

In hopes of offsetting the heaviness of the articles about evil, and to provide a sample of the creativity written about by Montuori, Purser, and Hale, I have included in this issue a beautiful poem by Dora Teitelboim, in a melodic translation from the Yiddish by Aaron Kramer. A future issue will contain an article about a poetry workshop Aaron conducted for people called "schizophrenic."

Tom Greening

REFERENCE

Keepnews, O. (1957) Jelly Roll Morton. In N. Shapiro & N. Hentoff (Eds.), *The jazz makers* (pp. 3-17). New York: Rinehart.

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THE DAIMONIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALEVOLENT PERSONALITY



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Summary

This paper examines the reluctance of the behavioral sciences to tackle the problem of evil. Whereas each of us as private citizens can attest to the calamitous presence of malevolence in our daily lives, the point of view I take in this paper is that as behavioral scientists most of us have acted as if the problem of evil could be safely ignored or the character structure of the perpetrators of heinous actions could be reduced to known and well-understood psychiatric disorders. This psychological denial and reductionism have not well served our mandate to provide meaningful explanations and solutions of social problems for the public. If the behavioral sciences are to have a relevant role in contemporary society, the problem of evil—perhaps the most important issue humankind has ever faced—must be meaningfully reexamined. This paper serves as an effort in this direction.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This paper was presented at the Eighth Adult Development Conference, Amherst, MA, June 1993, and at a paper session of Division 32 (Division of Humanistic Psychology), American Psychological Association Convention, Toronto, Canada, August 1993. An expansion of the ideas sketched herein may be found in the author's *Speaking With the Devil: A Dialogue With Evil* (forthcoming from Viking/Penguin).

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There are thousands hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the roots.

—Thoreau
(quoted in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts*, 1964)

Evil is but the shadow, that in this world, always accompanies good. You may have a world without shadow, but it is a world without light—a mere dim, twilight world. If you deepen the intensity of the light, you must be content to bring into deeper blackness and more distinct and definite outline, the shadow that accompanies it.

—F. W. Robertson
(quoted in *The New Dictionary of Thoughts*, 1964)

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Rollo May, in responding to Carl Rogers's (1981) claim that evil is not inherent in human nature, indicated that the daimonic urge ("the urge in every being to affirm itself, assert itself, perpetuate and increase itself" [May, 1982, p. 11]) serves as the mainspring of human potentialities. May regards this daimonic force as the source both of constructive and destructive impulses. When the daimonic is effectively integrated into one's personal identity, it serves constructive values and actions. On the other hand, if the daimonic is not harnessed to life-affirming values, destructive behavior is the result.

It is apparent that we live in an age in which there are many individuals for whom the daimonic has been separated from constructive human values. It is difficult to avoid the menacing reach of malevolence. Evil is not merely a pejorative metaphysical concept of historical interest. It is a presence and a destructive force that decisively shapes our lives. Seemingly "senseless" acts of cruelty and destructiveness have become a ubiquitous component of daily life. The rampage of violent crimes perpetrated against people in all segments of American society has become a dominant force in contemporary life. Few people feel safe from menace even in their own homes. Many of our children face real evil every day of their lives. They are frighteningly aware of monsters who have killed their classmates with drugs, guns, clubs, and fists, or with deprivation and abuse.

A recent news story in the *New York Times* (1992, December 29) reported that after 17 years of trying to reform Westley Allen Dodd, the State of Washington executed him. When Dodd was arrested in the fall of 1989, he confessed to stabbing an 11-year-old boy and his 10-year-old brother and to hanging a 4-year-old child after having repeatedly raped him. Dodd said that he killed the children because he enjoyed it and he thought he could get away with it. He said that he knew what he was doing. He admitted that it was wrong and that he would get the death penalty if caught. With that recognition he killed them anyway.

Dodd also indicated that there were few explanatory clues to his heinous behavior in his family background. The usual childhood "explain-all" conditions behavioral scientists employ to account for adult psychopathology were absent. Dodd revealed that he and his siblings were never beaten or molested. They had adequate clothes and food. Dodd did admit that he was raised in a family without love. This, however, does not sufficiently explain his behavior. Yochelson and Samenow (1976) have noted that the world is replete with families without love who do not produce vicious killers.

A NEGLECT OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL BY THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Tragically, the behavioral sciences have been unable to cogently explain the wellsprings of evil. Moreover, their clinical methods have not succeeded in preventing murder and torture by others of Dodd's ilk. Behavioral scientists for the most part have assumed either of two overriding distancing assumptions about the problem: (a) Evil can be safely ignored by behavioral scientists because it is a moral problem and, as such, the province of the theologian rather than a legitimate concern of mental health professionals; (b) there is no such thing as an evil person because the character structure of the perpetrators of heinous actions can be reduced to known and well-understood psychological concepts and psychiatric diagnoses.

OBSTACLES TO A SERIOUS STUDY OF EVIL

A number of theologians, as well as many people who have been victims of atrocities, have, what I call, a *moral objection* to examining evil, because they believe such an examination is futile and



even outright dangerous. Many Holocaust survivors, for example, isolate the events involved and regard them as the products of a social and psychological anomaly. They fear that in studying malevolence we will replace the rectitude of condemnatory moral judgment with the “insights” of psychological explanation. Their concern is expressed in the frequently invoked French aphorism, *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* (to understand all is to forgive all).

The incredible brutality and irrationality of atrocities such as those perpetrated by the Nazis make compelling the argument against understanding. However, as Robert Lifton (1986) has persuasively demonstrated in his study of Nazi doctors involved in the Holocaust, this argument is false and even dangerous. It contains not only fears of being contaminated by evil by studying the subject, but it also has an assumption that the Nazis or any other evildoers of serious magnitude have no relationship to the rest of the world. Those who hold this point of view would prefer to believe that the Nazis were a race of invaders from an alien planet whose visitation we will never again have to host. Unfortunately, this is a reflection of magical thinking.

Evidently, we have not yet sufficiently learned the tragic lessons of the Nazi Holocaust. Large-scale atrocities, such as those in Serbia and Cambodia, continue in virtually every corner of the world to this day. Moreover, many believe that the events in Israel in recent years demonstrate that suffering from evil does not necessarily provide insight into evil.

The danger malevolence imposes can only be intelligently and effectively addressed by confronting it. A moral inquiry into any important problem must include a willingness to take action to resolve it. And responsible action requires recognizing the ways in which we may have contributed to the problem and will continue to do so if we do not explore our own motivation.

On the opposite side of the ledger to the moral objection to a serious study of evil is the “psychological objection.” To alleviate the fear and terror of unsanctioned power, each culture and succeeding generation has tried to explain evil deeds. In our culture, psychiatry, the decoder of the untoward, has offered a plenitude of explanatory theories about malevolence, including childhood trauma and abuse, influences of deviant peers, inadequate parental role-modeling, upbringing by overly strict parents who desperately try to suppress socially unacceptable impulses, and chemical or neurological imbalance. Today we prefer to believe that modern

scientific knowledge, based on empirical studies as well as logical and rational reasoning, has freed us from the need to explain heinous events with a demonological causation. In short, in order to quiet our primitive apprehensions about strange and frightening events, the behavioral sciences have fostered modern psychological theories.

According to Otto Rank (1958), modern psychological theories have attempted to cleanse frightening and mysterious behavioral events of their ominous spiritual and animistic implications by “rationalizing the irrational.” They have addressed the problem of evil by first changing the language with which the problem is discussed. In so doing, Rank claimed, we have discarded moralistic and metaphysical concepts under one name, only to retrieve them under still another. Most importantly, however, “psychological sanitation” limits understanding. The dismal failure of intellectualizing the irrational is evidenced in the application of the various diagnostic labels to Hitler, such as *paranoid schizophrenic*, *manic-depressive*, *borderline personality*, and *criminal psychopath*. Diagnosing Hitler and other evildoers in terms of common clinical syndromes is based on the unreasonable assumption that such people’s heinous crimes are readily explicable by standard and well-understood diagnostic concepts.

The same kind of dysfunctional reasoning preventing the study of evil by behavioral scientists is found in the use of insanity as a legal defense—it devoids vicious and irrational behavior of its evil intent, while at the same time equivocating whether to hold the accused responsible for his or her actions. To call something evil by the name of a standard clinical entity, such as psychosis or insanity, does not meaningfully explain its mystery. It acts only as a temporary measure in reducing evil’s awe and terror. Once the same evil is reenacted, however, we are not in any better position to deal with the malevolence than we were before it was given a clinical label.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO STUDY EVIL

As a private citizen as well as a behavioral scientist, I am deeply concerned about the cruelty and abuse that is a regular part of our society. I am ashamed that my colleagues have largely ignored the most important social problem humankind has ever faced—the problem of evil. Psychological denial and reductionism have not



well served behavioral scientists' mandate to provide meaningful explanations of social problems for the public. An ancient saying tells us: "Those who avert their eyes from evil commit the worst of sins."

Not only are evil deeds an extremely destructive component of the human condition, but no less importantly, the sense of imposing evil in our everyday world demoralizes us—leaving us feeling depressed, pessimistic, and alienated from what is good, hopeful, and worthy in our lives. It leaves us with a chronic sense of overwhelming oppression and an unwillingness to strive for what we believe in and cherish. Moreover, without a deep insight into the crucial influences and dynamics of evil, we cannot fashion viable strategies for efficaciously responding to the malevolent perpetrator or for modifying societal institutions to curb future atrocities.

Examining evil also has inspirational rewards. Fascination with malevolence can be a healthy striving for discovery. It originates from our need to be curious about what we do not understand about ourselves. The study of evil enables us to inquire in the most profound ways what human existence is about—as reflected in such concerns as what are the conditions that make life meaningful or even tolerable. Therefore, studying evil offers us insights into the ways we can pursue constructive, creative, and compassionate human strivings and into what we can do to prevent our fears, limitations, and weaknesses from compelling us to remain in fearful and cloistered lives.

A DEFINITION OF EVIL

Evil involves treating another person without respect for that person's humanity. Operative in malevolent behavior is one or both of two crucial beliefs. The first is a situation in which one creates or accepts the assumption that another person is weak, stupid, incompetent, and so forth and on that basis treats him or her as an object rather than as someone who deserves decency.

The second is a situation in which the perpetrator assumes that because the victim is regarded as dangerous to the physical or psychological safety of the perpetrator, any destructive action taken against the victim is justified. My definition presupposes that the agent of malevolence, such as Westley Dodd, has the

capacity to understand the consequences of his or her actions. Therefore, evil—as I will be using the term—is the deliberate infliction of cruel and painful suffering on another living being.

A comprehensive definition of evil must also include its powerful effect on nonparticipants as well as on those directly involved. Acts of atrocity, such as torture, cruelty, serial and mass murder, defy not only our understanding of what might have caused these events but even our capacity to imagine what might have actually taken place. Committed acts of serious malevolence are singular among human experiences in their commanding effect on people who are not directly involved in the acts or who may not even be present when they occur. Acts of evil invoke discomfort in those who try to understand the causes of these heinous acts. This tension results from the uneasy amalgamation of the curious fascination we have about mysterious power with the feared dangers of its unsanctioned exercise. Evil events engender simultaneous paradoxical responses of both captivating excitement and massive fear.

Finally, the context of possibility in which evil takes place must be included in its definition if its dynamics are to be meaningfully described. Evil is an act that lacks justification because it can be feasibly replaced by more rational, decent, and humane behaviors. For instance, most people agree it is reasonable to protect oneself against an armed attacker, even if one's efforts cause serious harm to the attacker. On the other hand, one would be acting malevolently if he or she unnecessarily remained in a situation just so one could assault an attacker even after that person had been rendered helpless. Our system of justice is constituted on the premise that it is one's right (perhaps even one's duty) to protect one's self and others from arbitrary and destructive actions by whatever force is necessary. However, our forceful actions are regarded as unjustified if they are based on premeditated revenge or retaliation, or if they are taken against past or supposed future behavior of another person. In short, our system of justice legitimizes protective action only in the immediate situation in which one is endangered.

THE THESIS OF THIS PAPER

Modern psychological theories have not provided a cogent understanding of the "senseless" acts of cruelty and destructiveness



that have become commonplace in our society. The general approach in the modern era for understanding malevolence is contained in the assumption that the childhood influences in the formation of the character of the people involved are the sole crucial sources of all tragic events. Psychoanalysts, in particular, have reduced character to the resultant of childhood experiences, with an emphasis on the effects of early trauma. In so doing, they have largely ignored the ongoing formation of character forged by the choices and decisions each person makes. In this way, modern psychological explanation for malevolence parts company with classical theory about human events, which provides an abundance of clear examples of the arbitrary nature of our destiny and of the crucial role one's moral choices have for tempering one's fate, as exemplified in the story of Job. His catastrophes were not due to any flaw in his pious and kind character. They were caused by Lucifer slyly and maliciously convincing God to make a wager with him about Job's future behavior. In this parable, the resolution of Job's unfair suffering was directly related to the way in which he responded to his dilemma.

In this paper I will show that character is gradually molded by prior actions. My thesis, simply put, is that we learn by doing. Impulses to do good or evil occur continuously in our daily lives. Usually they come in small matters; and yet, how we respond to earlier decisions shapes our moral choices in the future. Extreme behavior, such as the heinous cruelty of Westley Dodd, usually is the last of many steps along a continuum of unkind and indecent acts, made possible and facilitated by earlier acts of insensitivity and disregard of others that were rationalized and thereby justified by the perpetrator and condoned by his or her reference group.

The assumption that evil is only a projection of childhood psychological conflict, the usual psychodynamic explanation provided by clinicians, is unsupported by my own clinical experience. My account of malevolence delineated in this paper at once does justice to the discoveries of science and psychoanalysis, while at the same time retaining the traditional significance of choice, freedom, and responsibility in human affairs.

I will demonstrate from several clinical cases¹ that there are five stages through which a person passes in forging a personal identity as a malevolent personality. In the following, I will demonstrate the specific conditions that gradually prepare a person for acts of

cruelty and malevolence, and the social and political factors that increasingly forge malevolent behavior as a committed way of life. First, however, I will review the major psychological theories now existent to account for evil.

EVIL AND THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Psychoanalysis, as I have already indicated, has only with considerable reluctance and great difficulty struggled with the incessant tendency of humankind to carry out evil acts. Freud himself regarded the drive conflict theory he employed to account for other acts of psychopathology as inadequate to meaningfully explain the cruel abuses of war and mass destructiveness. He formulated the presence of a death instinct to explain the recurrence of these events. Freud described his formulation of the death instinct in the following way:

Starting from speculations on the beginning of life and from biological parallels I drew the conclusion that, besides the instinct to preserve living substance, there must exist another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval, inorganic state. That is to say, as well as Eros there was an instinct of death. (1930, pp. 65-66)

According to Freud, the death instinct in the form of a destructive force has only two avenues of discharge—toward self or toward others. Its harmful effects may be blunted somewhat, however. When melded to sexuality, the tendency to be destructive of others may be enacted by expressions of masochism or sadism rather than by outright violence.

Carl Jung (1976), in his theological account of the evil visited upon Job in the Old Testament, offers a systematic explanation of evil. Jung's answer to Job attempts to account for the presence of evil in the world; it does not actually explain how individuals become malevolent. A review of Jung's other writings suggests that he believed that any of us can become a person who encounters the devil because each of us has a dark side. According to Jung, we deny that part of ourselves at extreme risk, because that which we do not bring to consciousness appears in our lives as destiny. Jung's idea was that a person's past inescapably clings to him or her, and if the shadow of some of its events are too terrifying to be examined, the cast of that shadow becomes one's eventual fate.



Robert Lifton's (1986) extensive investigation of the behavior of physicians in Nazi Germany is both a psychiatric and a sociopolitical-historical account of the atrocities committed by medically trained Germans. In addition to using sociopolitical explanations, Lifton uses two psychological concepts, *psychic numbing* and *doubling*, to account for why many of these physicians could lead normal social and family lives at the same time they were involved in horrendous cruelty. According to Lifton, psychic numbing constitutes

a general category of diminished capacity or inclination to feel. Psychic numbing involves an interruption in psychic action—in the continuous creation and re-creation of images and forms that constitute the symbolizing or formative process characteristic of mental life. Psychic numbing varies greatly in degree. . . . But it is probably impossible to kill another human being without numbing oneself toward that victim. (p. 442)

Doubling, according to Lifton,

is the division of the self into two functioning wholes, so that a part-self acts as an entire self. An Auschwitz doctor could, through doubling, not only kill and contribute to killing but organize silently, on behalf of the evil project, . . . virtually all aspects of his behavior. (p. 418)

Joel Norris (1988), a prison psychologist who examined several incarcerated serial killers, describes these criminals in much of the same ways that Lifton spoke of the Nazi doctors. The importance of Norris's work is that it is based on his direct clinical experience with several of these serial killers and that he provides a detailed systematic discussion of the rituals and cycles that pervade the behavior of serial killers.

M. Scott Peck's (1983) ideas about evil, which he reports to be based on his clinical experience, are theologically focused—sounding in important aspects like those of Jung. Peck maintains that

it is not their sins per se that characterize evil people, rather it is the subtle and persistence and consistency of their sins. This is because the central defect of the evil is not the sin but the refusal to acknowledge it. (p. 69)

The refusal to acknowledge sin, Peck claims, is due to the presence of a malignant narcissistic personality—a concept first used by Fromm (1964) to account for evil actions—that is characterized by an unsubmitting will.

Ervin Staub (1989), a social psychologist, in reviewing the literature on mass murder and genocide, has advanced a theory that extreme destructiveness is usually the last of many steps along a continuum of destructiveness. Whereas Staub's systematic approach offers an excellent outline of many of the salient features that I draw upon in my own theory, it is based on others' ideas. The three important original theories follow.

ERICH FROMM'S THEORIES

Erich Fromm theorized that there are three psychological orientations that form the basis of the most vicious and dangerous forms of malevolent personalities. These disturbed conditions, *love of death*, *malignant narcissism*, and *symbolic fixation*, when they are combined, form what Fromm called the *syndrome of decay*, that he claims prompts people "to destroy for the sake of destruction, and to hate for the sake of hate." Fromm's theoretical discussion of the series of choices that a person makes in becoming increasingly more rooted in a malignant narcissistic personality is his greatest contribution to the study of malevolence.

The limitation of Fromm's ideas is that they are based on his readings about malevolent people rather than on discussions of those he knew personally. Consequently, his theory lacks the specific psychological and social factors that influence the choices and decisions that lead to evil behavior.

I believe that, based as they are on my clinical experiences, my concepts of shame, humiliation, and contempt in their role of contaminating the efforts of a person to form a meaningful and competent personal identity offer a better way to explain the causes of the destructive choices that forge a malevolent personality than do the reductionistic concepts of psychoanalysis that Fromm employs.

HANNAH ARENDT'S THEORIES

In Hannah Arendt's (1977) view, evil, more frequently than not, arises out of the banal mentality of ordinary people. Her thesis appears to agree with the manifest behavior of such malevolent ordinary bureaucrats as Adolph Eichmann. Eichmann followed his



murderous orders because he wanted to be admired and rewarded by his more powerful superiors for doing an efficient job. In doing so, he put his official stamp on the death of millions of people with the casualness of a postal clerk.

Nevertheless, Arendt's theory, because it does not recognize that evil rests on the passionate motive to perpetuate oneself at all costs, as long as the sacrifice is someone else, denies the rage and contempt that fuels evil. For the banal-appearing person of malevolence, evil rests like a heated coil below the surface of the persona of the personality, waiting for the right conditions to be switched on in order to carry out the acts of cruelty that past acts of insensitivity and disregard of others have firmly rationalized.

My clinical work, together with my reading of the histories of people who were involved in malevolence, suggests that there is what may be called a *sleepers* dynamic at work in the malevolent person. My notion suggests that the capacity for evil lies dormant until certain circumstances or specific events activate the contemptuous inner coil of the person and produce horrendous behavior not before apparent.

ERNEST BECKER'S THEORIES

Ernest Becker's (1973) ideas about evil are predicated upon Otto Rank's notion that humans cannot come to terms with the idea of their own death. Rank (1958) wrote: "All our human problems, with their intolerable suffering, arise from man's ceaseless attempts to make this material world into a man-made reality . . . aiming to achieve on earth a 'perfection' which is only to be found in the beyond" (pp. 58-59).

According to Becker, aggression serves as a desire for power over the fear of mortality. For modern humans, commandeering the power of life and death over others, Becker claims, as did human sacrifices ritualized in some earlier cultures, may serve the person with a magical feeling of invincibility against death.

Becker's thesis fails to explain why, if all humankind is afraid of death, some people deal with their fears with courage and decency, others self-destruct themselves, and still others commit cruel and murderous acts toward others.

My clinical experience has strongly indicated that it is necessary to understand the roles that shame and humiliation and the series

of rationalized choices and decisions that lead to contempt toward the world play in order to answer the crucial question that Becker's theory does not explain.

A THEORETICAL DELINEATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MALEVOLENT PERSONALITY

There are five stages to the development of the malevolent personality:

1. *Child of Scorn*: The shaming of the vulnerable child;
2. *Child of the Devil*: The inculcation of the "bad" self;
3. The transition from victim to perpetrator of insensitivity and disregard;
4. Experimental malevolence;
5. The forging of the malevolent personality.

STAGE 1. CHILD OF SCORN: THE SHAMING OF THE VULNERABLE CHILD

Clinical Vignette

In my apprenticeship as a clinical psychologist in a psychiatric hospital, I was assigned to work with a severely disturbed young man of my own age. Benjamin, a slight, bespectacled young man of 28, peered out at the world with a sad and hurt look. He lived with his parents, who supported him. He had been frequently teased and psychologically seduced by his beautiful Orthodox Jewish mother, who, in preparation for her extramarital dates, would dress and undress in front of him when he was a child. Although he was intellectually above average in capacity, he was too deficient in social and practical skills to form close friendships or hold a job.

Benjamin envied his one close friend, a young man his own age who was having an affair with a married older woman. Obsessively preoccupied with the fantasy of becoming sexually involved with an older woman, Benjamin lost interest in high school and dropped out. He spent his time reading romantic novels, going to the movies, and wandering the streets or sitting for long hours in coffee shops looking for the woman of his desires. Being shy and ashamed of his appearance, he never approached a woman.



One wintry day standing in a crowded subway train, his fantasy of what it would be like to have a sexual encounter with a woman was disturbingly overthrown. A fortyish woman in furs and a short skirt slyly and skillfully rubbed up against him and manipulated him for the hour he stood in the train. He had a strong orgasm during the encounter.

Following the subway incident, whenever he felt intense desire for a woman, he believed that an angel of deliverance from sin sat on one of his shoulders and the devil of temptation sat on the other. He felt violently oscillated by what he perceived as these theological agents involved in a struggle for the possession of his soul.

Theoretical Explanation

In the first stage, shame serves as the monitor of personal identity. The vulnerable child is exposed to a pattern of humiliation and forms a negative personal identity. The child, inarticulate in expressing feelings of shame, hurt, anguish, and despair, develops a critical inner *narrative voice*.

The Role of Shame in Exposing the Self to Evil

An individual's personal identity is a complex enterprise. Not only does it consist of one's sense of self in the present, but of the beliefs and desires about who one should be and what one can become. As a result, every action and interaction either substantiates or disconfirms the self one wishes to be. Where there is a congruent fit between the experiences of one's tested self (i.e., the actual circumstances of one's life) and the images, fantasies, and intentions of one's desired identity, a feeling of competence is achieved. According to White (1963), competence is an expression of the ability, fitness, and capacity to live effectively and well. Being shamed, in contrast, always involves a sense of incompetence. The potential for experiencing shame, therefore, is present when there is a disparity between the tested self and the desired self (Blimes, 1967). As such, a useful way to view being shamed is to regard it as a powerful unquestioned conviction that in some important way one is flawed and incompetent as a human being.

People can be best understood as acting in light of their own sense of personal identity so as to make their experiences meaningful based on how they conceptualize the situations in which they

find themselves. My clinical studies (Goldberg, 1991) have shown that shame² is one of the most devastating interpersonal weapons a person can use to influence or punish someone else.

Each shaming experience, especially those that involve disregard and mistreatment, threaten to deplete a person's sense of personal identity. These contemptuous experiences inform the sufferer in destructive and painful ways that he or she is inadequate. As such, they undermine the sufferer's interpersonal relationships and feelings of well-being and security. Chronic shame prevents one from defining oneself constructively to others, leaving one vulnerable to further abuse and neglect.

Although events that have a shaming effect on a person occur suddenly and are often quickly repressed, the experience can have long-lasting effects, especially for shame-vulnerable people. Shame is ironic: Despite how intensely affected people are, they rarely can do anything about their despair because they do not recognize that their suffering is rooted in shame. What makes shame so unfathomable is that people experiencing it are usually unable to identify the precise cause of their uneasy feelings. In fact, few people are able to articulate the misery of shame. No matter how deeply shaken they are by a shaming experience, they cannot tell themselves, much less anyone else, just what is so tenaciously stifling their psyches. Consequently, they have a great deal of difficulty finding the language to communicate the source of their pain.

The sense of being "bad" initially comes from being continuously informed—verbally and through other people's behavior—that we are inadequate, flawed, and unwanted. The emotional means for conveying this message is through shame and humiliation. Over time, as our negative personal identity becomes stabilized, our negative *inner narrative voice* reminds us that we should become or inevitably will become whatever we are treated as already being.³

Implications of Shame Theory for Stage 1

Self-understanding is indispensable to the most profound insight into any issue or problem we encounter and therefore is our most reliable guide for making possible a life lived fully and well. There are, of course, formidable roadblocks impeding self-discovery.

Human suffering arises from the awareness of our vulnerability to pain and suffering and from our mortal status. Most of our daily roles and activities are designed to deny and buffer us from our



dreaded aloneness, the casting shadow of our eventual nonbeing. Throughout our lives we seek a fund of knowledge and a place in the world we magically hope will forestall, if not defeat, death. Nietzsche explained the efforts of those who seek superiority through eminent wisdom as the wish to be aligned with God. As an *übermensch* (an extraordinary being), there is a magical belief that one can defeat death and the shame that accompanies its recognition. Tolstoy's short story "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" powerfully dramatizes death as the ultimate shame because it provides undeniable evidence of our powerlessness and defeat as human beings at being able to control our ultimate fate. The experience of shame in its most important sense issues from this profound despair of having no future moment as an existent being. As such, the shame of recognizing human limitation imposes a major impediment to self-discovery. By bringing to light what we do not know, self-knowledge becomes the estranged sibling of the magical belief that one can defeat death and human limitation through superior knowledge.

On the other hand, magically avoiding knowing is to avoid feeling limited. The unconscious, as Freud stressed, is timeless. Because of the sense of no limitation of time in the unconscious, there is no negation of possibility (no death) in those recesses of the psyche that are still unexplored. We rationalize our procrastinating self-discovery by acting as if we will live forever and have unlimited time.

People who believe that they are possessed by evil, as did Benjamin, are too vulnerable to psychic pain and suffering to self-explore and, by so doing, to discover that their magical beliefs will not protect them from the suffering and death of ordinary people. Inexperienced in close examination of themselves, these people are prevented from recognizing how they symbolize their experiences.

Humans are symbol-formulating and meaning-oriented beings. Our personal identity is constituted from our family and societal myths significant in our upbringing. These myths have direct implications for how we transpose our instinctual desires and social needs into acceptable or deplorable ways of expressing ourselves.

In adolescence, boys begin to imagine the ideal sexual encounter. Year after year, into the era of accessibility of the objects of desire,

this ideal person is sought and embellished with details from actual persons encountered. If the myths that constitute one's personal identity provide healthy regard for our needs and desires, we symbolize these objects of desire with good feelings about our sexuality and our personal identity. If, on the other hand, as a child a person experiences the awakening of strong desires as a wicked lust that produces shame and betrayal, as did Benjamin, then one's personal identity is infected with badness. Benjamin, caught between desire and self-loathing, had no opportunity to escape his dilemma because his personal myths did not provide alternatives to a rigid and hypocritical upbringing, until he found an opportunity to see himself differently in psychotherapy.⁴

STAGE 2. CHILD OF THE DEVIL: THE INCULCATION OF THE "BAD" SELF

Clinical Vignette

Christopher, a wealthy and talented young man who had lived an indulgent life, came to see me for psychoanalysis in the thralls of suicidal despair. He is a highly articulate and handsome young man, slender though muscular, appearing older than his stated 25 years. He would intersperse his seemingly insightful comments with raucous laughter indicative of extreme anxiety. His preoccupation with evil was precipitated by events in his childhood that required him to keep a painful secret from his father about a malevolent stranger: a minister who climbed into Chris's mother's bed when Chris's father left the house. The stranger justified his presence in Chris's mother's room by accusing Chris of wanting to do wicked things to his mother, which the minister was there to prevent. He also pointed out that Chris's father was too weak to protect his wife. Chris's inability to chase away the menacing stranger frightened him terribly and painfully exposed his shameful vulnerability. During this crisis, Chris began to see in his bathroom mirror a strange and sinister face staring back at him that he believed could read his mind. If he did not immediately turn away from the face that arose from the mirror's hidden vault, he sensed that he would be swept into a violent maelstrom from which he could never escape.



Theoretical Explanation

Trying to hide from their painful shame, people in this second stage are involved in lying and deceit—to themselves, as well as to others. This deceit makes self-examination virtually impossible. It leads to the inculcation of a bad self, replete with wickedness, loneliness, bitterness, helplessness, inadequacy, and self-contempt.

Some individuals inflicted with self-contempt attempt to ward off these terrible feelings by becoming “shameless.” They sever the bonds of identification and empathy with others and try to regain a feeling of pride through bravado behavior involving considerable daring and risk to themselves. At the age of 16, the famous French writer Jean Genet was put in a penal colony for a minor offense. In writing about his experiences, he revealed that he had suffered greatly from the shameful and cruel ordeal of having his head shaven, being uniformed in loathsome clothing, and being detained in a vile prison. He was continually subjected to the contempt of the other prisoners who were nastier and stronger than he. Over time there arose within him the urge to become what he had been called—thieving, cowardly, and homosexual (*Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 1992, November 8).

Implications for Stage 2

In working with seriously disturbed patients, I have come to recognize that the attributes we assign to the “mentally ill” are inherent to being human. The sinister face Chris saw in the mirror was a disturbing reminder of the shameful secret he was forced to bear. A person in the second stage is painfully and shamefully in touch with the frailties, paradoxes, and absurdities of the human condition.

STAGE 3. THE TRANSITION FROM VICTIM TO PERPETRATOR OF EVIL*Clinical Vignette*

Julius, a talented jazz musician with superior intellectual capacity, was in his late twenties when I treated him in a federal

psychiatric hospital early in my career. He bemoaned the fact that he could not obtain the musical career he yearned for and for which he seemed destined in his youth. His history of drug abuse, alcoholism, suicidal attempts, and assaults on hospital staff and fellow patients had resulted in his being in and out of psychiatric hospitals, maximum-security installations, and self-help groups for a decade.

Julius had sought me out for psychotherapy. Once he began to trust me, he confided that he took hard drugs—which he was able to obtain by stealing hospital doctors’ prescription pads and skillfully forging the doctors’ signatures—because he had come to recognize that drugs had a personality and a living presence which sought him out and spoke to him. The drugs seduced him with the promise of protecting him against the sinister powers of his adoptive father. Julius believed that his adoptive father, who allegedly had been a hired killer for organized crime in his younger years, was able to psychically manipulate him with his “evil eye,” even after his adoptive father’s death. As frightened as Julius had been of his adoptive father, he also envied him because his adoptive father had lived an exciting life without the self-doubts and fears that were crippling Julius.

Theoretical Explanation of the Relationship Between Madness and Malevolence

Great writers such as Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Goethe intuitively understood that madness is not an illness but a moral affliction. We can best understand the special world of madness as a self-imposed excommunication from human company. Those who repudiate the world that you and I regard as reality once had before them what is available to each of us. Tragically, however, the satisfactions and securities accessible to us are off-limits to the mad. They have been led to believe by powerful people in their lives that they are culpable of unpardonable sins. In this sense, madness is a statement of moral requirement. For their wrongs the mad must surrender the interpersonal relations that give others a sense of living fully and well. The mad can do nothing realistic to change their moral condition because they are not actually guilty of anything; they are unknowing victims, shamed at their incapacity to deal with the world as they know it.



Yet the separation from human company is unbearably lonely, as Raskolnikov's gradual progression of madness in *Crime and Punishment* powerfully demonstrates. Deprived of other humans, the mad are compelled to create their own world, inspired by beings of their own flawed moral dispositions. Perhaps this is why early in my career a very disturbed patient told me that "being paranoid and hearing voices accusing me of evil acts means that I never have to be alone and disregarded."

Faust's pact with the devil in Goethe's famous story can be seen, as in every other conflict with evil, as depicting the tragic role that toxic shame plays in the lives of those who do not know themselves well enough to have found the wisdom and inner resources for establishing a strong personal identity. Goethe's tale suggests that our culture strongly exhorts us to boundless ambition and pride built upon personal achievement. At the same time, we are left with a haunting doubt as to whether we—the fragile, vulnerable beings we regard ourselves to be—have the virtues to live fully and well.

People who believe that they are possessed by evil are those who are too vulnerable to psychic pain and suffering to be able to easily break their pact with the devil or some other supernatural power. Their pact is based upon the magical belief that their demonic bond will protect them from the suffering and death of ordinary people.

Yet, the devil cannot control Faust. The devil can only come to him when Faust inadvertently exposes his vulnerability by asking for magical solutions to free him from his failure to obtain romantic love, friendship, and honor.

Madness is a crucial step in becoming an evildoer, but psychiatry has been unable to find psychotic processes in many of the malevolent people who have been psychologically examined and psychiatrically interviewed, such as the Nazi officials who were tried at Nuremberg. This is because magical thinking involved in malevolent behavior has not been recognized as crucial to madness.

Typically, the mad and the malevolent are more painfully plagued by their human finitude than are other people. Faust, like other people in the third stage, uses magical thinking to try to transform his sense of being frail and vulnerable into a position of invincibility.

This is to say that magical thinking is a process of thought in which a person suspends critical assessment of his or her behavior and character. Instead of making efforts to improve one's character

to become the person one aspires to be, during periods of magical thinking, people are convinced that they are already perfect and it is only others' perception of their being less than perfect that is preventing their happiness.

The ultimate objective of magic, William Butler Yeats told us, is to obtain power over the sources of life that elude normal strivings. In this regard, evil and madness have a common mission because neither the mad nor the malevolent have been able to secure a personal identity that gives them a sense of goodness and worth.

Those who are bereft of self-knowledge are forced to employ a magical transformation of their actual situation to subdue their disquieting doubts about the meaninglessness of their lives. Efforts by the mad to imbue themselves with magical powers and by the malevolent to dominate the fates of others by manipulating the supreme powers of life and death are, at their base, refusals to come to terms with human limitations.

In short, madness is a necessary condition for evil, in which the anger and despair evoked by a hurtful awareness of one's vulnerabilities unleashes a desperate delusion of magical invincibility and is expressed by vicious aggression. This leads to feelings of contempt toward the world. Unlike in earlier stages when they passively tolerated shame and humiliation by others, people in Stage 3 feel disregard and insensitivity toward others—both toward those who have mistreated them and toward anyone else who tries to get close. Everyone in the world is regarded as responsible for having permitted their shame and humiliation.

Contempt toward the world diminishes the ability to self-examine. People who are depressed and/or self-contemptuous can self-examine because they harbor some sense of their own responsibility for what has happened to them. However, once contempt and blame are cast out and externalized, self-examination is no longer feasible because it is viewed as no longer warranted.

Implications for Stage 3

Only by giving up our magical beliefs do we have access to the deepest strata of our minds and to authentic interpersonal relationships made possible by our courageous imagination and compassionate interactions. It is the opportunity to deal with our deeply buried sense of despair about our human limitations that enables us to live more legitimately as purposeful people and to



develop a courageous recognition of human possibility. Because Julius would not accept his fears and limitations, he needed drugs and alcohol to try to mask his shame and self-contempt for his sense of inadequacy and cowardice. His disregard for others was a result of his efforts to cast out responsibility and to blame others for his failures in life. Rather than self-examine the reasons for his untoward feelings, he longed for a reunion with his deceased adopted father, who he fantasized as a superordinary person beyond the pale of ordinary standards of conduct and who he desperately hoped would endow him with extraordinary power to overcome human limitation.

STAGE 4. EXPERIMENTAL MALEVOLENCE: THE PROLIFERATION OF CONTEMPT

Clinical Vignette

An unfortunate legacy for many of the children I have seen from privileged families is that they are given an analyst at a tender age, rather than emotionally responsive parents. At the age of 5, Richard was introduced to the world of psychoanalysis and the power of language. By the time I saw him, he had spent almost 25 of his 30 years of life in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. The first psychiatrist who treated him wrote Anna Freud a letter about Richard's problematic behavior, emphasizing Richard's reveries in which he spent large portions of time imagining that he was one of the virtuous hero characters from the classical novels given him by his parents. Anna Freud wrote back diagnosing Richard as a child schizophrenic.

As an adult, Richard, who has a very high IQ and is verbally fluent, became a successful academic writer, well respected in literary circles. The capacity for good or evil typically is conveyed in the way we use words. Richard took pride in turning out an apt and elegant phrase, but he derived no satisfaction in performing a kind or decent act. Not surprisingly, despite his professional and creative achievements, Richard felt inadequate as a person. He felt alone, never having male friends whom he trusted sufficiently to turn to when he felt lonely. He continued in psychoanalysis to achieve some sense of intimacy with other males.

His intimate relationships with women were marred by the fear that any women who really knew him would quickly recognize that he was still schizophrenic. The deep resentment he harbored toward women, whom he believed regarded him as emotionally impaired, festered throughout childhood and into his adult years. His high intelligence found facile rationalizations for his increasing indifference, insensitivity, and, finally, cruelty toward women who were drawn to him.

Richard had become heavily addicted to cocaine to try to relax from the travails of his life. At a Christmas party at his publisher's offices, he approached one of his editors, a longtime friend, with what she regarded as an insulting sexual proposition. She had already been concerned about Richard from the rumors she had heard that Richard, after seducing women, would subject them to degrading experiences. She had been told of one incident in which Richard, after having spent the night with a woman, had pushed the woman, who was still nude, into the corridor outside their hotel room and had bolted the door, enjoying the woman's frantic efforts to get back into the room. The woman, it was rumored, committed suicide sometime later. The editor recommended that Richard meet her analyst. Richard was reluctant; he admitted that he had concerns about the quality of his recent writing but nothing more. He took the analyst's telephone number anyway.

I was the editor's analyst. Soon after Richard consulted me for psychoanalysis, I became aware that sometime during the sessions with Richard I would be having an analytic encounter with a different Richard than the person who had started the session with me. Richard referred to this personification of himself as "Stud."

Stud was compelled by a Nietzschean philosophy in which Stud regarded his behavior as beyond the strictures of conventional morality because he was sufficient unto himself. He believed that the highest morality that any society could fulfill was the liberation of the full capacities and powers of the superior. If lesser people suffered in this endeavor, it was regrettable but not that important. He had firmly rationalized his degradation of women as his uncompromising scientific curiosity about human behavior. He also claimed that his "scientific experiments" with women were not a consequence of his drug usage but Richard's morbid pride in faithfully enacting the disturbed legacy that the psychiatric profession had bestowed upon him.



At first, Stud only appeared during cocaine trips. After several months of frequent drug usage, Stud, without chemical inhalation, started to take dominance over Richard's personality.

Theoretical Explanation of Freedom of Behavior

Fromm (1964) provided some important psychological insights into the controversy about whether individuals have freedom of choice over their behavior. He pointed out that

the argument for the view that man has no freedom to choose the better as against the worse is to some considerable degree based on the fact that one looks usually at the last decision in a chain of events, and not at the first or second ones. Indeed, at the point of final decision the freedom to choose has usually vanished. (p. 155)

According to Fromm:

There is no such thing as the choice between "good" and "evil"—there are concrete and specific actions that are means toward what is good, and others that are means toward what is evil, provided good and evil are properly defined. Our moral conflict on the question of choice arises when we have to make a concrete decision rather than when we choose good or evil in general. (p. 128)

Neither Fromm nor other theorists who have written about evil have provided the psychodynamic theory that in my view accounts for the chain of choices that eventuate in the commission of malevolent acts.

My clinical studies strongly suggest that the psychological defense mechanisms known as *rationalization* and *denial*—used in regard to one's contempt for and manipulation of others—are the crucial psychodynamics that justify and perpetuate the choices that eventuate in malevolence.

Denial is the defense mechanism of disavowal of unacceptable motives. Rationalization is a psychological strategy used by the individual to provide quasi-legitimate and rational reasons to justify behavior that does not fit his or her character and value system. Rationalization needs to be understood in the context of the crucial role justification plays in all societies. Justification for one's behavior is the hallmark of not only "advanced" societies, but appears to have the valence of a psychosocial "obsession." Most of our actions are based upon justification. This is to say, our behavior has reference to some standard or guideline that legitimates our

actions. So often in our conversations as well as in our thoughts, we employ the concepts of "appropriate," "reasonable," "justified," or "fair."

Of course, rationalization is a special kind of justification. We can recognize this in the explanations of deviant behavior. The alcoholic justifies his imbibing because he is misunderstood, the drug addict her palliative because she was born weak, and criminals their violations because they dare to do what lesser people can do only in fantasy.

Rationalizations reveal disturbed motives. What clinicians who have studied malevolent criminals apparently have not recognized is that the rationalizations criminals provide to justify their behavior are a component of magical thinking. The malevolent person uses rationalizations as bogus, self-deluding indications that his or her behavior is under control and that self-exploration, leading to appropriate character modification, will proceed in an orderly and productive fashion in the future. The addiction to rationalization by malevolent people is at its base a refusal to come to terms with one's human limitations.

Implications for Stage 4

Behavioral sciences studies have linked destructive behavior with the difficulties the perpetrators have in forming empathic bonds with other people. The inability or unwillingness to psychologically take the place of the other—to take into consideration how the other person feels—leads to the tendency to treat the other as an object of no importance rather than as a person who has feelings like oneself.

Richard's inability to be empathic was derived from his early family experiences and the impossible demands upon him to save his parents from their suffering. Feeling prone to evil has a variety of sources. In addition to being found in children who have been abused or neglected, the capacity for evil also is high among those who have been subjected to unreasonable expectations they are not equipped to meet.

Richard's identification and empathy with his family were too painful to retain. He was forced to cut his bonds with them and gradually with everyone because his helplessness in the face of others' suffering, together with his psychiatric diagnosis, imbued



him with shame and self-contempt. Self-hate has to be one of the most virulent destructive forces visited upon humankind.

Richard tried to rid himself of his self-loathing and to gain a sense of accentuated self-worth by deflating other people and casting the defects he sensed in himself as attributes of others. By boastful demonstration of his cleverness in manipulating others, Richard tried to reverse the humiliating status he suffered in his own eyes and in those of others.

His desperate rationalizations for his contemptuous behavior over the years had become a forged way of perceiving himself and others. Each rationalized choice of insensitivity and disregard of others eroded his freedom of choice until inevitably his cruel and insensitive behavior became unassailably justified. This helps explain why the malevolent life once begun is so difficult to overthrow.

STAGE V. THE FORGING OF THE MALEVOLENT PERSONALITY: THE DEVIL'S REPRESENTATIVE IN ATROCITY

Clinical Vignette

The stepfather who raised Emil in Serbia was a rough and impulsive old man, given to quick and stubborn opinions. He had been a boxer as a youth and had fought together with Marshall Tito in the mountains against the Nazis. He retained a prizefighter's physique and aggressive attitude throughout Emil's upbringing. Once as a child of 10, Emil returned home upset at having witnessed an old Jewish man being abused by some of the townspeople, among whom was one of Emil's stepbrothers. His stepfather, unable to voice his concern for the boy's experience, instead brutally beat him. When Emil angrily demanded to know why he was beaten he was told, "You are a Christian, what does it matter what happens to a Jew! Wise up, kid, if you want to survive in this world!" Emil's mother later told him that his stepfather had been captured by the Nazis and had witnessed what was done to Jews and other people who would not protect themselves. His stepfather was trying to toughen him, she told him. Emil had a terrible dream that night in which upper-echelon Nazis were present at a Black Mass. To Emil's horror, he saw himself participating lustfully in the Mass.

His stepbrothers contributed to his erratic upbringing. They spent a great deal of their time purchasing, cleaning, and repairing knives and guns. They used these weapons to kidnap, rape, and impregnate young women and to drive off the women's relatives who tried to rescue them. Over time they brought Emil into their escapades.

As an adult, Emil had been a paramilitary soldier involved in rape and murder of noncombatant citizens of his country. He escaped to the United States to avoid apprehension because he feared that in the near future there would be war-crime trials in Serbia.

At his wife's insistence, Emil came in for psychological consultation. I found him to be a young man who was heavily addicted to psychological rationalizations to justify his heinous crimes. He provided an endless storehouse of examples of how undependable and treacherous people had been to him all his life, and he rationalized that therefore everyone who had participated in or witnessed his brutal life or who simply did nothing to shelter him from it deserved to be treated contemptuously. On the other hand, he treated weapons with an appreciation and respect he didn't have for people, not even for his wife, on whom he was dependent for protection against deportation. He offered story after story, from childhood on, in which his skill with weapons had saved his life from the danger of people who were intent on harming him.

Theoretical Explanation of the Madness of Malevolence

Evil and madness are conjoined; understanding malevolence is predicated on understanding madness. Those who struggle with either share the terror of believing they will be alone forever, undiscovered and uncared for, a belief that fosters vulnerability and enables powerful forces and people to take control of their lives.

Both madness and evil are involved with magical thinking in which a wish for an ideal state determines what is perceived. Of course, there are obvious differences between evildoers and *autistically mad* people, that is, those who have become caught up in their own self-contained psychoses, as have, for example, delusional schizophrenics. For them, the social world is bewildering and frightening, so they retreat to their internal world, which is



more understandable to them. The delusional cohabitants of their internal world treat them in a way that makes sense in terms of the sins they believe they have committed, as conveyed to them by their early caretakers. Concern over their sins promotes attempts to self-examine, to find ways to redeem themselves.

The malevolent, on the other hand, are unwilling to self-examine because their internal world and its undiscovered self are more terrifying than the social world they share with others. They often possess superior physical, social, or intellectual skills with which to impress and intimidate others. This intimidation fosters within the malevolent feelings of self-aggrandizement, which serve as a magical conviction of their triumph over limitation, weakness, and mortality. In short, magic vanquishes shame.

The triumph over weakness fosters a rationalized morality based on self-interest. Its rationale purports that the malevolent person is living a higher "good" than are the weak and cowardly.

Moreover, their lack of self-monitoring separates them from most other people, ironically providing the means to take advantage of and to control others. For example, whereas most of us would pause and reconsider the impulse to seriously harm someone else—even someone who has angered us—malevolent people act destructively without pause. Their present heinous actions are firmly justified by the rationalizations they have rendered for their previous cruel acts.

Implications for Stage 5

Each of us experiences impulses requiring choices—large and small—throughout our lives. Each of these decisions reflects our attempts to define our personal identity in a meaningful way and at the same time, without our awareness, shapes our future behavior.

Emil's involvement with malevolent acts was a continuation of prior decisions and actions. Tragically, as a sensitive young child exposed to people's cruelty, he was repeatedly misguided in how to understand and respond to his feelings. At the same time, it is important to recognize that Emil also came in contact with other people who were kind, decent, and caringly responsive to him, such as his wife Alicia. Nevertheless, from the age of 9 onward, he chose to pattern his behavior after people more like his stepfather. So

when he met Alicia, his character was too malevolently formed to avert his insensitivity toward her, as much as he claimed that he wished he could.

CONCLUSION

Evil is not only a crime against other people; it also is found in the violation of one's human potentials. Our greatest human achievements are derived from our ability and willingness to accept our limitations. Becoming aware of our limitations soberly confronts our magical strivings to be an übermensch. Giving up these magical beliefs, however difficult, allows us to know love and create beauty, illuminating the preciousness of what we do have, and gains access to the deepest strata of our undiscovered self so that we will have the sanguinity and vibrance to engage in compassionate and authentic relationships.

NOTES

1. The clinical materials I provide in this paper are intended as illustrations of the theoretical concepts discussed, not as empirical validation. In my view, clinical data does not legitimately serve as "proof" of a theory until the successful treatment of that disorder has been demonstrated repeatedly. Only then is it meaningful to organize the crucial common influences in the etiology of these many cases in a developmental way and to test this clinical theory against other clinical explanations of the development of the clinical syndrome.

2. A full examination of the causes and clinical implications of shame is a neglected area of psychological inquiry. The most complex and difficult cases of suffering and despair have been traditionally attributed to guilt rather than rightfully to shame. Due to an overabundance of clinical cases of guilt, the emotional workings of shame, with the notable exceptions of the work of Erikson (1950), Piers and Singer (1953), Lynd (1958), and Lewis (1971), have only recently received some of the careful investigation this crucial syndrome deserves. Going back to Sigmund Freud, there has been a shame about studying shame in the psychological and psychoanalytic fields. The *Psychological Abstracts* don't have a separate category for shame, placing this elusive affect under the subject of guilt. In short, shame and its variants are the most seriously neglected and misunderstood emotions in contemporary behavioral science.

3. There is, of course, a great injustice involved in the appalling practice of guiding children toward feelings of self-contempt and worthlessness. It is not surprising, then, that when one clinically treats patients suffering from severe emotional disturbance one feels a considerable sadness for these patients. That we refer to them as *mad* alludes to their furious reactions to the injustices that their disturbed behavior is calling to our attention.



4. In an important sense, the goal of psychoanalysis, or any form of psychological healing, is to enable the sufferer to replace the metaphors of badness and evasion about oneself in one's personal myth with a sense of hopefulness and curiosity about oneself and the world in which one lives.

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M. SCOTT PECK'S ANALYSIS OF HUMAN EVIL: A CRITICAL REVIEW



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Summary

This article brings critical attention to M. Scott Peck's (1983) analysis of both individual and collective human evil, as presented in his *The People of the Lie*. Overlooked by some psychologists and others because of its religious associations, Peck's account stands up well as a psychological analysis that explains *evil character structure* as both a form of narcissistic personality disorder and a moral breakdown, or perversion, of conscience. Concepts of denial, scapegoating, threatened narcissism, lying, self-deception, and cover-up, in Peck's account, illuminate in parallel ways both individual and collective evil. Perennial questions, such as how ordinary persons come to perpetuate extraordinary evil, the genesis of evil character, and whether human evil can be healed, are explored by comparing Peck's views with those of other writers.

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