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From Being a Scapegoat to Loving the Enemy –

the Transformation to a New Ethic

Abstract

With his revised article from his book „The Transformation of Consciousness – Erich Neumann's Depth Psychology of Culture" ("Wandlungen des Bewusstseins – Erich Neumanns Tiefenpsychologie der Kultur") Gerhard M. Walch refers to Erich Neumann's work „Depth Psychology and a New Ethic". Neumann was one of the most important representative and innovator of C. G. Jung's Analytical Psychology. He shows us a transition from the old, dividing ethic of shadow projection and scapegoat psychology to a new holistic ethic with the integration of the evil and the image of enemies. Only an integrated approach to the problem of evil is able to meet the circumstances of modern humans. Humans, who know their dark and negative sides, do not have to project it to others and the outside world and fight it there. This way, we get a general orientation for collective integration and peace work.

1. Introduction

My article on Erich Neumann's work, which was created during the Second World War, gives us a general roadmap on the acceptance of one's own shadow, one's own evil and on an inner peace work through the transformation of one's own personality.

In 2014, 65 years after its first publication and on the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War, his work is significant and relevant more than ever.

In his introduction on the disappearance of values in the modern age and the problem of evil, Erich Neumann sees the two World Wars of the last century as a result of the incapability of treating the psychological nature of people the right way. A collective outburst of evil happened, which could not be solved by the old Jewish-Christian ethic. This leads to a further disappearance of values and also to the question of the roots of a new ethic.

According to Neumann, the basic elements of a new ethic can be derived best from the depth psychology development of the individuals. This is where evil is manifested. The individual, who comes close to fall due to the evil, is forced to find new ways, new forms of life, new values and new leading symbols. This is an individual reflection of the collective situation. In this case, the individual is the embodiment of the collective. In the collective subconscious of every individual, the collective is present and its future is rooted. Sensitive people feel the ethical conflicts and questions earlier than others. They are exposed to them earlier and stronger and can therefore work on future problems of humanity beforehand.

I will now summarise the most important statements of Neumann based on four chapters of his work:

2. The Old Ethic

In order to understand the meaning of the new ethic, we first have to see through the mechanisms of the old ethic. The old ethic is defined by ideals, levels of perfection, laws and orders. Their role models are the holy, the noble and the good. However, we can only make them real if we negate the negative. The methods to enforce the old ethic are oppression and suppression.

Oppression means consciously turning off those parts of the personality who disagree with the valid ethical values. These parts stay connected to conscience, even if it means victims and pain. In comparison, suppression includes fully disclosed contents, which lost the relationship with conscience. It leads an own life in the subconscious and yields to the fate of the individual as well as the collective because it undermines and destroys the conscience subversively.

The enforcement of the old ethic with individuals happens through the instance of conscience, which is, opposed to the inner voice, an individual expression of the soul.

Sigmund Freud already described conscience in its origin as social angst (S. Freud, 1974).

„To have a good conscience" therefore means to be in line with the set of values of a certain community that determines the cultural super-ego. A bad conscience on the other hand means not to be in line with the collective. Conscience therefore represents collective norms.

Since collective values are absolute and not related to an individual, it is impossible to be fully in line with them. Trying to fit in anyway leads to the establishment of two psychological systems, which the Analytical Psychology by C. G. Jung calls persona and shadow.

The persona (in Greek theatre the mask through which the actor lets to hear his voice = per-sonare in Latin) is the adaption mask of the individual to the collective. In this quasi-personality, created by conscience, the wish for compliance with the collective is expressed.

As compensation, the one-sidedness of the persona brings up the shadow in the subconscious that would like to hide behind the mask. The shadow is the opponent of the persona. It includes the dark, the negative, the incomplete, transient, limited and unloved sides of our personality. The suppression of the shadow leads to a seemingly good conscience, but also to an inflation of oneself, to hubris, to a puffing of the personality with supra-personal values, which are a danger to the personality, because they are not adequate to its superior power.

The old ethic is dualistic: it divides the external and the internal reality as well as humans, the world and God into dual contrasts: into light and darkness, into pure and filthy, into good and bad and ultimately into God and the devil. The individual, who can identify himself with the light side, is driven to fight only for the good, the pure and the light. But this war is pointless, because the bad that has been defeated stands up again and again.

Light cannot fight darkness and darkness cannot fight light because they are simply two sides of one reality.

The suppression of the dark side is just as radical as how dogmatic the ethic of the group is and as how strong the conscience of the individual is. The strength of conscience often shows itself in unconscious feelings of guilt. These are caused by the shadow. But instead of accepting the shadow, we project it to the outside world. We are looking for a scapegoat, which will then become a substitute for a victim and we transfer the collective guilt to it. The victims are preferably strangers and minorities; in problems with minorities, the division of the collective mind is expressed.

In the projection of the shadow, the own inner enemy and opponent are thrown out. The words of the Sermon on the Mount are in contrast to this: "Love your enemy", it invites to love your inner enemy and your inner shadowy parts.

The collective scapegoat mechanism exists as long as there are unconscious feelings of guilt.

3. Stages of Ethical Development

In order to understand the crisis and the problems of the old ethic better, we have to comprehend the relation between the ethical development and the development of consciousness. You can find an extensive description of the archetypical and mythological development and the development of consciousness in Erich Neumann's book "The Origins and History of Consciousness" ("Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins").

The development of consciousness starts with the stage of the original unity, where the embryonic individual is lacking independence and is dependent on the group, the world and the collective consciousness. This is equal to the symbol of the "Uroboros", the serpent locked into a circle that eats its own tail and the condition of the so-called "participation mystique" (Levy-Brühl), the unconscious experience of the identity.

In this early stage, individuals are identical with the group. Every individual represents the whole group. This explains for example the phenomenon of vendetta, but also the transfer of reward and punishment to the following generations.

In every further ethical development, the large individual, the so-called "Mana-personality", arises to a central, leading figure, the leader of the group. It defines the values of the collective, which then become the basis of the collective ethic.

The collective ethic leads to a fixation on consciousness, a demarcation leads to the unconscious. At the same time, a division into an ethical elite that can live up to the ethical demands and into an overburdened collective is threatening. The latter tries to live up to the demanded ethical standards by the ethical separation from the persona at first, but then, the adaption mask regresses to the mass, which neither feels responsible for the individual nor the group.

A further development of the old collective ethic happens by the advancing individualisation and reaches as far as the individuation ethics, the new ethic. In "The Origins and History of Consciousness" by Erich Neumann, this corresponds to the transformation from the stage of the heroic myth, which includes the scapegoat psychology, to the transformation myth, which integrates loving the enemy.

4. The New Ethic

Erich Neumann starts with depth psychology and derives the new ethic by the process of the individuation of oneself. There, a necessary shock of self-consciousness and its values happens by the confrontation with the holism of the personality and the subconscious. The moral reorientation happens by the integration of the shadow and the processing of the persona.

The fall of the old, idealistic self-image in an individual corresponds to the collective situation, which was expressed in a number of fields throughout the last 200 years via the break-in of the occidental consciousness' dark side. Terms like secularism, materialism and relativism show the downward shift in focus.

In the new, holistic ethic, the entire personality is considered as the basis for ethical behaviour rather than just parts of it. The impacts of the individual approach of consciousness to the collective on the outside as well as the subconscious are taken into consideration. The collective on the outside reflects in the collective subconscious on the inside. My personal shadow is the individual form of the dark side of humanity. By accepting this, I accept the whole of humanity as well. This process lets me recognize that humans belong together and that I have a collective joint responsibility. Therefore, shadow projections end, just like the scapegoat-mechanism and the ethically covered eradication fight against the bad. Instead, we reach a much more stable ethical approach individually as well as collectively, by accepting our own evil.

5. The Aims and Values of the New Ethic

The main task of the new ethic is the integration of conflicting parts of the personality into a consistent human structure. The basis for this is the so-called "centroversion", meaning the mind's tendency to holism, being revealed by its self-healing power.

Like in a psychological League of Nations, oppositional parties would like to live together: primitive and differentiated, pre-human and modern, atheistic and religious, instinct-driven and spiritual, destructive and constructive elements.

The holism of the personality is also the best basis for creative processes. It is the prerequisite to let the evil, entitled by and corresponding to the individual, live in free responsibility.

The way to adulthood and independence demands from us to do something bad and be able to process it.

The mythological stages of the "Origins and History of Consciousness" correspond to this with the topics of "world parent separation" and the symbolic "murder of father and mother".

The words of Jesus Christ match this: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Mt. 10,34). It opposes the development of a preventive peace.

At this point, I would like to quote my article "From the fake to real peace" ("Vom faulen zum wahren Frieden") from my book "Transformation to the inner heaven" ("Wandlung zum inneren Himmel", Gerhard M. Walch, 2007, p. 168 et seq.):

These words of Jesus Christ are "a clear rejection to a peace which would like to avoid the elements of conflict in our human existence. They would like to shake us up from our safeguarding against any change, our indifference and lack of interest, which hold life in contempt, our rigid attitude, only wanting to be let alone and in peace. We tend to want to quickly get rid of everything that disturbs our peace. How little we know that by this, we only suppress but do not solve, reconcile or pacify anything. As long as we are longing for a freedom that is the opposite of war, conflict and confrontation, we are longing for something impossible, because all opposites are complimentary and therefore have to take turns if life should not come to a halt. Or is this rather a hidden yearning for death, secretly envying those who "rest in peace"?

Erich Neumann gives us a roadmap on how to handle the evil on the basis of the new ethic: "The acknowledgement of one's own evil is "good". To be too good — that is, to want to transcend the limits of the good which is actually available and possible—is "evil". Evil done by anybody in a conscious way (and that always also implies full awareness of his own responsibility), evil, in fact, from which the agent does not try to escape —is ethically "good". The repression of evil, accompanied, as it invariably is, by an inflationary overvaluation of oneself, is "evil", even when it is the result of a "positive attitude" or a "good will"." (E. Neumann, 1990, p. 114).

In contrast to knowingly doing something bad, there is sublimation in a Freudian sense, where we experience the negative effect of the old ethic, which originates from the suppression of not sublime unconscious content. Neumann reminds us of the subliming "saints" who struggle with sexual phantasies, who are seemingly sent by the "devil" as a temptation. Instead, the shadow projection of such "saints" lead to crusades and inquisition.

The impossibility to fulfil the absolute demands of the old ethic resulted in the teaching of the original sin that declares life, the earth and people fallen and to the carriers of the evil. This led to the escape from the "lower" side of the earth to heaven as a symbol of the only good. The cause lies in a misinterpretation of the myth from the fall of man as a fall from heaven (good) to the earth (evil). Actually, it is a value-free transformation of the experience of heaven and earth as a unity to duality. Erich Neumann presented this unholy development extensively in his Eranos lecture "The meaning of the earth archetype for modern times".

The new ethic on the other hand consists of accepting the negative, which makes it possible for people to say yes to themselves as well as to the earth and life in this world. This path stands under the symbol of descent, in line with the myths of the journey to the sea in the night and to the underworld.

In this connection, Karlfried Graf Dürckheim's story about his encounter with an orthodox eremite comes to my mind, who painted a wonderful icon of Christ, descending to hell and hugging Adam. To the question of what this icon meant to him, the monk answered: "If humans recognize their own inner hell, the devil inside them, the evil, the dark, the wicked, when they accept them and hug them with love instead of pushing them away, the divine can shine through. And this means resurrection to me (K. Graf Dürckheim, 1982, p. 90).

In the lecture "The meaning of the earth archetype for modern times" Erich Neumann says: "A strange revaluation is becoming clearer, where the actual goal does not seem to be the defeat of the evil but rather its salvation, not the patriarchal victory but rather a transformation of the downside." (E. Neumann, 1992, p. 33)

This salvation and transformation of evil does not originate from the individual but from the self, which includes every opposite in itself.

As "body-self", the holism of the body is included in this process. Karlfried Graf Dürckheim talks about a transformation from the objective individual consciousness for the body, which I have, to a real felt consciousness of the body that I am.

By the self, taking the place of the super-ego and conscience with an inner voice, humans come to their ethical autonomy and self-determination. At the same time, the collective meaning of a new individuation ethics becomes visible in the consolidated structure of the human soul. It does not let itself being carried away by the collective subconscious or mass phenomena on the outside. This is because it already experienced the highs, lows and depths of humanity in its own soul.

Sufi-mystic Hazrat Inayat Khan says: "I knew good and evil, sin and virtue, right and wrong; I judged and have been judged; I went through birth and death, joy and sorrow and in the end I recognized that I am in all, and all is in me." (H. I. Khan, 1979, p. 123).

Since the shadow of the individual is always linked to the collective shadow of the group, the shadow-integration of the individual also saves a little bit of the collective evil. With this, we came to the phenomenon of representative suffering and salvation instead of the scapegoat psychology and stepped deeply into a religious field that is directly linked to ethics.

While people become more human by accepting the darkness, God also meets the individual in a human form, not absolute and abstract, but rather by the human dimension of the inner voice. With the new human image, a new, transformed image of God appears.

There is the question of evil itself and also the evil in God. We are turning to an original view of Judaism, where God created light and darkness, good and evil and where God and Satan are linked aspects of a transcendental reality.

In Jewish mysticism "The good and the evil are like the right and the left hand of God" (quote by Martin Buber).

With the understanding of the antagonism of humans, the world and transcendence, a replacement of the old ethic and its perfection principle happens. It is replaced by a new ethic, which is oriented towards accepting imperfection on holism and completeness.

I conclude my article with the visionary future perspective of Erich Neumann, which we can find at the end of his book "Depth Psychology and a New Ethic":

"Our growing insight into the limitations of the human condition must inevitably lead, in the course of the next few centuries, to an increasing sense of human solidarity and to a recognition of the fact that, despite all differences, the structure of human nature is everywhere, in essence, the same.

The common rootedness of all religion and philosophy in the collective unconscious of the human race is beginning to become obvious. It is becoming clear that [...] the human species is nevertheless one and indivisible in the basic structure of its mind. [...]

Slowly but surely, the human race is withdrawing the psychological projections by means of which it had peopled the emptiness of the world with hierarchies of gods and spirits, heavens and hells; and now, with amazement, for the first time, it is experiencing the creative fullness of its own primal psychic Ground.

And yet, out of the midst of this circle of humanity, which is beginning to take shape from the coming-together of every part of the human species [...], continents and cultures, the same creative Godhead, unformed and manifold, is emerging within the human mind, who previously filled the heavens and spheres of the universe around us." (E. Neumann, 1990, p. 134 et seq.).

About the author

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