adult, the true adult assumes the burden of his own guilt. Like the weight-bearing camel, he wants to know what is the heaviest of burdens and does not balk when he learns that it is himself. "Who am I," he asks himself, "that all this should happen to me."

Although we were all once children, and though children are vulnerable, the psyche is archetypal and cannot be reduced to our childhood experiences. Like a loaded camel, the child carries upon its back all that is necessary for its latter life. It is blame, not calamity, that weakens our fate, blame, not other people, that destroys what is valuable in the human spirit.

Notes

1. For a thorough discussion of the archetypal factors which underpin the psychology of individuals and groups who have become identified with the evil for which they have been blamed see Sylvia Brinton Perera, *The Scapegoat Complex: Toward a Mythology of Shadow and Guilt* (Toronto: Inner City Books, 1986).
2. James Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), pp. 72-82.
3. James Hillman, *Re-Visioning Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 47-48.
4. Adolf Guggenbuhl-Craig, *Eros on Crutches* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1980), pp. 84-87.
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 87.
6. C.G. Jung, *CW* 10, para. 360.
7. While Freud believed that careful analytic reconstruction of a patient's history would reveal that the child-in-the-patient had either suffered from literal sexual abuse at the hands of others or from its own infantile sexual fantasies, Jung suggested a third aetiological factor--the future personality as an image in the now. For Jung, the development and pathology of the personality cannot wholly be accounted for in terms of past experiences, whether real or fantasied. Though Jung did not deny that abuse occurs any more than Freud did, and though he, too, acknowledged the role of sexuality in development and pathology, he believed that the conscious personality was in dialogue from the beginning with the latent potential of the unconscious. Of course, Jung's conception of the unconscious was very different from Freud's. The unconscious, in Jung's view, was not simply a waste bin of repressed contents, but a creative matrix out of which the individual develops. What Jung, in his autobiography, refers to as his "personality number two" corresponds to the larger personality which addresses the child or the child-in-the-adult in the language of fantasy. Personality "No. 2," writes Jung, "had no definable character at all; he was a *vita peracta*, born, living, dead, everything in one; a total vision of life. Though pitilessly clear about himself, he was unable to express himself through the dense, dark medium of No.1 [i.e., Jung's ego-personality], though he longed to do so. When No.2 predominated, No.1 was contained and obliterated in him, just as, conversely, No.1 regarded No.2 as a region of inner darkness." *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 87.
8. Melanie Klein, "On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt" (1948) in *Envy and Gratitude & Other Works: 1946-1963* (New York: Delacorte Press/ Seymour Lawrence, 1975), p. 26.
9. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, *S.E.* 21, p. 138.

10. Melanie Klein, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.

11. "...during a particular session a [depressive] patient may suffer from strong feelings of guilt and despair about his incapacity to restore the damage which he feels he may have caused. Then a complete change occurs: the patient suddenly brings up material of a persecutory kind. The analyst and analysis are accused of doing nothing but harm, grievances which lead back to early frustrations are voiced. The processes which underlie this change can be summarized as follows: persecutory anxiety has become dominant, the feeling of guilt has receded, and with it the love for the object seems to have disappeared. In this altered emotional situation, the object has turned bad, cannot be loved, and therefore destructive impulses toward it seem justified. ...persecutory anxiety and defenses *have been reinforced* in order to escape from the overwhelming burden of guilt and disappear." Melanie Klein, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.

12. William Blake, *Selected Poetry and Prose of Blake* (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 127.

13. I allude here to Ferenczi's observations about child sexual assault: "The sexually violated child can suddenly bring to fruition under the pressure of traumatic exigency all future faculties which are virtually preformed in him and are necessary for marriage, motherhood and fatherhood, as well as all feelings of a mature person. Here one can confidently speak of *traumatic* (pathologic) *progression or precocity* in contrast to the familiar concept of regression. It is only natural to think of fruit that ripens or becomes sweet prematurely when injured by the beak of a bird...." "The Passions of Adults and Their Influence on the Character Development and Sexual Development of Children," reprinted under the title, "Confusion of Tongues Between Adults and Children," in Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 301.

14. For a fuller presentation of how abusive events can over-determine the God-image of the abused see my *God Is a Trauma: Vicarious Religion and Soul-Making* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1989), pp. 115-125.

15. In *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley depicts Prometheus as having spent three-thousand years blaming Jupiter for chaining him to a rock. This psychology of blame, Shelley wishes to suggest, characterizes the last three-thousand years of culture. In the poem it is when Prometheus decides to take back the blame that he is unbound. Likewise, for Shelley, the "new age" begins when we let go of blame.

16. C.G. Jung, *CW* 9,i., para. 217.

17. *Ibid.*, para. 304.

18. James Hillman, *Loose Ends: Primary Papers in Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1978), p. 34.

19. C.G. Jung, *CW* 14, para. 310.

20. C.G. Jung, *CW* 9,i, p. 161 fn.

²¹ C.G. Jung, *CW* 5, para 631.

22. Cited by Hillman in *Loose Ends*, p. 9.

23. C.G. Jung, *CW* 6, para. 373f.

²⁴ James Hillman, *Loose Ends: Primary Papers in Archetypal Psychology* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1978), p. 192.

25. C.G. Jung, *CW* 7, para. 217.

26. C.G. Jung, *CW* 7, para. 214.

27. James Hillman, "Image Sense," in *Spring 1979* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1979), p. 142.

28. James Hillman, "Silver and the White Earth (Part One)," in *Spring 1980* (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1980), p. 43.

29. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, R.J. Hollingdale, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 54.

30. C.G. Jung, *The Visions Seminars: Book One* (Zurich: Spring Publications, 1976), p. 53.

31. Although, as Jung (*CW* 11, para. 145) put it, "The individual ego is much too small, its brain much too feeble to incorporate all the projections withdrawn from the world," these projections can be incorporated, or rather carried, by the other figures which together constitute the objective psyche. Hillman in an essay titled, "The Elephant in the Garden of Eden" (*Spring 1990*, p. 103.) describes the theophanic appearance of an elephant in the fractured fantasy material of a schizophrenic patient. The elephant, Hillman notes, helped her to "slow[] down and hold[] together."

32. C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 183.

33. C.G. Jung, *CW* 12, para. 152.