

# The Cultural Complex and Archetypal Defenses of the Collective Spirit: Baby Zeus, Elian Gonzales, Constantine's Sword, and Other Holy Wars

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## INTRODUCTION

Much as an airline pilot gives the passengers a brief synopsis of the flight plan, I would like to provide an itinerary for this intuitive flight so that some of the landmarks along the way have a context. The series of seemingly unrelated historical episodes which I will be highlighting are linked together by a kind of intuitive logic that seeks to sketch an extension of traditional Jungian theory. Indeed, this essay is meant to be a “sketch” in the same way that an artist or architect would render a preliminary drawing of a work in progress which will be elaborated over time.

Jung's earliest work at the Burghölzli led to the development of his theory of complexes which even now forms the foundation of the day-to-day clinical work of analytical psychology. In fact, there was a time when the founders of the Jungian tradition considered calling it “complex psychology.” Later, Joseph Henderson created a much needed theoretical space between the personal and archetypal levels of the psyche which he called the “cultural level of the psyche.” This cultural level of the psyche exists in both the conscious and the unconscious. Elaborating Jung's theory of complexes as it manifests itself in the cultural level of the psyche—conscious and unconscious—is the goal of this essay. In the effort to sketch

this idea, we will be taking a tour which includes stops at Jane Harrison's study of early Greek religion, Elian Gonzales' gripping story of loss and political upheaval, James Carroll's study of anti-Semitism in the history of the Catholic church, current manifestations of the primal psychoanalytic split between Jung and Freud, and finally a brief commentary on the al Qaeda attack on the West and the "God Bless America" response. All of these episodes help illustrate the reality of cultural complexes and elucidate a specific type of cultural complex in which archetypal defenses of the collective spirit play a primary role.

#### JANE HARRISON'S *THEMIS*

Almost 100 years ago (1912), Jane Harrison published *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, her stunning exploration of matriarchal, pre-Olympian Greek religion. (Jane Ellen Harrison. *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*. Gloucester, MA, Peter Smith, 1974) Jung's notion of archetypes and the collective unconscious had not yet been conceived, and one can almost feel those seminal insights struggling to get born as Harrison weaves threads of anthropology, classical studies, archaeology, sociology and psychology. Her book reads like a detective story as she seeks to discover and piece together the origins of early Greek religion. Her work is named for, inspired by and presided over by the goddess Themis who embodies the earliest Western ideas of civility and community. Mention of Harrison's book is a fitting place to begin this contemporary piece of psychological theory making, because it is not only in her spirit of the detective piecing together bits and pieces of "evidence" to get at a whole that this essay is undertaken, but in fact one of the central images from her work actually gave birth to this project.

#### BABY ZEUS AND ELIAN GONZALES

The contemporary context of this inquiry begins in exactly the same place as Jane Harrison's: with a fascination about the origins, underlying meaning, and power of collective emotion. Harrison was gripped by the force of collective emotion in its capacity to create gods, social order and a meaningful link between man, nature and spirit in pre-Olympian Greece. I am equally fascinated by the power of

collective emotion to create gods, devils, political movements and social upheaval/transformation in our times. Harrison did not have the concept of the collective unconscious and its archetypes in which to ground her ideas about the origin of social and religious life in early Greece. But she was a keen observer of art, ritual and especially the degree to which collective emotion and its enthusiasms seemed to generate a coherent mythos that linked the natural and social order into a coherent whole. At the epicenter of her quest was the glorious mystery of “The Hymn of the Kouretes.” Through Harrison’s eyes, the image of Baby Zeus surrounded by the protective young male warriors, the Kouretes, comes to life and the very foundations of early Greek religion are unveiled:

Io, Kouros most Great, I give thee hail, Kronian,  
Lord of all that is wet and gleaming, thou art come  
at the head of thy Daimones. To Dike for the Year,  
Oh, march, and rejoice in the dance and song,

That we make to thee with harps and pipes mingled  
together, and sing as we come to a stand at thy well-  
fenced altar.

[Io, etc.]

For here the shielded Nurturers took thee, a child  
immortal, from Rhea, and with noise of beating feet  
hid thee away.

[Io, etc.]

And the Horai began to be fruitful year by year  
and Dike to possess mankind, and all wild living  
things were held about by wealth-loving Peace.

[Io, etc.]

To us also leap for full jars, and leap for fleecy  
flocks, and leap for fields of fruit, and for hives to  
bring increase.

[Io, etc.]

Leap for our Cities, and leap for our sea-borne  
ships, and leap for our young citizens and for godly  
Themis. (Harrison, pp. 7–8)

Baby Zeus, who is here referred to as “Kouros most Great,” was secretly stolen away from his nursery and handed over to the Kouretes for protection by his mother Rhea, wife of Kronos. She did not want him to suffer the same fate of his older brothers and sisters—namely, to be eaten by his

father, Kronos. The young god was shielded from destruction by the Kouretes who, in their youthful energy, leap for the gods and secure the safety and renewal of the crops, the animals, the cities, the ships, the “young citizens,” and for godly Themis.

Several thousand years later, in our time, young Elian Gonzales was miraculously plucked from the very sea in which his mother had just drowned. She perished trying to bring him to the “promised land” and within a short period of time, he became the center of a psychic and political drama that stirred the emotions of at least two nations. The response of Elian’s Cuban-American relatives and their community made little sense to most Americans, who do not share the same historical experience or mythic story of their origins, survival, and renewal.

Most well-intentioned, non-Cuban-Americans seized by this tragic story felt that the motherless child should be reunited as quickly as possible with his loving father, even if he happened to live in Castro’s Cuba. Most people found themselves thinking: “These Cuban-Americans are crazy. Isn’t it obvious that Elian should be returned to his surviving parent?” Indeed, it was the extraordinary power of the non-rational, collective emotion of the Cuban-Americans that caught my attention. “Why are they behaving so ‘irrationally?’” I asked myself. It wasn’t until I happened by chance to glance again at the image of Baby Zeus from Jane Harrison’s 1912 book that I was able to find a missing link to the story which allowed me to make some sense (at least for myself) of what seemed so irrational and yet was being deeply felt not just by the Cuban-Americans, but all the other people caught up in this extraordinary drama. What if Baby Zeus and Elian Gonzales are part of the same story? What if they are linked by a mythic form or archetypal pattern out of which are generated a story line, primal images and deeply powerful, non-rational collective emotion?

Elian Gonzales’ miraculous second birth or rebirth as he was plucked from the waters puts him in the realm of the divine child (like Moses), like the young god who carries all the hopes for the future of a people that sees itself as having been traumatized by a life of cruel oppression. He, too, in his vulnerable state of youthful divinity, needs to be protected

from destruction by his warrior cousins who rally to his defense. For Elian Gonzales' "shielded nurturers" to willingly return him to Castro's Cuba (because now, as a young god, he belongs to all his people, not just his personal family) would be equivalent to the Kouretes sending Baby Zeus back to Kronos. In the mythic imagination of the Cuban-American collective, Fidel Castro is the same as Kronos—a destructive father god who would eat his own son, the youthful god. Elian Gonzales' "crazy cousins" are not so crazy after all. They are the Kouretes, dancing in the frenzy of a collective emotion that seeks to form a protective circle or shield around their young god.

The force/libido providing the energy to fuel these incredible sagas comes from the collective emotion mobilized by the plight of a gravely endangered, vulnerable (divine) child who symbolizes the hopes of an entire people. The inevitable, archetypal coupling of the endangered divine child and the protective, warrior Kouretes who surround him are at the heart of the story I want to tell and the theory I want to advance.

#### **DONALD KALSCHED AND THE ARCHETYPAL DEFENSE OF THE PERSONAL SPIRIT**

Donald Kalsched's ground-breaking work in *The Inner World of Trauma; Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit* forms the next major building block of this essay. (Donald E. Kalsched. *The Inner World of Trauma; Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit*. London, Routledge, 1996; reviewed by Stephen D. Herrmann in *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2000, pp. 51–71.) In the summer of 2000, I participated in a conference with Dr. Kalsched in Montana. His paper focused on the inner world of trauma, while my presentation was more about the outer domain where myth, psyche, and politics intersect—a subject which I have explored with others in *The Vision Thing; Myth, Politics and Psyche in the World*. (Thomas Singer, Ed. *The Vision Thing; Myth, Politics and Psyche in the World*. London, Routledge, 2000; reviewed by Iden Goodman in *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, vol. 20, No. 1, 2001, pp. 43–50) I had just stumbled into an imaginal connection between Baby Zeus and Elian Gonzales and was using the

image of Baby Zeus surrounded by the Kouretes to illustrate the reality of the collective psyche and the power of collective emotion to generate living myths. Kalsched had not seen this particular image before, and he startled with both surprise and instant recognition at the lively representation of the warriors defending Baby Zeus. He immediately knew who they were, correctly identifying them as the Daimones. Indeed, the Kouretes are also known as the Daimones: “Io, Kouros most Great . . . thou art come at the head of thy Daimones.” (Harrison, p. 7)

These prototypes or original Daimones surrounding Baby Zeus are in the same lineage as those characters whom Kalsched a few millennia later would identify as the “archetypal defenses of the personal spirit.” If one thinks of this image psychologically as a portrait of the endangered psyche, one sees clearly that the Daimones have the intrapsychic function of protecting a vulnerable, traumatized youthful Self—be it Baby Zeus, Elian Gonzales, or any other less famous wounded soul. As Kalsched has elaborated, the Daimones have the function of protecting the “personal spirit” when the individual is endangered. These same Daimones also have the function of protecting the “collective spirit” of the group when it is endangered—be it Cuban-Americans, Jews, blacks, gays or any other traumatized “group soul.” The Daimones are as active in the psychological “outer” world of group life and the protection of its “collective spirit” as they are in the inner, individual world of trauma and the protection of “the personal spirit.” Perhaps they even found their earliest expression in group life rather than that of a single person, when the psychology of the individual was less developed and the survival of the group more in the forefront.

We have come to appreciate the Daimones again through the Jungian route of recognizing their role in the inner world of trauma. Whether it be in the inner/outer world of the individual or the inner/outer world of the group, the Daimones can serve both a vital self-protective function and can raise havoc with the fury of their attacks directed inwardly in self-torture and outwardly in impenetrability, hostility and ruthlessness. The fortuitous recognition of the connection between Baby Zeus and Elian Gonzales led me to consider an extension of Kalsched’s insights into what might best be

summarized in this reformulation of his book's title: "The Group World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Collective Spirit." Extending Kalsched's ideas into the realm of group experience and linking these ideas with the notion of a "cultural complex" is the goal of this paper.

I will briefly summarize the central elements of Kalsched's formulations in order to lay a foundation for considering them in relation to group processes.

1. Trauma alone does not shatter the psyche. The psyche shatters itself through its own self-defense system. In a sense, the psyche's defense system is as traumatogenic as the original trauma because its focus is on survival and it interprets any attempt to grow and individuate as dangerous and needing to be punished. According to the Daimon-Protector defense system, reaching out beyond a closed system of certainty exposes the personal spirit to further traumatization.

2. This occurs because the "daimonic defense system" is unleashed against the psyche for the purpose of converting annihilation anxiety into a more manageable fear. This self-protective mechanism preserves a fearful ego in the face of shattering trauma rather than permitting the ego to be annihilated altogether. This self-protective mechanism which results in self-attack can be likened to the autoimmune system having gone haywire when it turns its substantial arsenal of defenses back on one's own tissues. Fragmentation of the psyche is the result.

3. The Daimon-Protector defenses are internalized representations of the original perpetrators of the trauma. Even more than that, they are archaic, typical and archetypal.

4. Following the psyche's fragmenting, a false self takes up residence in the outer world which can function well enough in ordinary situations, although it is most likely to break down in intimate relationships. This false self can take on a caretaker function as well as becoming a compliant, good adult.

5. On the other side of the fragmentation, the true self goes into inner hibernation behind the ferociously protective barrier of the Daimones—which can be alternately protective and torturing.

6. The individual has very little access to effective aggression in the world.

7. The shadow of being a traumatized victim is the tendency towards an imperious sense of entitlement and its accompanying demands for reparation. A false, imperial self can take root that demands love, respect, sexual pleasure, freedom and happiness.

8. At the heart of this fragmented psychic “balance” resides a vulnerable, wounded child surrounded by an archaic defense system that can alternate between sheltering protection and ruthless torturing of the self and others.

What if this highly schematized outline of the psyche’s response to trauma applies as much to a group’s response to trauma as it does to the individual’s? The same dynamics so elegantly described by Kalsched may come alive in the traumatized group psyche as well as in the private horror of a traumatized individual. The traumatized group may develop a cohort of protector/persecutor leaders who function like the Kouretes protecting Baby Zeus or the Cuban-American relatives protecting Elian Gonzales. The traumatized group spirit may well be subject to the same nurturing protection and/or violent torture at the hands of its Daimones leaders. All of the group’s defenses are mobilized in the name of a self-care system which is designed to protect the injured divine child of the group identity, as well as to protect the group “ego” from a terrifying sense of imminent annihilation.

The group may develop a defensive system akin to the individual, but in this case its goal is to protect the group or collective spirit rather than the individual spirit. Such a traumatized group presents only a “false self” to the world, and the world cannot “see” the group in its more authentic and vulnerable identity. The rest of the world which is not part of the traumatized group may see only the more hardened “daimonic” front men or women and respond to their aggression and impenetrability as if they were the whole group. Such a traumatized group with its defenses of the collective spirit may find itself living with a history that spans several generations, several centuries, or even millennia with repetitive, wounding experiences that fix these patterns of behavior and emotion into what analytical psychologists have come to know as “complexes.” The group complexes create bipolar fields in the same way that personal complexes activate or constellate in external reality the very splits that have splintered the inner



world. The traumatized life of the group gets incorporated into the inner life of the individual through a group complex—which may be mistaken for or get confused with a personal complex. How do we learn to distinguish the cultural or group level of the complex from the more “personal” level of the complex with its archetypal core? Before we address the implications of these assertions and the questions which follow from them, there is a missing building block in the argument that we are assembling.

**JOSEPH HENDERSON AND SAM KIMBLES: THE CULTURAL LEVEL OF THE PSYCHE AND THE REALITY OF GROUP COMPLEXES**

One of Joseph Henderson’s many seminal contributions to analytical psychology has been to delineate more carefully the space in the psyche between the personal and archetypal levels of psychological experience. He has called this the “cultural level” of the psyche and has elaborated a typology for that level of reality: social, aesthetic, philosophic and spiritual. (Joseph Henderson. *Cultural Attitudes in Psychological Perspective*. Toronto, Inner City Books, 1984) For Jungians, Henderson’s work has opened the theoretical door to the vast realm of human experience that inhabits the psychical space between our most personal and our most archetypal levels of being in the world. For example, there is surely something in cultural life that nourishes us like a mother but is neither our personal mother nor archetypal Demeter. Henderson’s elaboration of the cultural level of the psyche has made greater space for the outer world of group life to have a home in the inner Jungian world and allowed the inner Jungian world to recognize more fully the outer world of social and cultural experience.

Extending Henderson’s notion of the “cultural level” of the psyche, Sam Kimbles has begun to speak of “cultural complexes” or “group complexes” in his essay, “The Cultural Complex and The Myth of Invisibility” in *The Vision Thing*. (pp. 157–169) These complexes function in that intermediate realm between the personal and archetypal level of the psyche, partaking of both but also being absolutely unique in that their content and activity is the bridge and link between the individual, society, and the archetypal realms. “Cultural complexes” are at the heart of the conflicts between many groups

and are expressed in group life all the time: politically, economically, sociologically, geographically, and religiously. For example, one simply has to think of the struggles between Christians and Jews, blacks and whites, gays and straights, men and women, to begin to imagine how potent are the individual and collective processes activated by “cultural complexes.” When these complexes are triggered, all of the emotion of the personal and archetypal realm gets channeled through group life and its experience. “Cultural complexes” are lived out in group life and they are internalized in the psyche of individuals.

Just as Henderson opened up the vast intermediate realm between the personal and archetypal, we hope that our work can help us begin to recognize the difference between individual and cultural complexes. For many analytical psychologists, Jung’s theory of complexes and its subsequent elaboration forms the cornerstone of the day-to-day work of psychotherapy and analysis. Like the Freudian theory of defenses, Jung’s notion of complexes provides a handle for understanding the nature of intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict.

Complexes express themselves in powerful moods and repetitive behaviors. They resist our most heroic efforts at consciousness, and they tend to collect experience that confirms their pre-existing view of the world. Complexes are the psychological analogue of the vegetative biological systems, such as those that carry out digestion or maintain blood pressure. An activated personal complex can have its own body language and tone of voice. It can operate beneath the level of consciousness; we do not have to think about complexes for them to carry out their autonomous processes of structuring and filtering our experience of ourselves and others. A further characteristic of complexes, elegantly elaborated by John Perry, is that they tend to be bipolar or consist of two parts. (John Weir Perry, “Emotions and Object Relations,” *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 15, No. 1, 1970, pp. 1–12) Most often, when a complex is activated, one part of the bipolar complex attaches itself to the ego and the other part gets projected onto a suitable other. For instance, in a typical negative father complex, a rebellious son inevitably finds the authoritarian father in every teacher, coach or boss who provides a suitable hook for the negative projection. This bipolarity of the complex leads to an endless round of repeti-

tive skirmishes with the illusory other—who may or may not fit the bill perfectly. Finally, complexes can be recognized by the simplistic certainty of a world view and one's place in it that they offer us, in the face of the otherwise very difficult task of holding the tension of conflicting and not easily reconcilable opposites. A colleague likes to tell a story about herself that well illustrates this psychological fact. After a day of “holding the opposites” in the office with her analysands, she enjoys watching John Wayne movies in which it is clear who the bad guys and the good guys are. She points out that it is far easier to settle for the certainty of a complex than wrestle with the emotional ambiguity of inner and outer reality that is constantly challenging the ego.

Cultural complexes structure emotional experience and operate in the personal and collective psyche in much the same way as individual complexes, although their content might be quite different. Like individual complexes, cultural complexes tend to be repetitive, autonomous, resist consciousness, and collect experience that confirms their historical point of view. Cultural complexes also tend to be bipolar, so that when they are activated the group ego becomes identified with one part of the unconscious complex, while the other part is projected out onto the suitable hook of another group. Individuals and groups in the grip of a particular cultural complex automatically take on a shared body language and postures or express their distress in similar somatic complaints. Finally, like personal complexes, cultural complexes provide a simplistic certainty about the group's place in the world in the face of otherwise conflicting and ambiguous uncertainties.

Because of its primary focus on the individuation process, the Jungian tradition has tended to emphasize the development of the individual out of his or her particular collective experience, but has not been particularly clear or helpful in differentiating individual from cultural complexes. Certainly Jung and his followers have had a sense of different cultural types which is evident, for example, in Jung's discussion of national personality characteristics. (C. G. Jung. Aniela Jaffé, ed. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, rev. ed. New York, Vintage Books, 1989, p. 246f.) But this perception of different cultural types has never adequately been linked to Jung's theory of complexes or to how these differences get incorpo-

rated into the psyche of the individual and the group. Both in the clinical work of individual analysis and in the broader Jungian tradition of archetypal and cultural commentary, it is of enormous potential benefit to begin to make clearer distinctions between an individual complex and a cultural complex. It offers both the individual and groups the opportunity of not having to telescope or condense everything into the personal or archetypal realm—but to recognize the legitimate cultural and group contributions to their struggles, suffering, and meaning.

One can easily imagine how the individual's ego can identify with a cultural complex as a defense against a more painful and isolating personal complex. It is far easier to split off one's individual suffering (or to see it all as a result of group trauma) and get caught up in a mass movement than it is to carry the burden of one's individual pain. Within analytical psychology itself, there is a growing tradition of archetypal commentary on cultural experience which tends to neglect how the individual relates to the culture through more personal experiences and complexes. Archetypal commentary on the culture's underlying myths and failings can easily camouflage the need to work hard at grappling with individual complexes. Differentiating the personal, cultural and archetypal level of complexes requires careful attention to each of these realms, without condensing or telescoping one into the other, as if one were more real or true than the other. Finally, cultural complexes are based on repetitive, historical group experiences which have taken root in the collective psyche of groups and in the individual/collective psyches of individual members of the group. One can think of cultural complexes as the fundamental building blocks and content of an inner sociology.

#### **CULTURAL COMPLEXES AND ARCHETYPAL DEFENSES OF THE COLLECTIVE SPIRIT: CONSTANTINE'S SWORD.**

Donald Kalsched's work offers a compelling model of how the individual psyche responds to trauma in its defense of the self. Can his model be extended to include specific categories of group behavior and allow us to see a bit more clearly the structure and content of certain types of group or cultural complexes? Of course, I am not suggesting that all

cultural complexes behave in the particular model of a traumatized, vulnerable child and protective/torturer Daimones, as described by Kalsched. But many of them do. There are two separate but related points that I want to emphasize here:

1. There is a continuum in the content and structure of complexes that ranges from the personal to the cultural to the archetypal. At the same time, some complexes have become such a part of a group's identity over time and repetitive experience that the cultural level of the complex becomes dominant or paramount, even in the psyche of an individual. Individuals are frequently swallowed whole by the group complex that has come to define their ethnic, religious, racial, gender, or other primary sense of identity.

2. Sometimes groups as a whole behave as if they are in the grip of a specific type of cultural complex. This type of cultural complex mobilizes in the group's behavior, emotion and life a defensive self-care system akin to that described in individuals by Kalsched. In the group version of the complex, however, the goal of the self-care, defensive system is the protection of the collective spirit, not the personal spirit. The Daimones are mobilized to protect the traumatized divine child or other symbolic carrier of the collective spirit of the group and can do so with a mixture of sheltering kindness and persecutory attack, which directed inwardly results in self-loathing and directed outwardly results in impenetrability and hostilities to other groups.

One has only to glance at the daily newspaper to see the proliferation in popular culture of these group complexes at work. Indeed, it has almost become a national sport for traumatized groups to send out Daimones (attorneys and others) to attack the general public for neglecting the entitled interests of their particular victimized group. A large part of the public has grown weary of this institutionalization of group defenses of the collective spirit. Frequently members of the victimized group are so identified with themselves as wounded divine children that it is hard for them to understand how their Daimones/Protectors, embodied in public spokespersons/attackers, are perceived as an aggressive, destructive, hostile turnoff by those who are not identified with their plight. In the psychic arena of our global group life, it is as if every group is "loaded for bear"—out there with their group

trauma, their group divine child, and their group Daimones (protectors/persecutors) ready to swing into action.

I have already offered one such contemporary example of a cultural complex that was activated in the defense of the collective spirit—that of the Cuban-Americans and Elian Gonzales. But to further amplify this cluster of ideas, I want to focus on another stunning example of the dynamic interplay between cultural complex and archetypal defenses of the collective spirit. In this example one gets a rare glimpse at the continuum of complex from individual to cultural to archetypal, and one can also see how the defenses of the collective spirit became a monster. It would be easiest to focus on groups such as gays, blacks, women, the disabled and other obviously disenfranchised and historically traumatized peoples, to see how the dynamics of cultural complex and defenses of the collective spirit play out. But a recent book by James Carroll entitled *Constantine's Sword; The Church and the Jews: A History* suggested to me that the same dynamics can be seen in the Catholics, a group that few would now characterize as a disenfranchised and traumatized minority. (James Carroll. *Constantine's Sword; The Church and the Jews: A History*. Boston, New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001)

*Constantine's Sword* is a history of Christian—more specifically Catholic—anti-Semitism. Starting with the old Christian belief that Jews were the “Christ-killers,” Carroll systematically examines layer upon layer of historical event, political context, emotional climate, theological justification and psychological consequence. He begins his narrative by describing Catholic and Jewish reactions to a memorial cross placed at Auschwitz as the latest episode in a stormy and violent two-millennia relationship. His reflections on the Auschwitz cross are placed in the context of his memories of growing up in Germany right after World War II and his own early childhood belief that Jews were in fact “Christ-killers.” After carefully probing the details of his Catholic upbringing, Carroll opens up to an in-depth exploration of the entire historical sweep of Catholic-Jewish relations. Carroll does not claim to tell the whole story of the development of Catholicism or Judaism or of the relations between the two religions.

Let us briefly follow the thread of Carroll's work. On the personal side, the early development of his faith took place in the epicenter of the most traumatic event of modern Western

history—the Holocaust. Carroll’s father was commander of the American Airforce in Germany immediately following World War II. The family lived at headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany. Accompanying his devoutly Catholic mother, an adolescent Jim Carroll traveled to many of the important Catholic shrines of Western Europe. Through his deep love of his mother and his intimate knowledge of her suffering because of the crippling illness (polio) of his brother, Carroll developed a faith rooted in the cross, the mother, and the suffering son. Growing up in post-Nazi Germany, Carroll saw a lot of the great Catholic tradition and the devastation of World War II, but learned little of the Holocaust and the suffering of the Jews at that time. To the Catholic boy, Jews were still identified simply as the “Christ-killers.”

This is where Carroll’s personal complex and the cultural complex get all mixed up—not just in his history but in the 2000-year history that he sets out to explore in this book. The Christian religion that nurtured a youth aspiring to the priesthood placed suffering and traumatic death at the center of the Western collective experience, indeed at the center of all human history. And right at the very heart of that story, as he heard it, was the belief that the Jews were responsible for the suffering and traumatic death of the young god. This belief—reinforced through a long history of theological amplification and political, social and religious persecution—has fueled a virulent collective emotion of loathing and rage that has burned without interruption for centuries. Collective emotion fuels the Daimones’ dance around Baby Zeus; collective emotion fuels the Cuban-Americans’ dance around Elian Gonzales; and two millennia of collective emotion demanding vengeance on the “Christ-killers” fuels a long line of Daimones from the Crusaders to the Nazis.

One of the many surprising revelations of Carroll’s historical journey is that the suffering and traumatic death of the young god for which the Jews have been held responsible has not always been at the center of Christian faith. Indeed, the cult of the cross does not seem to come to center stage until the time of Constantine in the early part of the fourth century C.E. Even today, the Eastern Orthodox Church places more emphasis on the mystery of the resurrection or rebirth than on the traumatic death symbolized by the crucifixion. Imagine for a moment what the history of the Western world might

have been like if suffering and trauma had not been at the center of the story that the West has told about itself since the time of Christ. Of course, the fact is that the traumatic death of the crucifixion has been at the center of Western orthodoxy since the time of Constantine.

When Constantine was crossing the Milvian Bridge to attack Rome in 312 C.E., he had a vision and a conversion experience in which his sword and the cross became one. Carroll writes:

The place of the cross in the Christian imagination changed with Constantine. “He said that about noon, when the day was already beginning to decline”—this is Eusebius’s account of Constantine’s own report of what he saw in the sky on the eve of the battle above the Milvian Bridge—“he saw with his own eyes the trophy of a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and bearing the inscription CONQUER BY THIS.” The story goes on to say that Constantine then assembled his army—“He sat in the midst of them, and described to them the figure of the sign he had seen”—and gave them the new standard to carry into battle. “Now it was made in the following manner. A long spear, overlaid with gold, formed the figure of the cross by means of a transverse bar laid over it.” As we saw, the army behind this standard did conquer, and Constantine, so Eusebius heard him say, was thus convinced of the truth of Christianity. “The emperor constantly made use of this sign of salvation as a safeguard against every adverse and hostile power, and commanded that others similar to it should be carried at the head of all his armies.” (*Ibid.*, p. 175)

Constantine became a Christian and the Christian faith found a protector/persecutor/Daimon of the first order. At that moment, the symbol of traumatic injury—the cross—and its avenging protector in the form of Constantine’s sword got married. I would argue that this symbolic marriage of cross and sword is an example of the historical emergence of an “archetypal defense of the collective spirit.” It might be helpful at this point to remind the reader of what I said about Baby Zeus in the early part of this essay: the inevitable, archetypal coupling of the endangered divine child and the protective, warrior Daimones who surround him are at the heart of the story I want to tell and the theory I want to advance. Christ is not Baby Zeus and he is not a child, but in the mytho-religious imagination of the West, he is in that lineage of



divine beings who has found potent Daimones/Protectors who commit unimaginable atrocities in his name.

Groups go on the attack in defense of their collective spirit when they fear being annihilated, especially if there is a history of trauma at their beginnings. The Christian story begins in trauma. Some three hundred years after the crucifixion of Christ, the suffering divine being finds his archetypal and historical Daimon/Protector/Persecutor in Constantine, from whose sword Carroll traces a direct line to the Crusades, the Inquisition and finally the Holocaust. One can argue, in summary, that at the heart of the central cultural complex and narrative event of the Western Christian psyche is the emergence of an archetypal defense of the collective spirit, the central features of which include:

1. Traumatic injury to a vulnerable divine being representing the group spirit;

2. Fear of annihilation of the group spirit; and

3. Emergence of avenging protector/persecutor defense of the collective spirit. In the Christian coupling of cross and sword, the archetypal defense of the collective spirit turned all of its more shadowy aggressive energy outward and one sees self-righteousness rather than self-hatred. (Note: obviously this is not the whole story of Christianity or of Judaism since Constantine. Rather, it is following one thread only that has contributed to a particularly potent/virulent cultural complex.) The Jews bore the brunt of this 2000-year archetypal defense of the collective spirit and to some degree mirrored its aggressiveness in self-hatred, until Zionism and the Holocaust gave birth to a generation of Jews that could say with equally aggressive self-affirmation: “Never Again.” “Never Again” grew out of unimaginable human suffering and the resolve to protect the Jewish collective spirit at any cost, giving birth to a whole new generation of Jewish Daimones whom the Palestinians and Israelis know quite well.

Carroll’s book, from one perspective then, can be viewed as the extraordinary effort of an individual to unravel his personal complexes from a cultural complex which, until consciously examined, are in fact so interwoven and continuous that it would be impossible to know where the personal part of the complex ends and the cultural part begins. Carroll would not describe his effort in the language of Jung’s complex theory and analytical psychology, but it is clear that all

of his considerable emotional and intellectual passions have been devoted to teasing out the different levels of personal, cultural and archetypal conflict that are at the heart of his history of the Catholics and the Jews. Carroll's personal journey to free himself from the myth of the Jews as "Christ-killers" and all of the collective emotion that has been ignited in the name of that belief, is deeply entangled with the 2000-year history of animosity, misunderstanding, persecution and trauma that characterize Jewish-Christian relations. One of the most important aspects of his book from a Jungian perspective is that he gives us an X-ray of the layering of the personal, cultural and archetypal dimensions of the complex he is probing. This approach opens him up to criticism from more "objective" historians, some of whom have dismissed his work as too "personal."

Indeed, Carroll's search for historical objectivity begins with an examination of his own subjectivity. In my opinion, the objectivity he gains from the hard introspective work of looking at his own personal and family history is more authentic than the carefully cultivated dispassionate objectivity of a conventional historian who is trained to refrain from injecting his own experience and biases into the story. Carroll's method is truer to our own experience of how the personal and cultural get all mixed up in the unconscious of our family lives and in the cultural and religious history of mankind. Paradoxically, by publicly wrestling with the personal dimensions of his development as a devout Catholic, he leads us to a profound consideration of the unfolding of the historical relations between Catholics and Jews. This is because Carroll's personal revelations naturally evoke and invite us to consider our own personal and cultural complexes in relation to this history. And through the window of his story opening our story, we are initiated or re-initiated into a horrifying story of the last two thousand years. From one point of view, then, this book is a history of a personal complex set in the context of a two-millennia cultural complex, as well as a two-millennia cultural complex set in the context of a personal complex.

**NEVER AGAIN AND THE HISTORY OF JUNG AND FREUD:  
A CULTURAL COMPLEX EVEN CLOSER TO HOME**

Of course, the traumatized (i.e., crucified) Christ as the carrier of the collective spirit in need of archetypal defenses

in the form of the sword, the Crusades, the Inquisition, the pogroms, and ultimately the Holocaust are just one side of the history of this horrific cultural complex. Like other personal and cultural complexes, it is part of a bipolar pair, and the other side—the Jewish—has its own story of trauma, fear of annihilation and the emergence of avenging protector/persecutor Daimones who defend the collective spirit.

One has to look no further than our own tradition of psychoanalysis—Jungian and Freudian alike—and how it gets told from one generation to the next to see the power of such cultural complexes (stories) in which the archetypal defenses of the collective spirit have been mobilized—this time in the defense of the Jewish collective spirit rather than the Christian collective spirit. An example of this potent phenomenon flared at a recent conference on the history of psychoanalysis. Seen from the perspective of the Christian/Jewish complex detailed in Carroll's book, the Jung-Freud conflict and its historical unfolding is just a short chapter in the ongoing saga of how not just individuals but the whole history of groups gets swallowed by even larger cultural complexes and their archetypal defenses of the collective spirit.

Thomas Kirsch, a past president of the International Association for Analytical Psychology, and a Jew, is particularly sensitive to the Christian/Jewish component of the conflict between Jung and Freud. Kirsch literally grew up with it as part of his childhood. He knew well that Jung had been anointed “the Christian Crown-Prince” of psychoanalysis by the Jewish psychoanalytic father Freud. He knew well that Freud had hoped Jung would take the psychoanalytic word from his small Jewish circle in Vienna to the non-Jewish, Christian world of Zurich and beyond to the West. Kirsch also knew that Jung's bitter split from Freud, seen through the lens of the Jewish/Christian cultural complex, could be viewed as one more betrayal and “murder” of a Jew by a Christian. Kirsch's own father, James Kirsch, had had to spend much of his professional career explaining in a careful, scholarly way, that Jung was not a Nazi.

Part of what must have motivated the elder Kirsch's lifelong, passionate defense of Jung had to be his desire to make it absolutely clear that he himself had not betrayed the Jews by following Jung. This must have been acutely painful for the elder Kirsch, because not only was he a Jungian and

Jewish, but he was also a German Jew. How can you be German, Jewish and Jungian?

Once you fall into the grip of a cultural complex, guilt by association rules in the collective psyche. The Kirsches knew this as German, Jewish Jungians. Jim Carroll knew this as an Irish Catholic who began to discover in his adolescence what had been done to the Jews in the name of Christ and the cross. The “logic” of a cultural complex has the same non-rational collective emotional power that led the Cuban-Americans to a fierce defense of Elian Gonzales. The goal of this emotion and “logic” is to protect the collective spirit. In the case of Jung, the “logic” of the Jewish argument against him and the emotional drive to dismiss his followers is primal and, stated bluntly, runs something like the following: “Jung was a Nazi. If you follow Jung, you are anti-Semitic at best and participated at least indirectly in the Holocaust. Jungians favor the annihilation of our people. We must vigorously defend ourselves against them and, as they would annihilate us, we must deny their existence.” Put in the broader perspective of the Christian/Jewish conflict explored in Carroll’s book, it has been common for traumatized Jews to dismiss Jung and his followers as part of the long line of those who followed Constantine’s sword and initiated the Crusades, the Inquisition, the pogroms and the 2000-year history of anti-Semitism. Such is the primitive “logic” and powerful emotion of a cultural complex.

Tom Kirsch has been attuned to this deeply painful cultural complex all his life, not just from his father’s experience but also from his mother’s. She was German, Jewish, and Jungian as well. Having lived the early history of the Jungian tradition so intimately, Kirsch has pursued an interest in the history of the early psychoanalytic movement as a whole and has worked “cross-culturally” with many Freudians over the years to develop a better sense of the seminal ideas, founding personalities and social context of its origins. His work led to an invitation to speak at the recent History of Psychoanalysis Conference in Versailles, France. Keenly sensitive to the easily provoked historical animosity between Jungians and Freudians, he tailored his remarks to this primarily Freudian group in the most careful and least inflammatory way possible. He did not go looking to activate the primal split, but to promote mutual understanding and consideration of a shared,

early history. (Thomas B. Kirsch. "Reports on the VIIIth International Meeting of the International Association for the History of Psychoanalysis (IAHP), *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, vol. 46, no. 3, July, 2001, pp. 496–498)

Shortly after Kirsch's remarks and a few friendly questions, a Freudian analyst in the back of the audience rose and said: "Look—there is an elephant in the room. Jung was an anti-Semitic Nazi. He was indirectly responsible for the death of relatives of people sitting in this room. How can we go on talking about the theoretical?" Kirsch, shaking almost as if a bomb had been dropped in the room, reacted by telling his personal story. He related his parents' experience as both German Jews and early students of Jung. But, the "elephant in the room" was even bigger than what was being discussed. If possible, its scale was even more monumental than the Holocaust and the question of Jung's anti-Semitism. The cultural complex triggered was the accumulated two-millennia history of the persecution of Jews, originating in the belief that the Jews were "Christ-killers." Naturally, it swallowed any further meaningful dialogue at the History Conference in an instant. Daimones beget Daimones and the defenses of the collective spirit in both Freudians and Jungians remain the most potent force preventing significant dialogue about the history of psychoanalysis or a real rapprochement between Jungians and Freudians. The cultural complex and its archetypal defenses of the collective spirit put Jungians and Freudians in "sea-borne ships" similar to those of the early Greeks in the "Hymn of the Kouretes" or the "crazy" Cuban-Americans who sailed to our shores. They protect Baby Zeus from Kronos, Elian Gonzales from Fidel Castro, Christians from Jews and Jews from Christians, Jungians from Freudians and Freudians from Jungians. It's an old story.

#### AND OTHER HOLY WARS

A new chapter of this type of old story literally exploded into our collective consciousness on September 11, 2001. Although this essay was written and submitted for publication in the first half of 2001, a most horrific Muslim/Christian/Jewish eruption of daimonic forces deserves a comment from the perspective of the theories advanced in this essay. Radical Islamism and its terrorist agenda can be understood as the expression of archetypal defenses of the collective spirit, set

off by the activation of a cultural complex with more than a thousand years of accumulated historical experience. From this point of view, bin Laden and the Mujahedin are daimones—human but terrifyingly impersonal incarnations of the archetypal defenses of the collective spirit. They are the avenging angels of the deeply and long-traumatized spirit of the Muslim world. As daimones, they may well end up further wounding and torturing the very traumatized Muslim Self that they have set out to defend. In addition to the awful tragedy of inflicting further injury to the Muslim spirit that the daimones seek to protect is the psychological fact that possession by a cultural complex automatically triggers its bipolar, reciprocal opposite, namely the response of the Western world. It is no accident that George Bush made an unconscious slip when he first referred to a “crusade” as the Western world’s response to the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings. His slip was our cultural complex’s answer to the jihad and puts us right back into the world of *Constantine’s Sword*. Of course, for much of the Muslim world, George Bush is the daimone. When such forces are unleashed in the collective psyche of nations, we are in much the same situation that Jung observed in his 1936 essay about Nazi Germany, *Wotan*:

Archetypes are like riverbeds which dry up when the water deserts them, but which it can find again at any time. An archetype is like an old watercourse along which the water of life has flowed for centuries, digging a deep channel for itself. The longer it has flowed in this channel the more likely it is that sooner or later the water will return to its old bed. The life of the individual as a member of society and particularly as part of the State may be regulated like a canal, but the life of nations is a great rushing river which is utterly beyond human control . . . Thus the life of nations rolls on unchecked, without guidance, unconscious of where it is going, like a rock crashing down the side of a hill, until it is stopped by an obstacle stronger than itself. Political events move from one impasse to the next, like a torrent caught in gullies, creeks and marshes. All human control comes to an end when the individual is caught up in a mass movement. Then the archetypes begin to function, as happens also in the lives of individuals when they are confronted with situations that cannot be dealt with in any of the familiar ways. (C.G. Jung, “Wotan,” *Civilization in Transition*,

*Collected Works, Vol. 10.* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, p. 189)

The ancient, archetypal riverbed of rivalrous conflicts between the Christians, the Jews, and the Muslims is once again overflowing with a gushing torrent that threatens to flood the world.

The Islamist dream of creating a new “caliphate” is a geographic projection of a wish to restore a wounded, collective Muslim spirit through the creation of an empire that transcends national boundaries. The traumatized Self of the Muslim world suffered centuries of humiliation at the hands of a rapidly expanding Western civilization that captured the scientific, technological and materialistic initiative that once belonged to the Muslim world. But, by the most ironic of historical twists, the Muslim world—deeply wounded in its collective self image—ended up with the richest share of the world’s oil that is the current fuel for the materialist advances of Western civilization. Cultural complexes beget cultural complexes. Where they land in the individual psyche defines an emerging challenge for the culturally attuned depth analyst.

## CONCLUSION

We hold strange mirrors up to ourselves and to one another when we start to explore cultural complexes as part of our personal and historical development. Our cultural complexes get all mixed up, not only with our personal history and complexes, but with other cultural complexes as well. These intermingling complexes take strange twists and turns over a lifetime and generations, creating exotic permutations and combinations within ourselves and between us and others, creating what I have come to think of as “recombinant visionary mythologies.” The unfolding story of a young Catholic boy from Marin County, California, converting to Islam and fighting for the Taliban/al Qaeda in Afghanistan is a compelling example of how personal and cultural complexes can get entangled in a “recombinant visionary mythology.”

In the other relatively straightforward personal stories I have been telling, Jim Carroll, an Irish Catholic, spent his adolescence growing up in post-holocaust Germany, while Tom Kirsch, a Jew born of German parents, spent his Jungian adolescence in Los Angeles. Both found themselves expending

tremendous psychic energy sorting themselves out in relation to these cultural complexes—Kirsch as a Jewish Jungian, Carroll as a former Catholic priest wrestling with the Church’s historical relationship to Jews. What a burden it must have been for Tom Kirsch as a child of German Jewish Jungians to sort out the question of whether he has indirectly betrayed his people and the memory of the Holocaust. What a burden for Jim Carroll to have realized that as a devoted Catholic he could be held responsible for the “Christ-killer” myth that has resulted in the Crusades, the Inquisition and the Holocaust. If we do not sort through our cultural as well as personal complexes carefully, we end up—at a minimum in the unconscious—feeling responsible for, identified with, or traumatized by events that belong to our cultural complexes more than our personal complexes.

Failure to consider cultural complexes as part of the work of individuation puts a tremendous burden on both the personal and archetypal realms of the psyche. Placing such a burden on the personal and/or archetypal dimensions by ignoring the careful sorting out of cultural complexes does not allow for the freeing up of the tremendous energy held in the grip of cultural complexes and making it available for the development of healthier individuals, who are able to have positive interaction with group and cultural life. Too often the Jungian notion/bias of “differentiating out from the collective” in the service of individuation does not take into account either the role of cultural complexes in development or the need to make a place for oneself in the life of the group.

The young Kouretes or Daimones, leaping for godly Themis—the spirit of the community—have taken us on a rather circuitous journey from Baby Zeus to Elian Gonzales to Catholics and Jews, Jung and Freud, radical Muslims and the West. Collective emotion and its enthusiasm, in leaping for the communal spirit and securing its protection, not only guarantee the health of crops and cities but can also destroy many citizens and communities along the way. For those reasons, one is well advised to give equal consideration to the personal, the cultural and the archetypal dimensions of our life experience when considering human value, history and meaning.