

# The Blood Sacrifice

## its symbolism and psychology

Mats Winther

<http://www.two-paths.com/bloodsac.htm>

*Abstract:* Victimization as a form of sacrificial ritual is discussed. It is understood as an inferior and archaic method of ego emancipation by which the transgressor's unconscious suffering is transferred to the victim. Transfer of sin and guilt occurs. As a consequence, original wholeness is disrupted. The blood sacrifice originates as a defense against the fear of an overwhelming unconscious. Power over life and death is imparted to the institutions of consciousness. Identification with collective consciousness is promoted, which serves to strengthen feeble individual consciousness. The regressive bond to the unconscious is temporarily disrupted, but the sacrifice must be renewed. It is the real impetus behind Freud's death drive and also the destructive narcissistic relationship.

*Keywords:* human sacrifice, rite of passage, self-mutilation, primal transgression, ego wholeness, flagellants, amputation disorder, sin transference, St Paul, Tezcatlipoca.

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### Introduction

In Aztec theology, as long as men could "offer blood and the hearts of captives taken in combat, the power of the sun god would not decline, and he would continue on his course above the earth." It was necessary to "keep the sun moving in its course so that darkness should not overwhelm the world forever" (cf. Koenigsberg, 2004). Apparently, the world was threatened with destruction, and that's why the bloody carnage must continue uninterrupted, as a preventive measure. M-L von Franz says that "[the] sun in general represents a male principle of collective consciousness, the unknown psychological factor which creates collective consciousness" (von Franz, p.143). If the sun here represents the luminosity of collective consciousness, then the ominous darkness would represent the unconscious.

Individual consciousness was unripe in Aztec civilization. Ancient civilization was plagued by a fear of unconscious invasion and the resultant dissolution of the ego. It

comes to expression in apocalyptic dread and fear of darkness. Indeed, ego disintegration, to the individual, is no less fatal and terrifying than the demolition of the world. Since the undeveloped ego consciousness remains identified with the collective, the collective psyche was bound to envelop civilization. Thus, the Aztec priest did not lie when he said that the Aztec world was threatened with destruction.

### **Rites of passage**

Mircea Eliade explains that primitive man, in the initiation rite, attempts to pass beyond and to abolish "natural" humanity. The rite of passage involve agonizing ordeals and symbolic death and resurrection. Among some peoples candidates are buried, or laid in newly dug graves. Novices are exposed to physical suffering; every so often mutilations occur, like circumcision, tattooing, and scarring. Sometimes teeth are knocked out or fingers amputated. In this way the novice passes beyond "natural man" and enters into the community of adulthood (cf. Eliade, 1959, pp.184–92). It implies that conscious knowledge is now possible. In the continued initiation he is taught the concepts of collective consciousness: "During his training in the bush he learns the sacred secrets: the myths that tell of the gods and the origin of the world, the true names of the gods, the role and origin of the ritual instruments employed in the initiation ceremonies..." (ibid. p.188).

The practice of male circumcision in modern society is connected with the rites of passage among aboriginals, which might include scarring, etc. In amputation disorder (see below, [here](#)), cutting off a leg has arguably the same castrative quality. To do damage to one's original nature is to die to the old life of youthful wholeness and to emerge into the life of culture, where one is bound to be maimed, and where one cannot give full expression to one's potential, but must submit to the societal ideals. It's like the deity wants his own devotees to damage themselves so they can fit into male society. Although the rite of passage is initiatory it seems to overlap with the blood sacrifice. In general terms, it has the function of upholding collective consciousness, to keep the sun in its course. Every sacrifice is, to greater or lesser extent, a self-sacrifice, pertaining to the natural state of unconscious identity with the victim. Self-laceration, as a means of destroying natural man, would also serve to vitalize the old sun god.

### **Medieval terror**

The medieval flagellant movement is a case in point. A fourteenth century friar gives an account of his own experience.

One night this man shut himself up in his cell and stripped himself naked .... and took his scourge with the sharp spikes, and beat himself on the body and on the arms and on the legs, till blood poured off him as from a man that had been cupped. One of the spikes on the scourge was bent crooked, like a hook, and whatever flesh it caught it tore off. He beat himself so hard that the scourge broke into three bits and the points flew against the wall. He stood there bleeding and gazed at himself. It was such a wretched sight that he was reminded in many ways of the appearance of the beloved Christ, when he was fearfully beaten. Out of pity for himself he began to weep bitterly. And he knelt

down, naked and covered in blood, in the frosty air, and prayed to God to wipe out his sins from before his gentle eyes (cf. Cohn, p.124).

The flagellants had chiliastic expectations. God threatened the world with apocalyptic destruction if mankind didn't repent. This called for sacrifice.

Each day two complete flagellations were performed in public; and each night a third was performed in the privacy of the bedroom. The flagellants did their work with such thoroughness that often the spikes of the scourge stuck in the flesh and had to be wrenched out. Their blood spurted onto the walls and their bodies turned to swollen masses of blue flesh (ibid., pp.132-3).

The flagellant movement soon turned militant. The German flagellants in particular ended up as uncompromising enemies of the church who condemned the clergy and denied that the sacrament of the Eucharist had any meaning. Flagellants would disrupt the sermon at church, and declare that any priest who contradicted them should be dragged from the pulpit and burnt at stake. At one occasion two Dominicans ventured to dispute with a band of flagellants, but they were stoned and one of them died. As usual the Jews suffered along with the clergy and on a far greater scale. Through large areas of the Low Countries the flagellants, aided by the masses of the poor, burnt and drowned all the Jews they could find, "because they thought to please God this way." After the massacres of 1348 and 1349 there were very few Jews left in Germany or the Low Countries (cf. Cohn, p.132ff). The flagellants could be denoted a medieval terror movement. The motif of offering to an angry Germanic god was brought to completion in Auschwitz, Belzec and Treblinka. It's as if the old sun god demands human blood to reassert himself.

### **The Aztec priest**

The blood-stained Aztec priest, a specialist in sophisticated methods of torture, was no less fearful than the devoted flagellant. There are noteworthy similarities. The priests would always bellow aloud for more sacrificial victims, and urge on their superstitious sovereign by the denunciations of celestial wrath.

Every day he must make sacrifices of his own blood to the gods, not only from his ears like the common people, but also by piercing his tongue to offer blood. On all the greater ceremonial occasions he cut the calves of his legs or pierced them with cactus spines, so as to have blood to offer to the gods. His foreskin was pierced by cactus thorns, and torn until his penis was surrounded by a fringe of strips of flesh from which blood could easily be taken. Naturally, this implied, and was meant to assure, a celibate priesthood. The importance of virginity, both for the priests and among the women helpers of the temple, was absolute.

The priest was normally painted with a black, magical ointment from head to foot. On great occasions, his face, at least, was painted with the marks of the god whose festival was being celebrated. Even when going into war the priest would wear his magic black paint. His hair was never

cut and it was stained with splashes of blood from human sacrifices. Nor was it ever washed, so these strange, black figures were crowned with untidy masses of coiling, clotted locks, which apparently smelt horribly, and were infested with insects. Yet, in spite of these horrors, the priest, dressed in his long, black gown with little white crosses on it, was felt to be somebody holy and powerful .... The regime of priestly life involved much fasting. Long periods of living on only three tortillas and a bowl of water a day resulted in an austere and dedicated personality. (Burland, pp.105–6)

### **Tezcatlipoca festival**

The following example is from the religious festival of the black-faced god Tezcatlipoca (“Smoking Mirror”).

A year before the intended sacrifice, a captive, distinguished for his personal beauty, and without a blemish on his body, was selected to represent this deity. Certain tutors took charge of him, and instructed him how to perform his new part with becoming grace and dignity. He was arrayed in a splendid dress, regaled with incense and with a profusion of sweet-scented flowers .... When he went abroad, he was attended by a train of the royal pages, and, as he halted in the streets to play some favorite melody, the crowd prostrated themselves before him, and did him homage as the representative of their good deity. In this way he led an easy, luxurious life, till within a month of his sacrifice. Four beautiful girls, bearing the names of the principal goddesses, were then selected to share the honors of his bed; and with them he continued to live in idle dalliance, feasted at the banquets of the principal nobles, who paid him all the honours of a divinity.

At length the fatal day of sacrifice arrived .... He was stripped of his gaudy apparel, and bade adieu to the fair partners of his revelries .... As the sad procession wound up the sides of the pyramid, the unhappy victim threw away his gay chaplet of flowers, and broke in pieces the musical instrument with which he had solaced the hours of captivity. On the summit he was received by six priests .... They led him to the sacrificial stone .... On this the prisoner was stretched. [The sixth priest] dexterously opened the breast of the wretched victim [and] tore out the palpitating heart. The minister of death, first holding this up towards the sun, an object of worship throughout Anahuac, cast it at the feet of the deity to whom the temple was devoted, while the multitudes below prostrated themselves in humble adoration. (Prescott, 1974, pp.55–57).

Here, similar to the rite of passage, the original wholeness of natural man is sacrificed. In other words, it is really the unconsciousness of natural man which is being sacrificed. The Aztec god-man leads an impulsive and instinctive life, but it was also a life of cultural and social sophistication—in short, life in the full. It is this very ideal of a youthful naïveté and manifold lifestyle which is being sacrificed. When the god thus is stripped of his regal garment and dies, projections are withdrawn,

which should further an increase in collective consciousness. A stable standpoint of consciousness is retained, which promotes industriousness. The threat of instinctual licentiousness and unconscious invasion are temporarily warded off, but also childlike and playful individuality.

What lies behind this is an archaic form of substantive thinking. The divine properties are substantive. When the god-man is stripped of his divinity they fall to the share of humanity, who may also take part in divine sonship. His splendour and sovereignty is sacrificed. Stripped of his divine substance, often symbolized by costly regalia and garments, it becomes a boon for the worshippers, as it is being spiritually ingested. Often the victim is ritually cannibalized. Prometheus was likewise chained to the rock and tortured (cmp. the passion of Christ). Victimization finds its justification in the idea of stealing the luck and the virtuous qualities from another person or people. It is a ritual attempt of the psyche, being stuck in unconsciousness, to acquire the possessions of the divine, which include the light of consciousness.

Consciousness, in all its forms, is of divine origin. Prometheus (whose name means forethought) stole the fire from the gods and brought it to mankind. Prometheus and his fire are symbolic of consciousness, which is characterized by an elevated and self-sustaining condition. To the unconscious mind it would appear like a luxuriant and godlike independence. Consequently, to lay hands on and ingest these qualities ritually attempts at strengthening a feeble consciousness. It serves to break out of unconscious wholeness, a condition which is rooted in the historical infancy of mankind. When the divinely inspired unconscious man is sacrificed, his spirit is released, which is the very substance that engenders consciousness. When unconscious wholeness is sacrificed, consciousness is let out like the spirit from the bottle.

We arrive at the surprising conclusion that victimization of living beings, including the destruction of any orderly wholeness containing splendour and riches, is driven by a strong motive of breaking out of an unconsciousness which imprisons the spirit. For this reason unconsciousness in human beings is a very dangerous condition. An unawareness of unconscious motives is what characterizes modern politically correct thinking. Such people appear like aloof god-men, who are floating on the riches of Western civilization, trying to avoid contact with reality. This type of demeanour nurtures the motive of blood sacrifice. People tend to close their eye's to the dark shadow of collective mankind, but it is a lesson that must be learnt if individuation and growth of personality is to succeed. Most importantly, one must be prepared to swallow uncomfortable truths and rid oneself of the wet blanket of political correctness, which only serves the purpose of remaining in a state of unconscious protectiveness.

## **The sun god**

The Aztec citizen would experience the blood offering as very comforting. This meant that the sun god would prevail against darkness and rise above the horizon in the next day. Natural man—the divinely inspired unconscious man inside us all—is offered for the benefit of collective consciousness. Life in all its spontaneity and instinctuality is sacrificed, so that the sun of collective consciousness, in all its rigidity, monotony and boredom, can prevail. In pagan theology, the blood sacrifice is

motivated by the fact that the gods have at the beginning of time sacrificed themselves, in order to give rise to earthly life and humanity. So, as a repayment, we must furnish the gods with life–blood. Blood represents the divine spirit bound up in earthly creatures, which longs to return to its origin. Therefore the burning of blood offerings was a daily routine.

The Maya and Aztec describe the primordial sacrifice of the gods as quite a bloody affair, when divine limbs and heads were severed. This gave rise to everything we see. The sacrifice of the maize god produced the maize plant. Hence, when we eat maize we are eating the body of a god. The Aztec ritually baked maize into the image of a god, which they subsequently consumed as a form of pagan Eucharist. The gods have sacrificed themselves for us, as Christ made his sacrifice for the good fortune of humanity. In the theology of the blood sacrifice the victim is a god who experiences the original sacrifice, an act which replenishes the earth with the boons of the divine. Yet, the victim is still a human being whose blood is sacrificed to the gods for the purpose of restitution. So both the gods and humanity are sustained by the sacrifice.

At certain ceremonies a captive or a volunteer would, dressed as the sun god Tonatiuh, ascend the stairs to the sacrificial altar (cf. Vaillant, p.196). Victims commonly volunteered during religious festivals. It was a great honour to die as the dying and resurrecting sun god. This thinking is not in any sense antiquated. The sacrificial orgy of World War I depended on the soldier's notion of an honourable death to the glory of one's nation. An author in the midst of war writes: "Oh you young men whose value is so much greater than ours! They love life, but even were they dead, France will be rebuilt from their souls. The sublime sun of youth sinks into the sea and becomes the dawn which will hereafter rise again" (cf. Koenigsberg, 2004).

### **Sacrifice in the modern world**

The practice of ritual human sacrifice has continued right up to recent days. W.D. Spencer says that "[today] all around us that burden to sacrifice is being laid on people again" (Spencer, 1997). In various African countries clandestine human sacrifices have been promoted following the revival of traditional religions. Blood sacrifice can be required in, for example, some important Yoruban and Ghanaian rites, as when a wise Ghanaian woman is expected to preserve the well–being of a village by sacrificing her daughter at puberty or a niece to bury under a village's sacred tree. Or an Akan king might be compelled to sacrifice a young man to ensure "revival of the king's spirit" (cf. Spencer, 1997). When J.M. Hopkins conducted a survey in Malawi he discovered that contemporary business people, seeking to prosper their businesses, were often directed to sacrifice a family member, the parts being used for spells (cf. Hopkins, 1980).

In the mid–nineties the sects of the Solar Temple and the Heaven's Gate performed rituals of deadly transcendence. By a collective suicide the members would supposedly acquire heavenly grace. Their mystical theology guaranteed that death in this world would be succeeded by rebirth in another better and spiritual world. Self–sacrifice is here expressed as a means of transporting oneself to a "higher plane", much like the Aztec sacrificial victim was transported to the heaven of the sun god. But underlying this is really a call for spiritual renewal, namely to arrive at a higher

plane of consciousness.

What does it mean when Western teenagers are practicing self-mutilation? Young men and women are cutting themselves, using razor blades or knives to wound their limbs and bodies. Eliade notes that “patterns of initiation still survive, although markedly desacralized, in the modern world” (Eliade, p.188). By damaging themselves, it seems, they aim to destroy the natural wholeness of childhood, relieving themselves of the anxiety that goes together with a consciousness not yet amputated off its mother, namely the unconscious. As in the Tezcatlipoca sacrifice, an uncontrolled passion must be curbed. In order to conform to the monotony of social and societal life, it is necessary to cast off the ambivalency of primary wholeness[1]. The impression of a young woman’s wholeness is wrecked when she puts an ugly tattoo on her beautiful skin—it’s like knocking out a tooth.

Comparatively, in order for the Malawian businessman to be prosperous, he must entertain an hard-working attitude of one-sidedness and directionality, and avoid running off in the tangential direction, something very characteristic of aboriginal mentality. So he cuts off a limb, i.e. a member of the family. The horror of this transgression against the natural Law of primary wholeness is what generates temporary *ego wholeness* and temporary ego godlikeness. He need not follow the natural law of wholeness of life, but can devote time to the monotonous work in his business. The transgression of the ego means that it is temporarily liberated from the natural law. The vitality which the weak ego tends to lose at every occasion of misstep or failure is regained when sin is transferred to the victim. The transgressor is appeased and may continue his work without undergoing a regression to a natural level of life.

### **Collective identification**

With young persons, and citizens of backward cultures, identification with collective consciousness is often a necessary evil. The person who lacks an individual consciousness must instead have recourse to a collective consciousness, similar to the Aztecs:

There was no room for the deviant philosopher in the custom of the Aztecs, or in any of the nations in Central America. It was essential that all worshippers conformed entirely to the official beliefs. Even those individuals who were at the very peak of society might propound important doctrines which favoured one god or another, but it was unheard of that they should deny the system. There was no harsh materialist to ‘pervert’ the youth of the nation like Socrates in Greek culture, and no great teacher to denigrate the gods as did Plato.  
(Burland, p.107)

There is a connection between a low level of consciousness and the sacrificial motive. If personal consciousness is weak, then it must be sustained by sacrifice, on lines of the flagellants. If collective consciousness is faltering, and lacks a true power of conviction, then it is sustained by institutionalized sacrifice, pogroms and warfare. What characterizes a weak conscious function and a feeble ego is that it cannot be questioned, since that is experienced as a dangerous threat. Totalitarianism,

fundamentalism, and the amazingly strong force of political correctness, have all the defensive collective ego as underlying factor.

The sacrifice is a transgression against the original law of wholeness. In the manner of vicarious suffering, and the transference of sin, the ego is cut off from the imperfections of wholeness. By identifying with others and transferring one's own suffering onto them, accompanied by an act of victimization, one has built a defensive pattern that relieves the tension for a while. What is implied by the term sin? In the vocabulary of the archer, to "sin" is to miss the goal. Shortcomings and imperfections, mistakes and even silliness, all belong to the whole picture of man. C.G. Jung says:

[There] is no light without shadow and no psychic wholeness without imperfection. To round itself out, life calls not for perfection but for completeness; and for this the "thorn in the flesh" is needed, the suffering of defects without which there is no progress and no ascent. (Jung, 1980, para. 208)

Yet only the intelligent modern individual, who is furnished with a strong conscious ego, is capable of maintaining both wholeness and ego directionality at the same time. What Jung professes is not practicable at a low cultural level. Wisdom says that one should beware of perfect people. In order to remain perfect such a person is prone to use his neighbour as a scapegoat. A perfect and narcissistic man happens to tread in a puddle of water. This mistake is a sin which he experiences as insulting to his perfect and controlled ego, and his 'unit status' has been questioned. The stain must now be transferred onto his wife, who is made to suffer from his bad mood. Comparatively, the flagellant's longing to be free of sin evolved into scapegoat psychology and victimization of innocent people.

Pathological self-laceration, as a misguided initiation rite, obtains among youths. What's even more disturbing is the bullying at schools. Instead of lacerating themselves, youths can find a substitute victim. Young people often lack the strength to endure the ambiguity of their own nature when confronted with a diversity of painful and confused experiences. They want to remain in control and to be "cool". Hence they resort to the destructive form of ego emancipation. Arguably, this is the price for living with an infirm "sun god" and indistinct fatherly principle. Since rigid ideologies have proven both ineffectual and evil, an investment in the conscious capacities of the individual would be a much better way of solving the problem. Sadly, psychology and its notion of unconscious motivation is still vastly undervalued.

## **The death drive**

Sigmund Freud's notion of the 'death drive' is explicated in 'Why War?' (1933), and 'Thoughts for the Times on War and Death' (1915), and elsewhere. According to Freud "[the] organism preserves its own life, so to say, by destroying an extraneous one." The portion of the death drive that isn't turned outwards will work destructively inwards. In an alternative reading, the portion of 'sin' that is not transferred to the environment will work destructively on ego wholeness and vitality. Primary wholeness, as opposed to ego wholeness, can keep the individual in fetters due to the undifferentiated state of conscious and unconscious. For this reason, ego



wholeness (i.e. narcissistic wholeness) can only be procreated by severing the bond to the unconscious[2]. Thus, it seems that the crime against the “natural law” is purposeful in that unconscious wholeness is destroyed (cmp. Cain and Abel).

Destructive ego emancipation implies that sin and guilt is cast off, i.e. repressed. The severed limb, or the sacrificial victim, when destroyed, carries sin and guilt with it, since the content becomes unconscious and parted from consciousness. It has a temporary emancipative effect on the weak ego. The narcissistic ego abandons “the Law of original man”, replacing it with his own fanatical doctrine. Hence he becomes free of guilt and acquires a nearly godly stature. The *mafioso* adheres only to the code of honour of his mafia group. From this ego position he can commit a murder without feeling remorse, because he has followed the rules, i.e. the “anti-law” of one-eyed consciousness.

### The Free Spirit movement

We shall see how this came to expression in the medieval *Free Spirit* movement. The heresy of the Free Spirit appeared in the 13th century and survived several centuries. Like the flagellants, they were fond of interrupting church services, impatient of ecclesiastical discipline. There was no afterlife of punishment or reward, and the adepts developed into an élite of amoral supermen. One had only to recognize one’s own divinity and one was resurrected as a Spiritual, a denizen of heaven on earth. To be ignorant of one’s own divinity was the only sin. The rank-and-file of the movement was made up of people who gave an oath of absolute obedience to a member who already had “become God”. In return they received an assurance that they could commit no sin (cf. Cohn, 1962, p.192). Cohn says:

What distinguished the adepts of the Free Spirit from all other medieval sectarians was, precisely, their total amoralism. For them the proof of salvation was to know nothing of conscience or remorse. Innumerable pronouncements of theirs bear witness to this attitude: “He who attributes to himself anything that he does, and does not attribute it all to God, is in ignorance, which is hell” .... “He who recognizes that God does all things in him, he shall not sin. For he must not attribute to himself, but to God, all that he does.”—“A man who has conscience is himself Devil and hell and purgatory, tormenting himself. He who is free in spirit escapes from all these things.” .... “One can be so united with God that whatever one may do one cannot sin.” .... “The free man is quite right to do whatever gives him pleasure.” (Cohn, 1962, p.186f)

Their way to self-deification commenced with various techniques, ranging from self-denial and self-torture to the cultivation of absolute passivity and disinterest. Then, after a training which might last for years, they were transformed. “The Spirit of Freedom or the Free Spirit”, said one adept, “is attained when one is wholly transformed into God.” Sister Catherine calls out to her confessor: “Rejoice with me, I have become God!” “Praise be to God!” he answers. “Now leave all people, withdraw again into your state of oneness, for so you shall remain God.” The woman falls into a deep trance, from which she emerges with the assurance: “I am made eternal in my eternal blessedness. Christ has made me his equal and I can never lose that condition” (cf. Cohn, p.183).

The “state of oneness” attained by Catherine is, in fact, what I have termed ego (egotistic) wholeness. By casting off the unconscious wholeness which binds the adept to the natural ideals of humanity and ‘original sin’, he or she can attain an ego position above and beyond morality. She may even “indulge in sexual promiscuity without ‘original sin’”, as an infamous libertine made clear.

[One] expression of this attitude was [a] promiscuous and mystically coloured eroticism. According to one adept, just as cattle were created for the use of human beings, so women were created to be used by the Brethren of the Free Spirit .... [For] the “subtle in spirit” sexual intercourse cannot under any circumstances be sinful. And it was held that one of the surest marks of “subtle in spirit” was, precisely, the ability to indulge in promiscuity without fear of God or qualms of conscience. Some adepts attributed a transcendental, quasi-mystical value to the sexual act itself, when it was performed by such as they. The “Homines intelligentiae” called the act “the delight of Paradise” and “the acclivity” (which was the term used for the ascent to mystical ecstasy); and the Thuringian ‘Blood Friends’ of 1550 regarded it as a sacrament, which they called “Christerie”. For all alike adultery possessed a symbolic value as an affirmation of emancipation. As the Ranter Clarkson put it, “till acted that so-called sin, thou art not delivered from the power of sin”. (Cohn, p.189)

Evidently the transgression of the law of God was, in fact, regarded an “affirmation” of ego emancipation. Primary wholeness is destroyed to create ego wholeness. Clarkson is explicit in saying that the way of deliverance from sin is to commit the “so-called sin.” The most abominable among transgressions is murder, and therefore it seems the most powerful tool of narcissistic emancipation. This accounts for the prevalence of the blood sacrifice in history. There exists a description, written in mid-fourteenth century, of a Beguine reciting her catechism to the heretical Beghard who is her spiritual director.

“When a man has truly reached the great and high knowledge”, she says, “he is no longer bound to observe any law or any command, for he has become one with God. God created all things to serve such a person, and all that God ever created is the property of such a man .... He shall take from all creatures as much as his nature desires and craves, and shall have no scruples of conscience about it, for all created things are his property .... A man whom all heaven serves, all people and creatures are indeed obliged to serve and to obey; and if any disobeys, it alone is guilty” (Cohn, 1962, p.188).

The practise of ritual nakedness and sexual promiscuity implied, according to one inquisitor, that they believed to be restored to the state of innocence which had existed before the Fall (cf. Cohn, p.191). Fraudulence, theft, robbery with violence were all warranted. John of Brünn confided having committed them all and said that they were normal among some two hundred Beghards of his fellowship. Should anybody die in the struggle of robbery, that was no matter. There is evidence that these were in fact common practices among the Brethren of the Free Spirit. “Whatever

the eye sees and covets, let the hand grasp it”, was one of their maxims. This attitude persisted right down to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (cf. Cohn, p.194).

### The primal transgression

We can better understand, then, why ego perfection is always connected with the most obnoxious side of the human soul. The fanatic, the fundamentalist, or the terrorist, upholds ideals of perfection, cleanliness, and obedience to the rules of *collective consciousness* (literalism, ideologism, etc). Yet at the same time he endorses the most horrid form of criminality in the victimization of the innocent. Tezcatlipoca, or the devil, is the dark side of ego wholeness. A modern example is the apocalyptic sect, Aum Shinrikyo, which in 1995 released deadly nerve gas in the Tokyo subway. The movement adhered to a similar principle of moral disengagement.

To administer *poa*, one required what was called in Aum “a sacred carefree mind,” a particularly radical form of Buddhist nonattachment. In Aum practice, it meant an absolute separation from any concern about the outside world and an equally absolute focus on carrying out the will of the guru. In effect, the sacred carefree mind was a form of psychic numbing in which one freed oneself, joyfully, from all moral restraint. As one close observer explained, ‘It meant caring nothing if you harm me or if I harm you.’ In Aum, the “if I harm you” was the more significant part of this spiritual equation, one of the many ways in which disciples came to withdraw their empathy from the world outside themselves. (Lifton, 1999, p.67)

In 1994, the guru said in a sermon: “So we must kill as soon as possible those opposed to the supreme truth.” This is the well-known formula of blood sacrifice as a way of upholding collective consciousness. It originates as a defense against the fear of an overwhelming unconscious. Accordingly, Lifton explains that “[the] psychological point here is that the guru’s murderous paranoia covered over his terror of personal annihilation” (ibid. p.68). The language of the Beguine Catherine, above, is still employed in Christian congregations of a more fundamentalist hue. The unredeemed person, having lived in sin, is in one stroke transformed into “oneness” with Christ, and becomes a shinningly new person. Again, this conversion relies on total adherence to the doctrines of collective consciousness, i.e. to yield fully to the will of the congregation and the letter of the bible.

As always, sin is in one stroke sloughed off and the person becomes shinningly clean. But the oneness attained represents only *ego wholeness*. It is achieved by severing the wholeness of personality, by denying parts of the self which keep personality tied to the unconscious wholeness of life. The destructive method of ego emancipation will generate psychic energy. It has temporary redeeming qualities, especially if it regards an alcoholic, for instance. But this is not what St Paul meant. Paul is concerned about knowledge (consciousness) of sin, and about carrying moral pain, amounting to a crucifixion of the soul. He does not speak about quick fixes.

In the rite of passage (see ‘Rites of passage’ above), the aborigine concedes to the rules of collective consciousness being taught to him during initiation. The imparted

knowledge involves a transgression of the former law of wholeness. He leaves the primary state of wholeness behind and becomes a “criminal” of sorts. (This is not in the sense of a terrorist, of course, but there are psychological parallels.) He must be capable of cruelly killing an animal during the hunt, and his fellow human being in war. The following is the Australian aborigine story named The Southern Cross, shortened by me:

[The] first humans, two men and a woman, walked the earth. They ate only plants. But one day during a famine, one of the men broke the rules of Baiame, the sky king, and killed a kangaroo rat. The woman ate of it, but the other man would not eat though he was famished for food. Weak as he was he walked angrily away towards the sunset, while the other two still ate hungrily. He continued to walk until he fell down dead under a white gum tree. The death spirit Yowi, a black figure with huge fiery eyes, appeared and dropped the man into the hollow centre of the tree. Then was heard a terrific burst of thunder and the gum tree lifted from the earth towards the southern sky where it planted itself where the Southern Cross is now seen. Two of the shining stars are the eyes of the death spirit, and the other two are the eyes of the first man to die. When all nature realized that the passing of this man meant that death had come into the world, there was wailing everywhere. So is the first coming of death remembered by the tribes, to whom the Southern Cross is a reminder. (cf. Langloh Parker, 1973, p.9f)

The cross is the symbol of the *original man* who is faithful to God. The conquistadors were surprised to find that it is the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, too. His sacrifice coincides with the disobedient act which creates ego emancipation in its pristine form. With disobedience comes death into the world. But original man, the god-man, is also the future ideal of psychic economy. He is the once and future king, the prototype of a new form of consciousness.

### **The narcissistic cycle**

It appears as if the ego frees itself by breaching the Law. The ego has thereby prepared its own fall, and will again fall prey to the unconscious. The directivity created, and the restored ego powers, will in the end lead him into greed and sexual indulgence, to become much like the Brethren of the Free Spirit. The foremost characteristic of the ego is its insatiability. It grows into a voracious monster, and personality again risks dissolution in licentiousness. It is reminiscent of the well-known story of the successful man who has managed to acquire a fortune by hard work. Now he is going to enjoy life. He sets about squandering his life by splitting up his personality on diverse amusements that lead nowhere. Then he proceeds to beat up his wife. The Malawian businessman succeeds in becoming rich, but then he can afford to be self-indulgent and satisfy all his needs. Comparatively, Oedipus is to be understood as a tendency in the psyche to acquire consciousness by the heroic sacrifice of unconscious (divine) wholeness. The hero sacrificed his father, in a sense, and went on to rescue Thebes whose people was haunted by the Sphinx. But then he unwittingly married his own mother. Oedipus is then back at his own beginnings. So the Sphinx got the better of him, after all. Jocasta sacrifices herself and Oedipus puts out his eyes.

Psychoanalytic authors have thoroughly researched motives of victimization, self-laceration and idealization in the narcissistic (NPD) patient (vid. Kernberg, et al.). Pathological narcissism implies that a man might, for instance, treat his spouse as a princess, and then turn to victimizing her (vid. Forward & Torres, 1986). The first phase relates to the symbiotic condition of identification. It will strengthen the effect of the sacrificial act, as in the Tezcatlipoca festival. Without identification the subject would suffer no real loss, and the psychological reward of self-sacrifice is not forthcoming. The idealizing form of identification corresponds to the Oedipal symbiosis with the Mother. Such immoral relationships employ the well-known patterns of vicarious suffering and projective identification, themes that run in circles by way of a repeated idealization and destruction. In the above example from the Tezcatlipoca festival the sacrificial victim was being idealized. With the reservation that these phenomena are far from identical, certain religious sacrificial acts seem to institute a form of narcissistic victimization. From a psychoanalytic point of view it seems like the well-known patterns in the interpersonal domain repeat themselves on a collective level. Pagan religion places the transformative mystery in a cosmographical context (see also my discussion below, 'The metaphysics of destruction', [here](#)).

## **Ego wholeness**

I have argued that the solution of ego wholeness is self-defeating, and that's why the sacrifice must be repeated anew. The liberation of power of consciousness accomplished by the Aztecs explains their rapid rise, from very humble origins, to immense power. But their greed and grandiose delusions precipitated their downfall, something which they tried to delay by repeated rituals of blood sacrifice. Ego wholeness implies either unconscious or conscious identity with God, as exemplified in the Free Spirit movement. It means that the members have a collective ego, strongly identified with group consciousness. Psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott, uses the term 'unit personality' for the same condition. I maintain that it is an abnormal ego, a pathological merger of ego and Self (i.e. the psychic wholeness), from which stems the typical grandiose delusions (vid. Winther, 2003, [here](#)).

One cannot make the psychic wholeness conscious and anchor it in ego consciousness. In that case, the abnormal ego would harbour opposites that really should be located in the unconscious wholeness of personality. The individual is then forced to transfer the internal conflict upon others, and to sacrifice the very people he has identified with. Winnicott, almost like an Aztec priest, upholds the unit personality as an ideal. In order to attain unit status the symbiotic subject-object relation must be broken by way of destruction of the object, when hatred is experienced. The process is cyclical. On a theoretical level, he creates the same programme of sacrifice to strengthen the weak ego as did the Aztec priest, although the latter performed on a collective scale whereas Winnicott functions in the analytic setting (vid. Winnicott, 1999 and elsewhere).

I contend that Tezcatlipoca, the god of destruction, is the god of ego wholeness, or the unit personality. He demands human sacrifice and thereby violates the founding civilizational law of Quetzalcoatl ("Feathered Serpent"). Thus he maintains ego power in a form which is wholly identified with collective consciousness. Tezcatlipoca, very

fittingly, is a one-legged god. The leg was sacrificed in the jaws of the Earth Monster (the unconscious) whose back never again sunk back into the water, and on which all the tribes of men now live (cf. Burland, 1980, p.55f). In the Tezcatlipoca myth is demonstrated how the sacrifice of a limb will conquer the unconscious and acquire conscious territory. Thus Tezcatlipoca is a cripple, since he has forfeited original unconscious wholeness.

### **Mental amputation and physical**

Interestingly, there exists a much debated personality disorder which involves an obsessive desire for limb amputation, one that drives people to cut off healthy arms and legs, and sometimes even both legs. It is called apotemnophilia or body integrity identity disorder. It involves an amputation fetishism and frequently an erotic target preference for amputees. Alternatively, the person pretends to be an amputee, i.e. is using wheelchairs or crutches. The most common wish is to amputate the left leg above the knee, the least common is a finger or toe (cmp. 'Rites of passage') (cf. Marantz Henig, 2005, and elsewhere). The "Tezcatlipoca syndrome" would be a fitting name for this disease. The afflicted person is eager to follow the example of Tezcatlipoca, where the wholeness of natural man is ritually destroyed in an attempt to discard sin and acquire conscious territory. The underlying motive would correspond to the rite of passage, above. I am not saying that this wholly explains the disorder, but the symbol of leg amputation carries such associations.

What is signified is really the "mental amputation" occurring in people when they forfeit wholeness and consciousness of sin, and when they repress their own pain and unsuitable sides of personality. Arguably, pathological self-laceration and amputation disorder would occur when the person is incapable of achieving a "mental amputation", as it were. At the same time, culture, on both a social and societal plane, would expect of the individual a streetwise worldliness and directionality, so typical of the one-sided and narcissistic ideal. A person in this predicament, who is not capable of harming others, might harm himself instead, following the principle of Freud's death drive.

As a representative of the ideal among pagan Germanic tribes, the war god Wotan (Odin) sacrificed his eye. Regardless of the mythological differences, it mirrors the achievement of Tezcatlipoca. The sacrificial act to bring about one-eyedness is performed in order to confer conscious directionality and ego power on humanity. Crippled gods, whether one-legged or one-eyed, probably represent the ideal of ego wholeness. The ideal is the riddance of sin, because this is the enemy of ego wholeness. Powerful as it is, it is not true wholeness achieved. From a bad painting one can cut out the part which is good, but to do the same operation in the psyche is quite a different thing. It is a crippled psyche, although swift and capable in its limited range. Overestimating himself, to the border of megalomania, the 'unit personality' refuses to see his own crippled nature. Due to the repressed contents the unconscious has a higher potentiality, and the ego must needs create a bulwark against the unconscious by blowing itself up.

By the formula of sin transference, deliverance from sin is achieved by making the very transgression that has caused the moral pain. In a marriage a woman so disposed can temporarily rid herself of the pain caused by her husbands extramarital

affair by taking part in the same sinful experience. A person whose asset has been stolen can steal something from a third party, thus transferring sin to this person. Similarly, if grief is caused by someone's death, then obtains an impetus to violate and kill a preferably innocent person. Accordingly, rape and murder, ever so topical, was institutionalized as a holy sacrificial act among the Pawnees (cf. Frazer, ch. XLVII.§3) and among the Vikings. In both cases a girl would walk from tent to tent and have sexual intercourse with the men. In case of the Vikings six men would thereafter violate her jointly. After this ordeal she was brutally sacrificed (vid. Ibn Fadlan).

Arguably, in a multi-faceted and multicultural society, especially the young individual is under great strain, since it is not easy to be "slick" among a multitude of lifestyles, social mores and customs. Any person will be a misfit in a multifarious and multicultural society. Awkwardness is a sin which the weak ego cannot bear with. But unfitting sides of personality can be sloughed off. Hence, archaic motives are activated, such as "cutting off the left leg", and to dispose of it. The most extreme reaction is the victimization of innocents in the terrorist deed. In Sweden today it has become customary among people in immigrant housing areas to attack and maul the ambulance personnel, or firemen, coming to salvage the residents' relatives and friends. The authorities have started investigations into this wholly irrational behaviour, as usual disregarding the archaic motives.

### **The precious substance of life**

Historians are clueless as to the causes of World War I, aside from the commonplace notions of "glory and honour". I have proposed that the killing industry served the purpose of extracting the precious substances of consciousness and lifeblood from the young men. If the substances of consciousness and health and youth are withdrawn from millions of people, then the same substances must finally befall the remaining people, hence promoting the conscious life-principle of the living. In the theologies of ancient Central America, the lifeblood of the sacrificial victims went back to the gods. This served as a payback for the life-principle of consciousness which the gods had generously granted humanity. But the replenished abundance of this substance gave the gods the opportunity to distribute it again over the world. The human sacrifices kept the sun on its route, and thus the daylight principle of consciousness was being consolidated. The young men sacrificed in WWI ensured that the sun would rise again.

The incentive to a redistribution of the life-substance is the imminent threat posed by the unconscious against the conscious system. The healthy ego system depends on a relative differentiation from collective identity. But in crowded social circumstances where people live on top of each other, and where there is not much psychological space for the individual, people show a tendency to regress into collective identity. Thus, the unconscious is surreptitiously given the upper hand, something which gives rise to a subjectively experienced anxiety of annihilation. The archaic remedy against this is to annihilate the other, steal the victim's lifeblood, generating a magical increase of one's own conscious power against an encroaching unconscious. Archaisms of this sort is what causes bullying at schools and workplaces. It is also what underlies fundamentalist ideology. As soon as people begin to lose their individual identity and instead fall back on the collective, the

pattern of the murder of the innocent, and the motif of stealing their power of independency, flares up in the thoughtways of the collective. The shining substance of gold is especially suitable as a symbol of this precious asset of the living soul. That's why it is deemed necessary to steal the victims' gold and belongings, and preferably to place the sufferers in concentration camps (cmp. Martin Luther and his polemics against the Jews).

The argument builds on the idea that very similar archaic complexes are at work in the unconscious. Obviously, the grounds for the massive bloodshed aren't exactly the same in Aztec civilization as in WWI. There are factors of politics and economy involved, conscious notions of ideology, and also the collective form of inferiority complex. The last is not least significant. My argument builds on the deepest and most archaic aspect of the blood sacrifice. Without this foundational motif the incentive for massive bloodshed would be lacking. Intellectual ideological motives, alone, aren't capable of making people throw away all concern for human life, including their own. There can exist problems in society and in individuals which actuate the solution of victimization. This calls up the monster, which in the Mezoamerican religions was the man-eating earth god—the dark shadow of humanity.

A recurrent argument, among modern politicians and debaters, is that collective identity serves as a bulwark against destructive tendencies. They want to promote the feeling of identity of the youth with their own schoolmates, as well as their countrymen of all races. This will temporarily ensure unity in the neighbourhood. However, it also amplifies collective identity. Accordingly, we are only paving the way for the very evil that we intend to remedy. Comparatively, among North American Indians, young men were obliged to go away into the wilderness and live alone for a time. This represented an initiation into adulthood, when the old identity of adolescence is cast off. The evils that threatened society could be met by the shedding of a youthful collective identity. But in the crowded civilization of Central America this method was no longer available. At a Stone Age cultural level men were destined to fall prey to the utmost evil; the institutionalization of war, torture, and blood sacrifice.

Although many a modern citizen has acquired a strong and self-governed personality, the mass-societies of the Western world are facing the same problem of regression into collective identity. The dark shadow of mankind can overhaul civilization again. I hold that the reinforcement of individual psychology is the only defence. Individuation is the answer. Young people should learn to withdraw into loneliness, and they must be allowed space for this. For a young person, a time in isolation, when he must fend for himself, is equally beneficent today as it was for the American Indian.

### **Beyond legalism and sacrifice**

Quetzalcoatl, founder of culture and the once and future king, represents primary wholeness but also the advanced phase of the strong ego destined to supersede Tezcatlipoca and the reign of the 'unit personality'. The modern psychological notion of 'ego strength' implies "integrity to be confused", that is, a capacity to endure conflict and pain in consciousness without risk of dissolution and regression. The



human being, while becoming a true individual, acquires the capacity to live in two worlds, the inner and the outer. The true individual will always find resort in an inner world when he cannot fully cope with the outer. So he has found an inner space that is a place of refuge (cf. Winther, 2003, [here](#) & 2006, [here](#)).

The struggle of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca is comparable to the struggle of Christ and Satan. St Paul explains that, as individuals, we may pass on to a superior psychic economy beyond both legalism and the economy of sacrifice. Paul says, “[By] the law is the knowledge of sin” [and] “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 3:20 & 6:23). By the realization of sin the old personality dies and new life is born. Jesus says, “Come, take up the cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21). This implies the capacity to carry one’s sins and inner conflicts with the aid of the new form of wholeness personified by Christ, without risk of dissolution and regression. The old way of sacrifice is obsolete, for as Paul says, “At God’s willing, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all” (Heb. 10:10).

Accordingly, Tezcatlipoca represents destructive ego emancipation whereas the latter Quetzalcoatl personifies constructive emancipation. In other terms, it has already been intellectually formulated by St Paul. The problem of ego wholeness is very topical in today’s world. It corresponds to the fundamentalist sense of perfection and wholeness, predicated on the individual’s identification with group consciousness, and the transference of sin. In Western society of today, it appears as if sexuality doesn’t pose a moral problem anymore, an attitude frighteningly similar to the Brethren of the Free Spirit. Against this, following St Paul, the strong individual is prepared to carry sin instead of transferring it to others. This includes ‘original sin’, and what is regarded as transgressions according to our inner human nature.

The enlightened individual has the capacity to carry moral pain. In this, he leaves the psychology of sacrifice and collective identification behind. He can shoulder personal failures by always relating to the wholeness of personality, without attempting to repress personal sides which are dark, weak, or unsuitable. However, as is depicted in the aboriginal story of the Southern Cross, the man who refuses to commit the transgression walks towards his death on the tree. The wages of sin is death. This implies, as St Paul explains, a rebirth in the spirit: “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me...” (Gal 02:19–20).

The strong ego is capable of carrying the suffering linked with a true wholeness of personality. It is another form of wholeness radically different from notions of ego purity and the egotistic form of wholeness. Instead, it builds on the individual’s relation to the unconscious. The individual realizes the double nature of his own mind, that he is both ego and psychic wholeness, and that the Christ lives inside him. When he refuses to cede with sin he allows the old personality to go under. In carrying the sin transferred to him by other people, he is crucified with Christ.

Woe to you when all people speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. But I say to you who are listening, love your enemies, treat well the ones hating you, bless the ones cursing you, pray for the ones insulting you. To the one striking you on the cheek, offer the other cheek also. And the person taking your cloak do not prevent him from

taking your coat as well. (Luke 06:26–29)

In terms of Paul, personality will conquer spiritual death and acquire a new vitality whose wellspring is a wholeness of a new kind. In the realization of sanctity *here and now* the split between outer and inner worlds are overcome, "...for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). The split between subject and external world is painfully obvious in the narcissistic personality of modern society. He always keeps looking over his shoulder, frightened of his own shadow. This is what lies behind overcompensations in the form of collectivistic political and religious ideals of the symbiotic kind, where "otherness" is simply removed. According to this ideal, only one single overblown ego should remain, which is common to all. It is the inferior solution of Tezcatlipoca, which Quetzalcoatl swore to destroy and supersede.

## Conclusion

In the sacrifice, the natural wholeness of man is repressed and collective consciousness reinforced, directionality and one-sidedness amplified. The blood sacrifice could be viewed as an ever recurrent rite of passage, the severing of limbs from the body of the collective. It is demonstrated that the individual has not much value compared to the spirit of the collective. The victim is fitted into the role of that particular portion of unconscious wholeness suitable for sacrifice, i.e. the part which must be cut away to create ego perfection. Victimization and bullying (also at workplaces and in school) means that *the transgressor's unconscious suffering is transferred to the victim*. The inability, on part of the weak ego, to sustain a moral conflict, leads to the repression of any painful moral issue, including personal failures and weaknesses. As anything unconscious is invariably projected, the theme of vicarious suffering will immediately surface. The combination of a complex—and therefore conflicted—society with an insufficient individual capacity of consciousness, gives rise to the theme of human sacrifice, whether it takes the form of the blood sacrifice or the terrorist deed.

Yet, the victim also represents a god. The acts of deicide and ritual cannibalism symbolically represent the integration of an unconscious content with consciousness. It points at an inner urge of conscious expansion. But a drive toward individual consciousness is a disruptive power which is being placated when the motif of integration is ritually manifested, rather than experienced in the individual psyche, something which would pave the way for an individual personality proper. Thus the stability of an unconscious lifestyle is maintained. The blood sacrifice represents two complementary perspectives: firstly, it is a perspective from the unconscious, as if viewed from the eyes of the god. Secondly, it derives its significance from the conscious perspective, i.e. the way in which it represents a sacrifice of unconscious wholeness. It is as if the unconscious archetype, when undergoing integration with consciousness, experiences death. However, from the conscious perspective, new life is born. When the Mayan maize god dies, the plant of maize is also brought into the world.

The mythic concept of killing as a recreative instrument to gain new life remains influential to this day. The notorious suicide sects, such as The Heaven's Gate, resort to the same destructive theology. This phenomenon, and many other aspects of the complex issue of the blood sacrifice, have only been cursorily discussed in this essay.

It seems that the Christian concept is very clever in that the feast of Corpus Christi has superimposed upon the gross concretism of blood sacrifice and cannibalism[3]. When the unconscious holds sway the anthropophagous sacrificial motive always surfaces. The underlying motive of terrorism is plainly to kill people, as it gives "glory to God". Alternatively, it follows any idolatrous conviction, such as nationalism. This is a function of the unconscious having gained ascendancy.

I hold that modern man's capacity for individual consciousness can put an end to the vicious circle of victimization. Unlike historical mankind he can stand in a personal relation to the unconscious. But the notion of the unconscious and its ramifications in all human life, including world politics, is being repressed (sacrificed), since it is experienced as a threat to the sun god of the collective. Should the individual learn that he is larger than himself, and extends far beyond the borders of his conscious personality, then the blood sacrifice will lose its impetus. The experience, although vague, of self as larger than everyday personality, has a wholesome effect, because this is what produces individual consciousness. The danger of collective identification is lessened or eliminated, and personality will be able to carry much more of suffering and personal failures, without passing the burden onto others.



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## Notes

1. When discussing *primary wholeness*, I do not simply adhere to a "biological" explanation. I believe that mankind in its pristine condition is equally spiritual as instinctual, although the sacred and the profane are very much amalgamated on a primitive level of culture.
  2. Much has been written about "splitting" in the Freudian and Kleinian sense, but then it typically regards splitting and repression of ego contents. It can also refer to *internal objects*, however, when they are attributed to objects in the environment. But I want to steer clear of the theoretical pother in this paper.
  3. "South Korea finds smuggled capsules contain human flesh" (The Daily Telegraph, [here](#)). There is a difference between cannibalizing your neighbours and ingesting the eucharistic bread, but at the archaic level of the unconscious this isn't experienced as essentially different. From an unconscious frame of reference, those capsules containing human flesh is the flesh of the Christchild. That's why some people think it has wholesome properties, capable of relieving people of sin, thus curing illness.
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## Addendum

### Thanatos

In examining the Aztec culture of violence, it seems logical to think of this as culture doing violence to natural, biological man. However, we have found that this is exactly what the aboriginals adhere to, when victimizing themselves in the rite of passage. It seems that man is “dismembering” himself in an attempt to reshape his own original nature; in Eliade’s words, to “abolish natural humanity.” The phenomenon has its counterpart in the man who suffers from amputation disorder and who cuts off his left leg. People damage themselves by cutting away something that belongs to their unconscious wholeness, thus acquiring conscious power in exchange. I have argued that this is a primitive means of effectuating the formation of ego consciousness.

People are doing this to themselves. But why is violence there in the first place (psychological or physical), and why does it grow out of hand time after time? When violence is institutionalized, then we can say, along with Freud, that culture and natural man are antagonists, especially when discussing the Aztecs, the Soviets, Mao’s China, etc. But what would happen if we removed this overlay of culture? The answer is that the punitive behaviour would soon begin anew, and people would sacrifice blood, cut scars, cut off fingertips, knock out teeth, and organize ourselves in antagonistic clans. Violence belongs in the human psyche from times immemorial. It’s the mark of Cain. Only the true individual can conquer this state of being, and leave behind the economy of blood sacrifice.

When investigating “natural impulses” in primitive man, we invariably discover themes of self-laceration and blood sacrifice. Clearly, then, it is an implausible argument that the incentive is imparted to him from culture. One gets the impression that the wholeness of natural man is sacrificed in the interests of culture. Perhaps this is true, but is this culture really situated *outside* man? It appears as if the primary wholeness of man is sacrificed in the interest of man himself. The aboriginal mythic ‘man of sorrows’, ([here](#)), who wanders away and dies, must be understood as the personification of the primordial and unconscious psychic wholeness that must suffer death as a result of the primal transgression. Mankind thus loses his innocence (cmp. ‘Tezcatlipoca festival’, [here](#)).

The disturbed man cuts off his left leg in a ritual attempt at destroying original wholeness, an act that serves to disengage the ego from Mother Nature. The argument that this act is predicated on instinct, that is, Freud’s death drive, is overly simplistic. Rather, the act depends on an autonomous archetypal formulation that constellates in the unconscious. In fact, the blood sacrifice is an integral part of the Oedipus story, as Oedipus kills his own father Laius—the old king of Thebes. In the sacred kingdom the patricide was institutionalized as a ritual (vid. Frazer, 1922). The old king was sacrificed and a young and healthy king superceded him. The patricide must precede Oedipus’s kingship. The haunting unconscious, in the form of the Sphinx, can only be overcome by a sacrifice of the old king (the old wholeness). Thus, the Oedipus narrative is also relevant to a psychic economy of sacrifice.

In the paradisaical myth, and in 'The Southern Cross' story ([here](#)), the principle of death (Thanatos) arrives in the world at the very moment when the ego breaks loose from original wholeness. It is portrayed as a criminal act, in itself. A culture of criminality, the mark of Cain on our foreheads, is deep-seated in our nature. The process of destruction starts from inside, and then things go out of hand—but why? Is it due to a culture that fails to relate to the wholeness of man? Or is it when culture acquires a level of complexity and puts demands on the individual that he cannot cope with? I have argued that the Christian myth cannot be circumvented, nor what is related by St Paul. It regards the quest for the psychic totality of the individual. Only the individual is capable of making the transformation; to return to true wholeness. Thus, it is necessary to relinquish the belief that society and culture can take us back to the paradisaical condition. There is no ideal condition in culture. The heavenly Jerusalem is symbolic. It represents the time-transcendent ideal of the Self as psychic totality.

When the first humans disobeyed God it resulted in the breaking free of the ego, and thus death came into the world. At this occasion all the existence wailed. Since Thanatos (the "death drive") is involved in ego formation it constitutes an inner factor that obtains only in humans. The reason why Freud could not discover a death instinct on the animal level is, arguably, because animals do not acquire an ego (vid. Freud, 1920). Thanatos has a biological foundation in so far as we are prepared for ego formation. Nevertheless, it is a factor that prevails in adult life and in culture, and causes destruction on a massive scale. It is not the case of a biological drive that wreaks havoc. Thanatos has become an autonomous force and an end in itself.

The appearance of Thanatos in myth cannot be reduced to "knowledge of death" including the *angst* it produces, although this certainly carries a degree of relevance. When the "black figure with huge fiery eyes" enters worldly existence, it means that the principle of destruction has become autonomous, and acquired an agenda of its own. Prior to this it was part of the wholeness of life. It was fit into the natural system of life and never made havoc in the earth's cycle of life and death. At the first transgression against Baïame, the sky king, the ego started to break free, and in this process the *Spirit of Death* made his entry. That's why all the trees and all the animals lamented because now they knew that they would become sacrificial victims to the death spirit. The ego in its relentless quest of proving itself would exterminate the majority of the big land animals. On the Australian continent many big marsupials, like the giant kangaroo, would soon become extinct. The trees lamented because the aborigines would burn off most of the woodland and the shrub land.

Earlier it was not clear whether this mass-extinction of mammoths, etc., depended on climate changes or human pursuit. Today we know that the human race is the main culprit. In the era of hunter-gatherers, mass-extinction of living beings became the order of the day. Thanatos had come into the world, and the bigger the animals the better it was, and the prouder the newly emancipated ego felt. It is a tragedy and a crime of monumental proportions. It is so vast that researchers earlier found it hard to believe that humans alone could have caused this. When the Spirit of Death enters existence, it means that Thanatos is become an autonomous force and an end in itself. This continues to this day, in the form of meaningless wars (what was the WWI really all about?), mass murder, ethnic cleansing, holocaust, overfishing, deforestation, followed by extermination of thousands of species. Most conspicuous of all is the violence we do to ourselves and our peers (cf. Davis, 2001, [here](#) and

here).

Yowi, the Spirit of Death and Destruction, is a force that exists among us today, ever demanding blood sacrifice. Thanatos is the generic name for the dialectics involved in the psychology of destructivity. It signifies a certain psychological dynamic, involving the interrelations between individual and the world. It could be understood as having a psychic function, a meaning of its own, largely explainable (but not wholly, of course) within the psychological framework. The psychology of death and destruction is one of the most formidable of all the forces on earth. It seems to have emerged with the advent of modern mankind, sometime during the hunter-gatherer epoch.

### **The metaphysics of destruction**

When Montezuma, king of the Aztec, was asked, “why he had suffered the republic of Tlaxcala to maintain her independence on his borders”, he replied, “that she might furnish him with victims for his gods!” (cf. Prescott, 1974, p.59). In the ceaseless wars between the two states, prisoners were taken on both sides that the angry gods may be pacified. The Tlaxcalans were later to join the Spanish campaign under Cortez. How does the mutual consent to war and victimization, in the Tenochtitlan–Tlaxcalan relation, reflect on the modern Israeli–Palestinian conflict? Is there a genuine wish for peace among the two peoples? I suggest that, underlying the conflict, lurks the same archaic thinking that became institutionalized in the Mesoamerican civilizations. The status quo of mutual victimization and scapegoating fulfils the archaic need of transferring and abolishing one’s own sins. Thus, suffering is imparted to the other party, so that one may oneself be delivered from suffering.

The primitive way of thought implies that suffering, life and death, happiness and beauty, are substantive in a metaphysical sense. In a manner which is hard for present-day people to grasp, the Pythagoreans thought of numbers as metaphysical entities, i.e. as “4-things” and “5-things”, etc. In the Mayan civilization the numbers were regarded as divine entities, i.e. as gods. Archaic logic says that if the “one” has shown up repeatedly in the latest dice throws, then the risk of throwing a “six” is greater. The “one” has fulfilled its quota and this particular number god is appeased. (However, if it has only shown up once, then one could suppose that the “number one” god is still present, because his appetite has been whetted). Correspondingly, if another person is subjected to suffering and death, then the risk of “me” coming to harm is lessened. The death god has been appeased, for today. Those who think that such archaisms have no place in modern society, should make a visit to a casino.

By the theology and rituals of destruction the Aztec kept the world alive, making sure that the sun would rise in the next morning. In fulfilling the quota of destruction, they made certain that destruction would not strike uncontrollably in the cosmos and in the Aztec kingdom. The Aztec state could be perpetuated this way, underpinned by the bones of sacrificial victims. By the efforts of sacrificial priests the forces of destruction were kept in control. The way in which people, still today, tend to gather around a gruesome and bloody scene, when an accident has occurred, depends on an unconscious cruel god that must have his fill. Arguably, in the Israeli and the Palestinian collective unconscious, an archaic thinking subsists according to which the state must be replenished and invigorated by sacrifice, much like the Aztec

temples were built over mass graves, and inaugurated by blood sacrifice. There is no genuine wish for peace because, similar to the Tenochtitlan–Tlaxcalan relation, the state can only be maintained, and its glory in the future can only be attained, by way of fulfilling the quota of suffering and destruction.

The Israeli state could not get along without the Palestinians. The latter are bound to impersonate the losers that throw a “one” so that the Israelis may throw a “six”. Psychologically, the Palestinians could not bear life without the Jews, thanks to whom they can transfer their own faults, incompetence, corruption and shortcomings. A people living in collective identification, which allows no real sense of personal responsibility, is dependent on a nation of scapegoats. The archaic unconscious rules in the Middle East. Peace initiatives are futile, because the parties lack a genuine wish to make peace. That’s why it’s necessary to openly admit the underlying unconscious rationale. When the unconscious complex is exposed to conscious light, the mad thoughtway that unconsciously controls the collective is finally contested.

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**See also:**

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