but it’s hard to play war with just one body
guns get confused which way to point
and divine forces are relied upon
to justify paralysis.

—Julia Hurvich, “Polar”

The tree that would grow to heaven must send its roots to hell.

—Nietzsche

OVERVIEW

With the last century marked by two world wars, the Soviet gulag, Mao’s “Great Leap Forward,” Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, and our present war on terrorism, we might ask, what is the generational accumulation of living in a metaphor of terror, and whether the psychological mechanisms by which we live or feel forced to live are mutating the race or changing human nature according to domination by terror. “Suffering is not the issue, nor is the number of victims. Human nature as such is at stake” (Arendt, 1976, p. 459).

Glover (2001) states:

The French Revolution guillotine and the republican baptisms—and the interest in the possibilities of gassing—all show how naturally inhumanity combines with technology. . . . Something needs to be done about this fatal combination. . . . It is too late to stop the technology. It is on to the psychology that we should now turn. (p. 414)
In this article I reflect on the psychology that keeps perpetuating terror, the damage done by terror generation after generation in transforming human nature itself individually and collectively, and the reality we have come to accept as such, as we feel ourselves without “choice” but to live in reaction and relation to terror. I offer some reflections on the characteristics and development of the mentality that gives rise to violence and genocide, and how it is maintained by the pervasiveness of authoritarian, hierarchical, and dualistic thinking, as well as nonempathic relating and soul murdering that is part of everyday life and ongoingly create binds and rationales that perpetuate it. This dualistic mentality promotes dissociation from the creative and transcendent drives in the self that would facilitate transcendence and spontaneously offer resistance to this mode of being. In this sense I see the conditions that could give rise to Holocausts in the present, rather than past events to be put to rest or forgotten. These conditions need to be confronted in ourselves, made conscious, and transformed on an ongoing basis.

At the beginning of this century, Enlightenment values emphasizing rationality, scientific inquiry, and a worldview of and belief in progress held out hope for social and political advancement. But there is a growing schism and paradoxical relation between our sense of progressing as a race in terms of a more civilized, comfortable, technologically advanced world and the increasingly brutal genocides using more and more powerful technology. Underlying our rational, scientific, progress-oriented outlook is an assumed and unexamined dualistic conception of right and wrong, and an assumption that one could scientifically and rationally discover “truth” and put oneself on the “right” side of it. In so doing one becomes part of the inner structure based on utopian belief systems that underlay much of the genocide of the twentieth century.

Within this structure certain assumptions are held to be true: for example, that man has basic aggressive, evil, or “sinful” instincts; a dualistic state of mind (constantly judging good and evil, true and false on the basis of certain truths established by religions, institutions, theory, culture); and a hierarchical, power-oriented organization of reality, where “reality” or “truth” is
most often externally defined, demanding compliance of those in its jurisdiction. Continuity with these institutions and groups and survival within them most often demands compliance and acceptance of the reality they establish. Development of one’s creative, transcendent capacities (locating power and authority within oneself through the integration and transcendence of dualities and autonomous and creative thinking) is often neglected out of fear that this state of mind would challenge existing power and the continuity of the group as it is presently organized. We become habituated to ways of thinking that make us feel safe, but the freezing of our minds and imaginations into these thought paradigms leaves us mindlessly craving that which these ideas dictate, whether it be what to oppose or to have. Then we are confused at the anguish we create in ourselves, as parts of our self, denied existence, remind us of their extermination through symptoms that perpetuate our own and others’ suffering.

I will explore links between culturally sanctioned child-rearing practices that create early splits and divisions in the self and consequent problems with individuation and creative/symbolic development that make the child vulnerable to and often eager to participate in forms of political activity that can be a prelude to or constitute involvement in genocidal actions. I also show similarities between the psychological mechanisms on an individual level that create soul murder or annihilate aspects of the other, and annihilation of groups of people on a political level. On both an individual and political level there is concretization of thinking resulting from traumatization early in life or from political and social events that lead to problems with differentiation and symbolic development, resulting in impeded development of or disengagement from the reflective “I.” This reflective “I” might be seen as what Arendt calls “thinking.” Kristeva (2001) summarizes as follows:

Thinking is what reveals and uncovers the “split” or the duality of the thinking ego, but it also provides most effective therapy for the thinking ego when it sustains the dialogue between the parties that constitute the split and when it can question their differences while avoiding get stuck in any one part of the dichotomies that gave rise to the experience. (p. 195)
Nietzsche, (1990) speaks to the pitfalls of “thinking” when he says,

what Socrates assumed to be a remedy was only another manifestation of the disease, the disease of thought. My spirit had dared the ultimate truth, the absolute certainty, and this certainty has made me mad. My wisdom, at last is disenchanted; I know less than Hamlet, less than Socrates, less than nothing! This is the final truth; there is no truth. . . . (pp. 81–82)

Both speak to what may be thought of as the differential between a dialogic as opposed to a genocidal mentality. To get stuck at either pole of a dialogue and set down one’s stake on it being truth results in “madness” rather than “remedy.” To assume there is “truth,” one must assume a not-truth which allows for a dialogue or ongoing discovery and creating of new relations and possibilities between existing facts and thoughts.

In feeling that inner freedom to reflect and to feel unbound to any one side of a polarity or dichotomy, one is in a position to truly think, create, choose, or decide. The achievement of this state allows for the transformation of the metaphor of terror to the metaphor of being alive, and this is, paradoxically, what terror attempts to destroy. “The only possible metaphor one may conceive of for the life of the mind is the sensation of being alive” (Arendt, 1978, p. 123).

In relation to this, some of the questions considered in this article are the following:

1. What are some of the developmental and social factors that contribute to the formation of a divided, fragmented or dualistic state of mind? What are the vulnerabilities and characteristics in this state of mind that allow for manipulation by external authority and forces of terror? How does this state of mind ultimately contribute to genocidal cultures?
2. What are the intergenerational dynamics and binds that perpetuate this state of mind?
3. How does one develop or generate the consciousness needed not to be identified with this state of mind, when it is the elements of this consciousness—reflection, creativity, symbolization—that are destroyed by the traumas of genocidal ac-
tions (both social and interpersonal)? What kind of awareness and transformation is necessary to transcend this impasse and achieve a dialogic state of mind as opposed to a genocidal state of mind?

4. What are some of the characteristics and achievements of a dialogic mentality?

This dualistic state of mind allows terror its greatest power and effect. Extreme forms of coercion and terror used by totalitarianism regimes attempt to wrench people from their “true” nature and self to the point where they no longer know that it has been stolen or destroyed. Once this happens, what is good and evil can be determined by those in power, and the compliant “false” self used, manipulated, or dispensed with as it serves needs of others with greater power, making objects of those used. Terror forces adherence to existing paradigms to secure one’s existence and makes that which does not fit the paradigm superfluous. It serves to obliterate presence to one’s being, because all one’s energy is given to warding off what might destroy one, bodily, emotionally, or spiritually. In its extreme form terror transforms human nature itself, so that one can live in a controlled society, or be more easily controlled and influenced by one’s environment. Terror tries to ensure that one will make the choice desired by the other, by creating consequences that make it too costly to make a more life enhancing or moral choice.

The use of terror attempts to insure there is always another to be feared, demeaned, or eliminated. The dualistic mind is fertile ground to perpetuate terror and be vulnerable to it. Dualism, driven by terror, prevents the integration that allows the deepening of the self from which emerges empathy, compassion, and the capacity for symbolization. What often results is identification with traits that make us feel either better than or worse than others, creating feelings of difference, rather than connection with the deeper, more universal aspects of self that unify us with others. Terror can be used to bind us to our masks, blinding ourselves to our own nature and that of others. It creates a floor that becomes the bottom line of our existence, obscuring possibilities of being that would be its remedy. The divide it cre-
ates in the self serves then to perpetuate terror, terror of the life below the floor, and terror of anything other than what we believe gives us security in the face of terror. The rationales we use to justify not challenging the masks or venturing below or beyond the floor it creates are reinforced by the belief that what we are terrified of is real, and therefore that the masks and divides within ourselves need to be maintained. The fact is that the masks we maintain and our dissociation from our more empathic, compassionate selves are terrifying to ourselves and others, and so a vicious cycle is perpetuated.

Perlman (2002) believes that “terrorism can be thought of as a perversion of the desire for empathy” (p. 33). Because “empathy is an unrelenting nonnegotiable requirement. . . . if empathy is not naturally forthcoming it will be exacted in a pathological manner” (p. 33). Terror thus becomes a way to make the other feel what one feels. September 11 was cited as an event that had the intent to make Americans feel what others who have been oppressed and attacked have felt.

The intolerable affects of the terrorists are projected into the recipients of terror—the powerful, the envied, the humiliated, the privileged ones. . . . The victims experience a transformation of their subjectivity, as they are now possessed by terror. They now feel powerlessness, frustration, grief and terror previously carried by the terrorist. (p. 32)

When one’s subjectivity is “possessed” by terror, one develops a self in relation to the terrorizer, and in feeling cornered into a fight for physical and psychic survival loses contact with the creative factors in the self that could transform the “terror consciousness” or “terror metaphor” into one that could redirect the self and society. Neumann (1954) emphasizes:

The creativity of consciousness may be jeopardized by religious or political totalitarianism, for any authoritarian fixation of the canon leads to sterility of consciousness. . . . The individual is the bearer of this creative activity of the mind and therefore remains the decisive factor in all future Western developments. (p. xix)

For many thinkers, the Holocaust took the use of terror, through a totalitarian regime, to such an extreme that it became a dividing line in civilization. All categories of thought, evalu-
tion, and definitions of good and evil seemed inadequate to the task of understanding. Arendt (1976) warns of reading the strange in the familiar. She sees the Holocaust as unprecedented and representing a new danger to the human race, an assault on human freedom and dignity that is not continuous with tyranny of the past. “Understanding the unprecedented meant that the faculty of human judgment, deprived of its usual ground in “common sense,” had to rely on a “fearful imagination” prepared to “dwell on horrors” (Villa, 1999, p.15).

We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition. This is the reality in which we live. And this is why all efforts to escape from the grimness of the present into nostalgia for a still intact past, or into the anticipated oblivion of a better future, are vain. (Arendt, 1976, p. ix)

Arendt sees the Holocaust as breaking down all categories and leaving a legacy of “bad” that cannot be left behind because it is the outcome of the “subterranean stream of Western history.” It will not cease generating “the bad” till it is processed consciously. The categories of good failed us, and the bad perhaps is a consequence of that failure.

Others, like Bauman (1989), see the Holocaust as continuous with what is considered “normal” in civilization and its guiding principals and spirit, “its priorities, its immanent vision of the world and of its proper way to pursue human happiness together with a perfect society” (p. 8). He modifies this by asking:

If the principles that ruled over life and death of Auschwitz inmates were like these that rule our own, then what has this outcry and lamentation been about? . . . Mass destruction was the extreme form of antagonism and oppression, yet not all cases of oppression, communal hatred and injustice are “like” the Holocaust. (p. 87)

But, he goes on to say that what is of real concern is . . . ideational processes that by their own inner logic may lead to genocidal projects and the technical resources that permit imple-
mentation of such projects. . . The Holocaust did not just, mysteriously, avoid clash with the social norms and institutions of modernity. It was these norms and institutions that made the Holocaust feasible. (p. 87)

The Holocaust could merely have uncovered another face of the same modern society whose other, more familiar face we so admire. And that the two faces are perfectly comfortable attached to the same body. What we perhaps fear most, is that each of the two faces can no more exist without the other than can the two sides of a coin. (p. 7)

I believe both positions—seeing the Holocaust as a radical departure from all categories we have used for conscious thinking in the civilized world, and recognizing its continuity with the principles, spirit, and priorities of civilization—are two aspects of the same problems, and not dichotomous positions. Ignoring the way the Holocaust is continuous with the spirit and principles of civilization—with its modernity, civility, rationality, technology—forces the eruption of increasingly dire, tragic, and consequential manifestations of the dark side of those principles. It is as Jung said: “That which we do not bring to consciousness appears in our lives as fate.” We are so a part of the consciousness that is generative of genocide that the question arises as to whether it is possible to “think” about genocide from a different consciousness than the one that is generated from it? Aware of this limitation in myself, I come up against the difficulty of thinking about it, as terror sets the boundaries of thought, sets barricades to crossing over into the “creative,” and thereby makes one aware of the thorny dilemmas and knots of mind that make exceedingly difficult the deeper synthesis and transcendence of the existing polarities. Dualistic and hierarchical thinking that are central in a history of genocide and terror seem to intrude on transforming it. This thinking might ask if killing one group of people is worse than killing another—one being an ally and more like one, and the other an enemy, or less like one, or whether genocides are of a different caliber, or whether the division of mind that annihilates whole groups of people and designates them superfluous is comparable to the division of mind that annihilates aspects of adults’ or children’s perception and feeling? Does it serve to evaluate suffering as deserving or unde-
serving and create a hierarchy of atrocity or pain that serves to rank victimization? Such evaluation might then serve to qualify what pain is worthy of empathy and what pain not.

Recent discoveries in science are relevant, such as Bohm’s (1980) implicate order, which includes his vision of the cosmos as a hologram where each part of the universe contains or enfolds the whole, allowing for the creation of separate but related events, outside of causality. He also states “that as the implicate order unfolds to manifest the moment-to moment reality of the explicate order, new ‘creative’ patterns tend to emerge. These matters are expressions of a creative urge in the deepest implicate aspect of the cosmos.” Similarly, perhaps we can look at the genocidal dynamics within us as a hologram for the whole, and by allowing the unfolding of it, under reflective scrutiny, we might allow for new creative patterns to emerge.

Heisenberg’s idea of the observer changing what’s observed bears thinking about as well. Are we examining the phenomenon of genocidal mentality with the consciousness formed by it, or one that has differentiated from it and transcended it? Are we capable of knowing the difference? Can we look at “victims” and “perpetrators” as part of a whole, not necessarily through the words that already define them, but through a lens different than the one that created them? Can we see guilt in innocence and innocence in guilt in ways that might tear us from old allegiances? Can we challenge the categories themselves and find fault with the mind that carries them with knowing understanding?

DeMausse (2002) and Miller (1984) believe terror has been the essence of child rearing philosophies and practices for many generations. They both see it being used to sharply delineate what is good and bad, acceptable and not, thinkable and unthinkable and thereby divides the self against itself and those others who embody these evil or unthinkable traits. This happens at a time when the self is so dependent and fused with the other that to do otherwise would risk its survival or the love of the one on whom the child is dependent. Thus a mentality is shaped by preexisting dualities, compliant to authoritarian structures and frozen in its understanding of reality and self.

Here the forced dilemma in infancy, to do what is expected
and designated good by parents to keep their love and survive or to protest and lose their love and possibly not survive, in some way mirrors the dilemmas of the Holocaust where all choices were essentially tragic—as Arendt (1976) describes “a man is faced with the alternative of betraying and thus murdering his friends or of sending his wife and children, for whom he is in every sense responsible to their death . . . (p. 452). In the camps survival might mean a choice between complicity with the enemy, betrayal of others, theft, or “suicidal adherence to ordinary morality” (Villa, 1999 p. 27.)

Clearly genocide is a violation of a different order than murder or psychic murder. But again the analogy deserves to be noted. The mass murders of Hitler or Stalin were often done without feeling, in a mechanical way—“they were killed because they did not fit, for one reason or another, the scheme of a perfect society. . . . They were eliminated, so that an objectively better human world—more efficient, ore moral, more beautiful, could be established” (Bauman, 1989, p. 92). Children shaped to fit the parental image of how to be a good person are often convinced that it is “for their own good.”

There are thus also risks in not reading the strange into the familiar, in not seeing the microcosms of tyranny, assault on freedom and human dignity, and rationales and logic used to justify actions, based on faulty dualities, as they occur in our everyday practices of child rearing, relationships, education, professional, business, and political life. In not seeing the shadow of genocidal acts of the past in our daily life, the thinking we take for granted as “normal,” leaves us unaware of our own vulnerability to complicity. We are a product of a history of genocide which, if unexamined, leaves us feeling un-implicated and potentially of a mindless piece with the prevailing metaphor of terror.

Arendt maintains that totalitarian terror is different from all other forms because the scale of it was “irreducible to any other set of recognizable human motivations.” (Arendt & Jaspers, 1992, p. 166). Among the motivations and effects Arendt (1976) speaks of are the assault on human dignity, creating a world where “masses of people are continuously rendered superfluous” (p. 459), and using terror to frighten people into submis-
tion, to prove there are no limits to human power and that there is nothing inherent or permanent about dignity to create people who can no longer resist domination, to remake "humanity and the world such that 'the facts' reflect the truth of the ideological superego (the inevitable victory of the proletariat in the class struggle; the superiority of the Aryan race in the Darwinian struggle)" (Villa, 1999 p. 17), and to destroy the natural repugnance or moral sense that might halt the gigantic scale of the terror—laws providing no protective boundaries, use of terror without end or designated purpose, use of camps as "holes of oblivion," where people are isolated from the outside world, "making death itself anonymous" as if he "never really existed" (Arendt, 1976, p. 452). People were rendered interchangeable, and not capable of initiative and judgment; they were made to internalize their unique individuality as superfluous. There was an attempt to eliminate human spontaneity, character, and the moral life, making conscience inadequate or irrelevant. In fact, conscience became a route to self-destruction. Innocence was not an excuse not to demean and murder, it was a requirement.

If we look at all the "motivations" Arendt elaborates, there is consistency with motivations in genocides and use of terror historically. World War I was the first war where advanced technology—machine guns, poison gas—contributed to anonymous and mass killing. The initial protests of the growing socialist movement, where workers declared they would not be used as pawns as soldiers by the capitalist enterprise, were mysteriously replaced by mass enlistments. As hundreds of thousands of soldiers perished anonymously and were buried in mass graves for little or no gain, motivations of nationalism and heroism were dashed. The battle of Verdun involved the use of massive artillery and entailed the loss of nearly three quarters of a million lives, with a gain of only two and a half miles. Mass, anonymous graves made death anonymous and meaningless, as if many of these millions had never existed. This sense of massive, anonymous, meaningless death has been amplified since World War I, resulting in its most horrific, though not unique, demonstration with the Holocaust.

The consciousness of the Holocaust is not a consciousness detached from history. As Newmann (p. 154), says "The evol-
tion of consciousness by stages is as much a collective human phenomenon as a particular individual phenomenon. Ontogenetic development may therefore be regarded as a modified recapitulation of phylogenetic development (p. xx). Following the Holocaust, many of its motivational attributes are mirrored in our individual psyches, particularly in those individuals closest to it.

Some of the unconscious characteristics of the children of Holocaust survivors and of Nazis are similar to parents directly victimized by a totalitarian regime. The unconscious of the parents takes total possession of the child for the purpose of transmitting and potentially processing the trauma of their life. The children of survivors, Kogan (1995) finds, are exploited by the parents’ need for the child to repeat their trauma. The parents-survivors create a sense of emotional inaccessibility, because of their own neediness, requiring the child to parent them through the symbiotic attachment. This makes necessary the child’s sacrifice of his own individuality, and with the consequent loss of self, the child takes on the horrific pain the parents attempt to deny. According to Kogan, these patients often find themselves in a “psychic hole”—“the encapsulation of the fantasy of the traumatic past of the parents, which has an impact on the whole life of the patient” (p. 156). Living from within this hole, the second generation often lives with “unthinkable anxiety” (Winnicott, 1962). Their inability to remedy their parents’ or their own reality creates feelings of being superfluous and helpless. To attempt to live their own life and escape the requirements of their parents’ past would feel like murder, and to subjugate their lives to these requirements is suicide—to die as if they did not exist. What is the reason for living this life of inner torture, but their innocence?

Arendt sees the camps as “laboratories” serving as advanced experiments to change human nature. Though not equal, one might see the Nazis’ creation of Hitler Youth and the Gestapo, and the attempt to get the whole German population to subjugate themselves to the will of the leader as ghastly and consequential “laboratory,” in changing and reducing human nature.

The unintegrated consciousness of victims and perpetrators alike takes hold of their descendents, trapping them in emo-
tional realities not of their making and often experientially dehumanizing and devastating. They lack the “reality” in the present from which to understand their own feelings of dehumanization, paralysis, and despair. Thus, the passing down of the trauma of genocide, or of trauma derivative of the qualities of genocide, perpetuates a mentality that re-creates trauma and the moral dilemmas of trauma, enforces the metaphor of terror, and prevents a dialogic mode from developing.

TRANSFORMING DUALISM

Letting Concepts and Ideals Fall Apart

The Main Point is to dissolve the Dualistic Struggle, our habitual tendency to struggle against what’s happening to us or in us . . . . We don’t get this kind of encouragement very often.

—Pema Chodron

Only through the inter—mixtures of good and evil can the full manifoldness of things arise . . . good and evil are then no longer irreconcilable principia but utilizable qualities, before whose utilizability the question of an absolute worth and worthlessness vanishes.

—Buber, Good and Evil

The crux of dualism is an apparently unbridgeable gap between two incommensurable orders of being that must be reconciled if our assumption that there is a comprehensible universe is to be justified. . . . Plato’s realm of being containing eternal ideas and realm of becoming containing changing things; the medieval division between finite man and infinite God; Descarte’s thinking mind and extended matter. . . . Kant’s division between empirical phenomena and transcendental noumena . . . the sacred and profane . . . religious and the secular. . . . Dualism is related to binary thinking, i.e., to systems of thought that are two-valued, such as logic in which theorems are valid or invalid . . . claims are true or false . . . ethics in which individuals are good or bad, actions right or wrong. (Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, p. 244–245)

Use of terror, both politically and in child rearing, has been coupled with ideology and utopian visions that justify and even encourage parents or leaders to feel good about using violent means to bring about so called “good” results, “virtuous ends” or a “better or ideal society.” This historically has meant tying
terror with virtue. As Alice Miller’s (1984) book *For Your Own Good* emphasizes

The conviction that parents are always right and that every act of cruelty, whether conscious or unconscious, is an expression of their love is so deeply rooted in human beings because it is based on the process of internalization that takes place during the first months of life—in other words, during the period preceding separation from the primary caregiver. (p. 5)

The capacity to identify with ideas that ultimately divide us from aspects of ourselves that are inconsistent with these ideas, and from “different” others, stems from a fundamental comfort with or acceptance of a dualistic state of mind rather than a creative, symbolizing one. A dualistic mind is more likely to freeze metaphors or create icons of one side of the duality, solidifying types of people into permanently good or bad. Green (1986) says duality is the irreducible basis of intelligence, leading to the creation of a third entity, namely, symbolic activity (pp. 18–19), which is the essence of creative activity. Nietzsche (1887) saw the opposing and innovative forces of the creative spirit as achieving a new kind of power, one not obedient to reason or existing moral forces. He saw the man designated “good,” that is, obedient to reason and existent and logical morality, as potentially dangerous, “endangering man’s potential to reach the peak of magnificence of which he is capable” (p. 155).

The dualistic mentality has dominated our culture for millennia. It manifests in leaders and institutions privileging an ideology, theory, or value at the expense of diminishing another, and attempts through power, manipulation, fear, and terror to create rationales, scientific evidence, and moral principals to convince a community, country, or population that the adherence to these precepts makes them superior and justifies the diminishment or elimination of the other. Where one side of a valence is valued more than another, there occur splits in our perceptions of ourselves and each other. Our mind adheres to this one side of the valence and distorts reality.

Although the dualistic nature of reality is evident in that things exist in opposites and there is always opposition or conflict in life, the tenacious clinging to one side of a polarity or avoidance of another is often the result of trauma. We do not
generally consider the conditioning that teaches us to give intrinsic value to one side or the other of a duality as a form of trauma nor the conditioning to unquestioningly accept the categories of mind that evaluate reality by these established and fixed values. We take for granted that this conditioned mind is an adequate instrument for assessing and perceiving reality. The terror that enforces this “conditioning” is often insidious but powerful, creating barriers against knowing other than what is allowed to be known, and making unthinkable that which does not fit into the world created by culture and parents. There is often a vacating, dissociating, or doubting of the experiencing self in favor of the “allowed” self. The use of terror, fear, or coercion to bend the other’s will toward what is wanted, rather than employing empathy to understand what the other wants, will create splits in the self. We then organize our sense of what is good around what is safe in terms of our significant others and group and what is bad in terms of what is dangerous in relation to the same “others.”

Among the many dichotomies by which we organize reality are life–death, masculine–feminine, anger–love, happiness–unhappiness, pain–pleasure, rationality–intuition, and strong–weak. The dualistic perspective negates a dialogic exchange that results in a synthesis or awareness of how opposites contain each other, how neither can exist except in relation to the other. The symbolizing capacity is impaired or destroyed, and a person cannot then process experience in a way that allows him to find meaning that can transform his relation to his experience. Rosenbaum (2004) sees trauma as resulting in both the inability to regulate negative emotions in relation to others and the destruction of the capacity to activate internal good, empathic, and creative object relations. The unregulated negative emotions then perpetuate the terrorizing that creates the splits in the self.

The Buddhist concept of emptiness implies that there is no intrinsic value in anything in life: Everything exists in relation to something else and its value is seen in terms of its conditioned causes. The idea of impermanence or transience is also embedded in this view. Nothing has a fixed or essential nature that will not change as it comes into relationship with different ideas or experience. In this light, a true self is no self, for there is no fixed concept or structure of self that has permanence and will
not change. The idea of clinging to some “sense” of self, protecting it, fighting for it, is illusory. There is no “self” apart from that which it is in relation to. There is thus a sense of the interdependence of all things. The self that we are desperately trying to protect and prove right does not exist in this view. Something in flux and existent only in relation to the conditions out of which it developed and interacts is nothing in itself.

The long process of coming to this insight helps free one from being bound to the fluctuations and conflicts created by a dualistic mind. One might come to see dualistic thinking as an attempt to protect oneself against trauma by designating in advance what is bad in hope of avoiding it, and in aligning oneself on the side of what one considers good and thereby feeling safe. As experience always seems to teach, those things we think are good for us may also involve aspects that are disappointing and toxic, while things we are taught to be afraid of or avoid might open expansive possibilities of experiencing that we could not have conceived of.

In Buddhist practice one is instructed to cultivate an in-between state, where one learns to live in the paradox of things being neither right nor wrong. Chodron (2001) says that one needs “to stay with the uneasiness and not solidify into a view. . . . Holding the paradox is not something any of us will suddenly be able to do. That’s why we’re encouraged to spend our whole lives training with uncertainty, ambiguity, insecurity” (p. 121).

While survival depends on making distinctions and evaluations, every situation presents a unique constellation of conditions that require a new and creative response. When we adhere to one side of things, evaluating by fixed understanding, we are no longer present to events, and no longer creatively discerning. We are being dictated to by perceptions with which we have come to identify for the sake of a cohesive identity or for survival with those on whom we depend. By placing one side of a duality in a superior position, with the other side considered lesser, false perceptions of all parts are created, thus diminishing the whole.

One of the more powerful “opposites” of our time is Nazi and victim. It is difficult to evoke sympathy in most people for someone designated a Nazi or terrorist; likewise it is difficult to
be critical of someone who was a victim of such a person. A Jewish woman, whose grandparents were killed in the Holocaust, entered a dialogue group with children of Nazis. Her first experience of being in the room with those “blond” people her parents had ‘hated’ was frightening, and people she knew with similar backgrounds were horrified that she would enter into dialogue with such people. A German man, who had grown up as a child in Germany in a town that had been made “free” of Jews, similarly felt that no Jew would want to be in his presence. When we see ourselves and others through frozen metaphors it becomes difficult to be receptive to the ways others change, or to perceive aspects of them that are different than the metaphor through which we see them. Within a frozen metaphor it is difficult to see that a victim of the Holocaust may project internalized experiences of the aggressor on others and continue to expect hate and rejection, in ways that justify his own derision or hate of others. Likewise, it is hard to acknowledge that former Nazis or their children might identify with their victims in unconscious ways and be agonized by aspects of themselves they feel would not have been brought into being under different conditions.

It is also difficult to see that there may be continuity in our “civilized” society with societies where genocidal behavior evolved. In his play *Aunt Dan and Lemon* (1985), the playwright Wallace Shawn has one of his characters—Lemon, a sickly young girl obsessed with reading about the Nazi period say:

The thing is the Nazis were trying to create a certain way of life for themselves. In their opinion all the destructive values of greed, materialism, competitiveness, dishonesty, and so on, had been brought into the society by non-Germanic races. They were trying to create... some sort of society of brothers.... So to make that attempt they had to remove the non-Germans, they had to eliminate inter-breeding.... And they were certainly ruthless and thorough in what they did. But the mere fact of killing human beings in order to create a certain way of life is not something that exactly distinguishes the Nazis from everybody else. That’s just absurd. When any people feel that its hope for a desirable future is threatened by some other group, they always do the very same thing. ... So it becomes absurd to talk about the Nazis as if the Nazis were unique. That’s a kind of hypocrisy. Because
the fact is, no society has ever considered the taking of life an unpardonable crime or even really a major tragedy. (pp. 77–80).

Stephan Batchelor’s (1997) description of an unawakened existence from a Buddhist perspective describes the mentality of blind craving, lack of integration, and blindness to self. The unawakened state is not merely a passive one of being asleep, but one of inner violence and conflict, that mirrors the unawakened culture.

An unawakened existence, in which we drift unaware on a surge of habitual impulses, is both ignoble and undignified. Instead of a natural and non-coercive authority, we impose our will on others either through manipulation and intimidation or by appealing to the opinions of those more powerful than ourselves. Authority becomes a question of force rather than integrity. (p. 6)

... self-centered confusion and craving can no longer be adequately understood only as psychological drives that manifest themselves in subjective states of anguish. We find these drives embodied in the very economic, military and political structures that influence the lives of the majority of people on earth. (p. 112)

The lack of integration and resulting inner violence in this “unawakened” inner as well as societal state generates genocidal behavior. But the repressed shadow side that is being kept out of existence is always yearning to be consciously integrated into the self. As the poet Rumi says, “You thought that union was a way you could decide to go. / But the soul follows things rejected and almost forgotten.” To achieve this union our unconscious is attracted to those that embody aspects of our psyche that need to come to light and be examined for how our conscious misconceptions and frozen metaphors keep them hidden. Too often the selves we consciously identify with forbid this, and we seek the more homogenous, like-minded other, keeping the rejected and forgotten buried and projected unconsciously.

An example of how the therapeutic relationship “tricked” or actually facilitated the integration of the shadow side can be seen in a relationship between a Muslim patient, active in terrorist organizations some years before entering therapy, and his therapist, a Jew, who had lost a relative in a bus bombing also
several years ago. The patient, after having several consultations, chose to work with this therapist, feeling a “chemistry” and “attraction” he did not feel with the others. He did not know at the onset that she was Jewish, and while she knew he was of Arab descent, she did not know for some months into the treatment of his involvement in terrorist organizations, of his active hatred of Jews at that time, and his still unresolved and confused feelings in that regard. The present crisis in his life directed the early sessions away from these facts, and insufficient trust made it difficult to bring up these experiences, which were, at the time of his therapy, years later, tainted with shame. In the months where neither knew these facts about the other, a therapeutic process evolved, melding the two in a mutual process of reflectively investigating the symbolic productions of the patient’s life. She questioned the meaning of each of his utterances and he associated to uncovered thoughts and memories that led to new understanding, new meanings, and new perceptions about his life. The fluency with which they worked together generated a positive transference and countertransference.

About six months into their work together, he, feeling safer, began revealing more of his life in the terrorist organization, and many of his shameful feelings and thoughts, including his buying into the image of Jews as despicable and worthy of extinction. The therapist was surprised, in hearing this, at her own experiences of revulsion at this man, whom she had grown to like and respect for his capacity to take hard looks at himself and develop insights he put to use in changing his life. She found herself questioning if he deserved being treated, was worth her time, or even if she was violating her morality in helping this man. She felt toward him what he had felt toward Jews: Was he worth it, or was he a despicable human being who should be discarded? He sensed a withdrawal of empathy and a lessening of rapport which made him anxious. He finally spoke of it. She felt compelled to reveal to him that she was Jewish and was having a difficult time listening to some of his life experience related to his hatred of Jews. He reacted with parallel feelings of self-revulsion that he had put trust in one whom he would have destroyed. All the real connection they had made through the evolving work of unfreezing the frozen metaphors and percep-
tions in his life seemed to temporarily dissolve in the reemergence of deep frozen images and metaphors each of them held in themselves of the other as enemy and a lesser human being.

Years of more work revealed that the initial rapport and attraction they felt for each other was for the images in the other’s unconscious they each needed to confront and symbolically transform to rid themselves of the inner frozen metaphors. “The obvious” for each was blocking the possibility of a more open dialogic process within themselves, with others, and with the world. The “obvious” dictated their conscious reactions. For the therapist, once she learned that her client matched her “image” of the terrorist she had learned to despise and consider unforgivable, she was ready to dismiss him and hate herself if she acted counter to the prescribed way of acting toward such a person. For the patient, once he learned his therapist matched his image of a despicable Jew, the trust he had built up came in grave conflict with his distrust and shame at having trusted her. Both, by virtue of the role assigned them—therapist, designated to feel compassion for her client; patient, designated to trust his healer—tricked themselves into feeling toward the other ways that were in contradiction to what the conscious images dictated. Once the unconscious images emerged they both had to fight the “obvious” reactions these more conscious images dictated in order to refind the more human connection they had blindly (at least blind to the “obvious”) fallen into.

The obvious is literally that which stands in one’s way, in front of or over against oneself. One has to begin by recognizing that it exists for oneself. . . . Someone whose mind is imprisoned in the metaphor cannot see it as a metaphor. It is just obvious. (Laing, 1969, pp.13–14, 17–18)

Capacity for reflection and doubt are pivotal in making the transition from the concrete, fixed images that dictate and tyrannize our behavior and make our aggressive and violent reactions against the other justifiable and “obvious” to the ever-changing mind that generates more and more integrated images. Doubt and reflection make us aware that (1) we only know the other through our own perception, and these perceptions may be dominated by fixed images from the past not related to a more
transforming dualism

complex, changing, present reality; (2) everyone projects these
not necessarily true perceptions and images on others; and (3)
people change, therefore what we think of someone now may
not be true of them an hour from now, or five years from now.
This is evident in the patient–therapist interaction described ear-
lier. Without identifying more with their reflective, symbolizing
process (asking at each point, what does it mean that I think
this or feel this?) than the fixed images dictating the mistrustful
feelings and destructive wishes toward the other, the relation-
ship would come to a grinding halt. Both would be denied a
chance for “cure,” that is, revising the images dictating the geno-
cidal behavior.

Reflection and doubt also mobilize the symbolic process
that allows one to differentiate from the symbiotic relationships
that holds the fixed images in place. Our symbiotic relationships
with people from the past, and present people embodying the
past, are often ridden with fears and terrors that are the residue
of traumatic and genocidal behaviors and experiences, making
change and the transition from one to the other painful and
difficult. This is why the transition from a genocidal to dialogic
mentality often involves the work of generations.

In the Yogic view, this reflective self is called the Witness,
which is the part of consciousness that helps heal the polariza-
tion in consciousness which causes suffering. When we live only
one side of a duality, the other side is continually presented to
us in life, as Jung said, as fate. The Witness mentality is a way of
breaking the chain of conditioning that mindlessly has us choos-
ing one side of the polarity as the preferred reality. Stephan
Cope (1999) identifies the following qualities of Witness men-
tality:

1. The Witness does not choose for or against any aspect of real-
ity—does not take sides. 2. The Witness does not censor life—all
thoughts, feelings and sensations receive the light of awareness,
without discrimination . . . [it] practices self-observation without
judgment. 3. Witness is not an intellectual exercise . . . We actu-
ally witness our experience with our whole body . . . 4. Witness
consciousness is always present at least in its potential form in
every human being at every moment. We don’t have to create the
Witness . . . [it] needs only to be recognized, evoked, claimed and
cultivated. 5. The Witness is the part of the mind that is capable
of standing completely still . . . at the center of the storm. 6. The Witness goes everywhere . . . outside time and space, the quality of the self-aware universe . . . the intelligence . . . saturating mind and matter. (pp. 179–180)

It is this aspect of the mind that emerges in meditation, where one lets the thoughts arising in the mind come and go, without feeling any attachment or aversion to them. One experiences oneself separate from the thought, the idea, the feeling. There is a still place from which to witness it all. It is the place from which Arendt might say one can truly think, or Buber would say one can truly have a relationship, a place from which one is free from feeling coerced by any one position or idea and feels no need to coerce another to be in accord with oneself.

There are writers like Adorno (1962), who believe that writing a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric and Howe (1986), who speak of an “evil that cannot quite be imagined,” or the “helplessness of the imagination before an evil that cannot quite be understood” (p.30). Is what is unimaginable the thought that such traits can arise in the species to which we belong? Are we afraid such capacities could arise in ourselves under parallel conditions? To make the unthinkable too holy or horrific to examine, or to articulate in metaphor and narrative, does not allow us to find the “inconceivable” in ourselves; thus the shadow side remains unknown and the “obvious” metaphors we live by control our consciousness.

The idea that writing poetry after the Holocaust is immoral and that the only response is silence does not see that poetry does not explain, in a rational way, but binds the rational with the seemingly irrational in a way that sheds new light on both. Poetry, as all art, relies on an inner integrative creative process that is antithetical to authority-driven thinking. It is the creative symbolic process involved in creating poetry that has the most power to heal and to stand up against genocidal forces. Adorno’s idea that thought must explore its own limits in tackling understanding of the Holocaust and participate in assembling something new in the aftermath is what art and poetry attempt to do.

Often the way we come to understand and organize our understanding of trauma and genocide is with a mentality that has been traumatized. This may in some way dovetail with Lacan’s
idea that the ego is not capable of recognizing its true nature, but can only grasp it apart from ideas and the mind, in a paradoxical manner. To think outside that paradigm can feel like one is unhinged from the reality one knows. Can we conceive of a development that would not so harshly lead to the splitting of self that causes such deep repression, and so projection and dualistic thinking? Can we conceive of not living bound to the identities that are formed by such trauma and abuse, and can we conceive of a self well-enough integrated to be free of identification with ideology and not susceptible to manipulation by external authority?

Hitler identified the Jews to the German people as masqueraders who were able to slyly fool others about their true nature, which was one of greed, ambition, and profiteering off the misfortune of others. Because most Germans were identified with their own masks of being superior, pure, it was easy for Hitler and the Nazi party to mobilize the unconsciously denied feelings that were projected on the Jews and the conscious identification with attributes (the Germans’ mask) that helped them deny them. For did they not in fact manifest the very greed, ambition, and profiteering off the misfortune of others that they accused the Jews of? When we do not acknowledge, even embrace the “worst” in ourselves, we must fight it outside of ourselves. But even thinking of it as “worst” must be fought in order to embrace “worst.”

SUSCEPTIBILITY AND SUBJUGATION TO AUTHORITY

Societies are not made of sticks and stones, but of men whose individual characters, by turning the scale one way or another, determine the direction of the whole.


I should like merely to understand how it happens that so many men, so many villages, so many cities, so many nations sometimes suffer under a single tyrant who has no other power than the power they give him; who is able to harm them only to the extent to which they have the willingness to bear with him; who could do them absolutely no injury unless the preferred to put up with him rather than confront him.

—Etienne de La Boetie, “The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude (The Politics of Obedience)”
William Reich (1970) said, “It is generally clear that “fascism” is not the act of a Hitler or a Mussolini, but that it is the expression of the irrational structure of mass man” (p. xx). Rycroft (1971) summarizes one of Reich’s main points:

The character structure of man today—who is perpetuating patriarchal, authoritarian culture some four to six thousand years old—is characterized by an armoring against nature within himself and against social misery outside himself. This armoring of the character is the basis of loneliness, helplessness, craving for authority, fear of responsibility, mystical longing, sexual misery, of impotent rebelliousness as well as of resignation of an unnatural and pathological type. (p. 35)

Laing (1969) adds to this, “Our civilization represses not only ‘the instincts,’ not only sexuality, but any form of transcendence. . . . it is not surprising that someone with an insistent experience of other dimensions . . . will run the risk either of being destroyed by the others, or of betraying what he knows” (p. 11).

How do people get emotionally bound together to act collectively in this way?

Etienne de La Boetie (cited in Sennett, 1977) writing in the 16th century, centuries before the development of psychoanalysis attempts to answer the question of why people would give up their most valuable asset—freedom, which involves the deeper human inclinations of creativity, spiritual growth (the forms of transcendence and longing Reich and Laing mentions, earlier) for subjugation to authority. His first point is that

...men will grow accustomed to the idea that they have always been in subjugation, that their fathers lived in the same way; they will think they are obliged to suffer this evil, and will persuade themselves by example and imitation of others, finally investing those who order them around with proprietary rights, based on the idea that it has always been that way. (p. 256)

La Boetie then goes on to describe the structure that maintains authoritarian leadership:

...there are only four or five who maintain the dictator, four or five who keep the country in bondage to him. . . . The six have six hundred who profit under them. . . . The six hundred maintain
under them six thousand, whom they promote in rank, . . . and whoever is pleased to unwind the skein, will observe that not the six thousand but a hundred thousand, and even millions cling to the tyrant by this cord to which they are tied . . . men accept servility in order to acquire wealth; as if they could acquire anything of their own when they cannot even assert that they belong to themselves, or as if anyone could possess under a tyrant a single thing in his own name. Yet they act as if their wealth really belonged to them, and forget that it is they themselves who give the ruler the power to deprive everybody of everything, leaving nothing that anyone can identify as belonging to somebody. (in Sennett, 1977, pp. 256–257)

So La Boetie sites the symbiosis with the past as a central factor in seeing living in subjugation as a norm because it has always been that way. The inability to transcend this state, or find support for the instincts to find alternatives, leads to societies forming around masses fixated in this symbiotic, undifferentiated mentality. He emphasizes that in a society dominated by this mentality one’s life is being run by the one we have given power, as in the symbiotic relationship with the parent. Not in charge of one’s self, how can we want anything but what is wanted of us by the powerful other we are symbiotically attached to. All that one is driven to, that is, what one thinks is good—wealth, property, power, status—is a function of the dualistic mind created by the internalization of the values of the powerful other not differentiated from. A particular level of psychological developmental will seek belonging to the type of collective or social organization that reinforces the individuals’ values and inner organization. “When both the individual’s and the society’s psychological state is pathological . . . the interdependence can be expected to result in mutual reinforcement of pathologies” (Gonen, 2000, p. 6).

Lasswell (1930) comments, “Politics is the transition between one unchallenged consensus and the next. It begins in conflict and eventuates in a solution. But the solution is not the ‘rationally best’ solution, but the emotionally satisfactory one” (p. 185). The unconscious fears and aspects of the self that have been repressed and divorced from one’s conscious image is what the political forces exploit and utilize to mobilize their forces and energy. Karl Mannheim (1936) said in *Ideology and Utopia*:
Political discussion is . . . the tearing off of disguises—the unmasking of those unconscious motives which bind the group existence to its cultural aspirations and its theoretical arguments. (p. 39)

Ideas, forms and psychic energies persist and are transformed in close conjunction with social forces. It is never by accident that they appear at given moments in the social process. (p. 248)

While the Holocaust seems to have destroyed faith and violated principals of most religions, it could also be seen as the outcome of a pervasive violation of the laws of nature—an outcome of adherence to “authority” rather than the inner creative capacity that acts free of the dictates of others and is not blind to one’s responsibility for one’s actions even in the face of coercion and death. Nazism did not create anti-Semitism, it fanned its existence. It did not create the people’s need for authority to tell them what to do or to reinforce their being number one at the expense of some other, or the loneliness and alienation that made them go along with beliefs in order to belong. This was likely the level of spiritual and emotional development of the masses of people for them to adhere to such a philosophy. Their vulnerability also lay in feelings of defeat, humiliation, vindictiveness, and rage, resulting from their defeat and humiliation after the last war, a depressed economic situation, and dominant methods of child rearing that tended to override children’s spontaneous wishes and expressions in favor of adherence to the authority of the parents. While of course, there were exceptions to this, within the dominant patriarchal paradigm where control and domination of power, deriving from strength, not wisdom, held sway, what chance do exceptions have to shed light?

As Lasswell (1930) goes on to say:

People who are emotionally bound together are not yet involved in a political movement. Politics begins when they achieve a symbolic definition of themselves in relation to demands upon the world. (pp. 185–186)

The process of symbolization can be studied with particular ease when widespread and disturbing changes occur in the life-situation of many members of society. Famine . . . unemployment, high living costs. . . . One of the first results is to release affect from their previous objects, and to create a state of susceptibility
to proposals. All sorts of symbols are ready or readily invented, to refix the mobile affects, “Take it to Lord in prayer, “Vote Socialist,” “Down with the Jews.” . . . (p. 188)

Symbolization thus necessitates dichotomization. The program of social action must be couched in “yes” and “no” form if decision is to be possible. . . . This reinforcement and facilitation of the symbol involves the use of men of prestige in its advocacy, the assimilation of special economic and group aims, and the invention of appeals to unconscious drives. (p. 189)

The mobilization of masses of people around a symbol, the swastika, hatred of Jews—the ability to be absolutely for something and absolutely against something takes root in a dualistic mentality, a readiness to take sides and be on the side of safety and “right.” Once such adherence to a symbol is mobilized, affects and ideas usually get mobilized into a frozen metaphor and the creative, reflective symbolizing capacities, those aspects of the self that might question such fixed ideologies or symbols are not cultivated, but repressed, both in child rearing, and institutions of education, and government.

Allowing the aspects of self that question these fixed, rationalized icons of a culture and civilization, would result in temporary chaos, where different views would coexist, needing to be integrated and brought into new relation:

It is within this chaos that a deeper, intrinsic order reveals itself. This is not the imposed order that we have become so accustomed to in a patriarchal, conceptualized world, an order that is not connected to the creative matrix. Rather it is an order that emerges instead of being imposed. (Woodman, 1997, p. 39)

This is not the order by which any civilization in history has been organized. As Einstein observed:

The splitting of the atom has changed everything except the way we think. . . . There’s been a quantum leap technologically in our age, but unless there’s another quantum leap in human relations, unless we learn to live in a new way towards one another, there will be a catastrophe. . . . The significant problems we face today cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.
In his Nobel Prize speech, Eli Wiesel (1986) raises the question: “Was Auschwitz a consequence of civilization or was it an aberration? All we know is that Auschwitz called that civilization into question as it called into question everything that preceded it.” Bauman (1989), in a similar vein, states:

The implication that the perpetrators of the Holocaust were a wound or malady of our civilization, rather than its horrifying yet legitimate product—results not only in the moral comfort of self-exculpation, but also in the dire threat of moral and political disarmament. It all happened “out there”—in another time, another country. The more they are to blame, the more the rest of “us” are safe, and the less we have to do to defend the safety. (p. xii)

Weisel and Bauman point to the problems of a scientific, technological, and rationally advanced civilization in the hands of an emotionally, spiritually, and ethically immature race. As early as 1270, Thomas Aquinas expressed grave concern over the limitations of science-oriented rationalism and what can be discerned by the senses. He believed in “the superior scope of mystic intuition and sheer faith as paths toward understanding” (Goldstein, 1995, p. 250). Jung believed that there was a steering away from synthesizing human consciousness in the West, the search for the total man, an integration of the psyche seeking the union of opposites to achieve wholeness. This transcendent process, Jung believed, was rejected by the Scientific Revolution and resulted in a repression that had tragic consequences, which included the creation of technology that could effect global genocide and human annihilation. The transcendent process, for Jung, involves identification with the reflective symbolizing process that constantly doubts, that feels at ease with mystery and not knowing. It endlessly promotes evolution and is always in opposition to standstill and the established order of things. Its repression, Jung believed, has resulted in increasing barbarism and mental illness. It means not facing our shadow or demon side, which was the essence of the journey.

Just as Winnicott (1952) said there can be no baby without a mother, there can be no individual that is not in context of community or culture. Embedded in the self is the knowledge that it is as impossible to live outside the culture or community in which one is born, as it is impossible to live apart from the
care of the mother. This makes both the baby and individual extremely vulnerable to the expectations and requirements of both the maternal and societal environment.

Genocidal mentality, once set in motion, contains mechanisms that are self-perpetuating and creates binds that are extremely difficult to change unless consciously reflected on and transcended. This difficulty, along with validation in our culture of its “reasonableness” or “normality” makes the task of changing to states of mind capable of true dialogue a process that spans several generations. It is the “normality” or “obviousness” of what we believe as well as the fact of how easily we accept without reflection our normality as truth that is a central obstacle to change. The obvious in Hitler’s Germany was that Jews were inferior and a contamination of the Aryan race. The obvious to European settlers coming to America was that “Indians” were savages and interfered with their settlement of this country. The obvious to Bin Laden is that Americans are infidels and possessed by the evil of greed and material accumulation. The obvious to Bush is that there is an axis of evil that threatens the “good” people of the Western world and that should be eliminated.

Without reflection and the capacity to make a symbolic, metaphorical reality out of the reality we believe to be absolute, we mistake the obvious for “reality.” We mistake our delusions for true perceptions and assume that others, who do not hold to what we see as obvious, need to be converted, persuaded, hated, held in contempt, thought of as ignorant fools, or killed.

If we do not see the context of our life as a metaphor of a particular psychological/social configuration to be deciphered and moved beyond, that is, creatively transformed, we are trapped in that metaphor, a victim of a past that determines our existence, rather than existing to determine the future. To be trapped in a metaphor created by the past is a nondialogic existence. To engage in our existence dialogically, the metaphoric nature of our existence, mentally, interpersonally, and socially needs to be creatively and symbolically transformed in ways that expand our relation to all three, that is, in ways that make room for more aspects of the other in oneself, that allow for more aspects of the self to be part of the other, more of oneself to be
in the world, and more of the world to be in oneself. A nondia-
logic or genocidal mentality would exterminate aspects of the
other that do not fit in with the self’s idea of acceptable or
“good,” and get the other to exterminate aspects of the self to
comply with one’s own idea of acceptable or good. Such a men-
tality demands that aspects of the self are exterminated in order
to comply with the other so as not to be in danger of extermina-
tion by the other, psychologically or physically. When one is in
the straightjacket of believing the metaphor to be reality, and is
not reflecting on the metaphor, one can only exist in relation to
the other with violence, aggressively trying to make the other an
extension or part of the metaphor or defending one’s right to
be that metaphor. This state is a state of delusion. In trying to
preserve our metaphors, fix them in reality, we destroy people,
who are more than a projected metaphor. Masses of people are
killed—in Vietnam, Rwanda, Iraq—because we are afraid that
somewhere in the minds of the millions slaughtered is the wrong
metaphor, the wrong ideology, or adherence to the wrong side.
What is also destroyed by a genocidal mentality is the potential
to partake in a dialogic process that would create the between-
state that moves us beyond the checkmate of people fighting to
the death to defend the absolute truth of their metaphors. The
authorities and leaders people select, or let themselves be led by,
help them protect their metaphors, and prevents Woodman’s
(1997) idea of the deeper, intrinsic order from emerging.

DEVELOPMENTAL UNDERPINNINGS
OF THE GENOCIDAL PERSONALITY

The source of most human violence and suffering has been a
hidden children’s holocaust throughout history, whereby billions
of innocent human beings have been routinely murdered, bound,
starved, raped, mutilated, battered and tortured by their parents
and other caregivers, so that they grow up as emotionally crippled
adults and become vengeful time bombs who periodically restage
their early traumas in sacrificial rites called wars.

—Lloyd DeMause, The Emotional Life of Nations

To the extent parents maintain defenses developed against
their own trauma, whether it is genocidal trauma of persecution,
coercion into compliance, or being subjected to an overly repressive authoritarian and nonempathic stance, and do not transform their defenses into a more empathic, open attitude toward their child, the child will unconsciously register the traumatic experience of the parent, even if the parents have denied or forgotten it. Parents tend to maintain defenses against trauma when experiences are so horrific and painful they cannot process them or when they idealize their past and do not acknowledge their own suffering in relation to mental and physical cruelty that they endured. Parents have most difficulty disentangling themselves from the symbiosis with their own parents when the child rearing itself impaired the individuation and symbolic and creative development necessary for true psychological separation. What they repress and cannot acknowledge rules their relationship with their child. As Alice Miller (1984) says:

The former practices of physical maiming, exploiting and abusing children seems to have been gradually replaced in modern times by a form of mental cruelty that is masked by the honorific term child rearing. Since training in many cultures begins in infancy during the initial symbiotic relationship between mother and child, this early conditioning makes it virtually impossible for the child to discover what is actually happening to him. The child’s dependence on his or her parent’s love also makes it impossible in later year to recognize these traumatizations, which often remain hidden behind the early idealization of the parents for the rest of the child’s life. (p. 4)

What marks mental cruelty in child rearing are forms of violence, whether physical or mental. Any form of force or coercion to conform, ignoring the child’s needs, perceptions, and feeling, will be experienced by the child as a form of pain.

An empathic stance in child rearing is, as DeMausse (2002) emphasizes, “an uneven, late historical achievement, and . . . the world is now in a race between the slowly improving child rearing and our rapidly evolving destructive technology” (p. viii). It was not long ago that children were essentially viewed as property; in many cultures this is still true. This shifted to viewing the child as having value to the extent that he fit into the parental social, intellectual, or value paradigm. In this view he was primarily a moldable being by virtue of the parents’ supposed
greater knowledge, maturity, authority, and preexisting ideas of what was best for the child. In this framework, discipline, judgments, limits, and instruction dominated child rearing in order that the child fit the parental images. Prior to Freud (1915, 1920, 1940) children were often thought to be motivated by original sin—to be bad, unruly, or destructive by nature and thus in need of discipline to be civilized. It was generally believed that children’s instinctive nature—sexuality, aggression—should be tamed and put under the control of church and society. A paradigm acknowledging the child as having innate motivation to organize his world meaningfully and grow creatively is a very recent development and is still not adhered to by most cultures or even most within our own culture. This paradigm requires of the parent an alert, attentive, empathic stance that sensitively follows the child’s emerging, unpredictable inclinations, and allows the parent to see the child as teacher as well. Parent and child become co-creators, rather than children being seen as needing to be obedient to the more knowing adults.

The capacity for empathy is not one that can be willed. It is either the product of empathic child rearing, where the child, through the open, nonintrusive stance of the parent, is heard in his own desires and nurtured in what he wants to become, not coerced into being what the parents need; or it is the result of a long struggle of differentiation from the symbiotic ties with parents and integration of the dichotomies and dualities within the self, resulting in a capacity to creatively listen, reflect, understand, and play with the symbolic nature of reality.

Psychic maturity involves both optimal symbolic development and the capacity for empathy. Empathy both facilitates the development of the symbolic attitude toward experience and is a developmental achievement, not possible without differentiated symbolic evolution. The spectrum of pathology to health can be viewed as inextricably intertwined with the developmental process of symbolic communication—from the most concrete or functional use of language to playful, creative communication that is resonant with multiple levels of meaning. Many theorists of early infancy (Beebe, 1985, 1988; Bick, 1986; Bion, 1959, 1962; Mitrani, 1996; Ogden, 1989, 1994; Winnicott, 1971) have shown that the early lack of a containing, holding, empathic en-
vironment results in an inability to separate from the maternal object. This results in a fused self/object sense of self and catastrophic anxieties that can derail the evolution of the symbolic process. Where there is substantial failure on the part of caretakers in providing a containing or empathic environment, symptoms of concreteness, perseveration, and, in extreme cases, adherence to hard external objects, often associated with autism (Tustin, 1986), can result.

The lack of empathy for aspects of the self, whether it is a child’s protest, anger, or preference for food, things, ideas, or aspirations that threaten the parents, results in aspects of the self being experienced either as bad or not consciously experienced at all. The origins of this bifurcation have been described by Sullivan (1940), where the infant associates satisfaction and security, the ways the mother is nurturing and approving, with the Good Mother, or the good nipple, and experiences of withholding of nurturance and of disapproval, and lack of empathy, with the Bad Mother. Sullivan says, “to the infant these are two vaguely limited but distinct people. The discrimination of the Good Mother pattern of events and the Bad Mother pattern of events constitutes a primary bifurcation of interpersonal experience, evidences of which persist in most people throughout life” (p. 79). This division is likely to be sharper with parenting that attempts to override the child’s spontaneous gestures with the parent’s own meaning.

Optimally, what is needed is a response of nonpossessive empathy, one in which the parent views the child from the beginning as an equal participant in his own life and sees the child’s motivations, needs, and expression, including negative and protesting responses, as basically good—that is, aimed toward growth and fulfillment or avoidance of situations and people that the child senses are antithetical to this. Such a parent wonders about the meaning of the child’s responses from the beginning and does not impose her own meaning in an arbitrary or narcissistic manner. This parent will accurately mirror the child’s emotions and inner states, and is likely to minimize the sharpness of the division in the child of good and bad mother and good and bad self. In this empathic stance, the child’s positive and negative feelings and responses are not evaluated, or
divided into good and bad, but empathized with and understood for their meaning.

Being aware of and empathic to how the child’s pain and conflict manifests itself in how he negotiates his true needs with what he needs to survive, requires of a parent openness to what is unlike herself and may initially be experienced as injurious to the parent’s narcissism. The parent who makes the child feel supported and seen in his most urgent callings will elicit feelings of love. When the child feels thwarted or unrecognized, the parent is likely to experience the child’s hate. In my view, anger and love are motivated by the “soul” of the child, generating love when he is allowed to fulfill himself, and anger when not. Children are never “basically” bad or angry. When a child is angry, provocative, difficult, or “bad,” the appropriate question is what is not being seen, recognized, or given validity. One keeps asking until the innocent motivation—which may not be reasonable, but is totally understandable, given this particular child’s predicament—is arrived at. This type of parenting is in some ways dialogic, attempting not to create polarity through authority, or by designating the child as in any way “bad” or “pathological.” The parent allows the child’s stance to open the parent to seeing something valid in the child’s expression, even if negative, and so gives the child more room to be himself in the full range of emotion and experience.

While most parenting embodies both types of responses, aspiring to the latter and being conscious of the effects of how an evaluative response fosters a dualistic and divided self can mitigate against the power of this kind of parental influence.

The parent’s evaluative response shapes what the child learns to crave and value. Furthermore, these cravings and valuations tend to be experienced as having intrinsic, absolute value, to be that which one cannot survive without being or having, at least in relation to one’s parent in that parent’s culture. One lives in this certainty without seeing the conditioned aspect of it, its relative value based on how one was raised. One grows up seeing one’s conditioned mind as oneself and fights to the death for this self—this frozen, unexamined self, while at the same time feeling the call of the denied, repressed, potentially “truer” self.
This split that occurs in the infant’s and child’s mind early in life has been cited as the cause of suffering and pathology by many other psychologists, as well as religious thinkers and philosophers. This split results in being separated from one’s true self and a consequent inability to feel integrated with the world in a meaningful way, leading to a feeling of alienation on both fronts. Freud (1930) sees the human mind split between conformity to a repressive civilization and instinctual energies. Winnicott (1971) sees the self living in compliance with external reality, resulting in a split between the true and false self. Fairbairn (1941) sees the infant identifying with the badness of the needed parent in order to keep the parent good, both out of compliant necessity, and because the child had come to believe, in his dissociated schizoid position, that his own love was bad, or that his hate was bad, resulting later in life in a profound mistrust of his own feelings and perceptions, and ongoing compliance to “bad” objects. Jung sees the dissociation from the spiritual and transcendent capacities and the unwillingness to face and integrate our shadow side into ourselves as central to the creation of technology that has affected global genocide. Bion (1965, 1970) speaks of “O,” the basic “truth instinct,” as our ground of being, and our need to reunite with it to obtain full development. There is also Lacan’s (1966) register of the real, which is beyond imagining and symbolizing; Milner (1969), who saw a need in patients to break with false organizations in order to grow in their own shape; and Laing (1959), who saw the “total rejection of the person’s being make ‘him’ his true self, a mere vanishing point. . . . Everything he is comes by definition, therefore, under the scope of his false-self system. . . . This false-self system is the breeding-ground of paranoid fears” (p. 168).

The splitting or division of self that occurs to defensively ensure one’s survival with the needed caretaker during the infant’s symbiotic phase, before there is clear awareness of self and other or a reflective capacity, results in internalized aspects of the other that one cannot distinguish from oneself, and parts of oneself that are lost in identifying oneself with these internalized aspects of the other. Grotstein (2000) summarizes this mechanism as follows:
Compliance is achieved by the selective introjective identification of the abusive aspects of the parent (Fairbairn, 1943) and also by an identification with the aggressor (A. Freud, 1936). The introjectively identified part-parent becomes split into a rejecting and a tantalizing exciting part-object. These opposing pairs along with the victim’s concordant, complementary, and oppositional identifications with them, thereafter constitute the victim’s endopsychic (internal) world. (p. 56)

Guntrip (1968) asks, “Why do human beings maintain an internal object-relations world at all, especially if it’s a bad one? What greater danger is being avoided in electing to face the dangers of internal bad objects experience?” (p. 207). If one is in a symbiotic relation with objects of the past, dependent on them for physical, emotional, or psychic survival, then the absence of the object in the inner world would be experienced as the annihilation of the self or the experience of existing in a void. The perpetuation of a symbiotic attachment, beyond its necessity, implies in itself some negative aspect to the parenting object, some way in which the child’s capacity for differentiation and autonomy was undermined, with narcissistic and/or coercive forces perhaps making separation more terrifying than it needed to be. The symbiosis also necessitates that the child see reality in a way that does not disturb the reality of the caretaker on which he is dependent. This may mean not diverging from parental perceptions, or diminishing his aliveness and creative relation to reality to normalize his parent’s lives.

Transcending this self and the bifurcated perceptions that are formed by it involves identifying more with the reflective self and differentiating from the symbiosis with one’s parents and the collective that conditioned one’s being. This change often brings up intense annihilation anxiety and can be experienced as something that is destructive to the other and so feared.

It is my belief that both aggression and “evil” evolve from subjecting children’s intuitive, creative, and naturally curious and growth-evolving instincts to external controls, repression, and self doubt (soul murder). Whether we are conscious of it or not, living with a motivation of compliance rather than creativity (Winnicott, 1971) makes one feel angry, vindictive (evil), and depressed. One therefore inevitably becomes the bad, evil person.
that those in power feel they need to control, vindicating their rationale for needing greater authority over those perceived as needing socialization or control.

One then learns to feel sane or good when one is adapting to the external world, but unconsciously one feels the falseness of this feeling of goodness or sanity, its fragility, and how it is held in place by fear. It also feels forbidden to question the structure to which we are adapting. The result of this mentality is to inevitably feel in a double bind (checkmated). No move is possible without putting oneself at risk, either with those on whom one depends for survival or oneself. Laing (1959) describes how the false-self system becomes the mirror of alien reality, all that is not the inner self can come to feel mechanical, robotic, dead, or like an alien presence possessing the individual. The inner self may disavow participation in the false self, experiencing it as enemy-occupied territory. “The self is persecuted as never before even within the confines of its own prison. The end result is thus at least as terrible as the state against which it was originally a defense” (p. 169).

The child develops all kinds of defensive mechanisms to survive these insoluble contradictions—splitting, projection, feeling better than (grandiosity), worse than (depression, feelings of no self-worth), denial, dissociation, rationalizations of actions and inactions, and a formulation in his mind of an inner and outer world. When the “good” self one has identified with is threatened, one lashes out to protect it against the “bad” forces, misunderstandings, or opposition that threaten it.

An example follows, illustrating, in the adult personality, manifestations that are a result of this early split:

A male lawyer in his late twenties, born in Germany, came to see me with complaints of feeling extremely passive, and unable to assert himself. In one session, he told me his mother was very upset that his wife was not flying with him to Germany for his mother’s seventieth birthday, to the point that his mother was crying on the phone. This brought up memories from his childhood, of how his mother would tell his father, in a sad, victimized way, about how he (her son) was not showing appreciation for her. His father would ask him to explain, but would not wait to listen to his explanation, would cut him off and pun-
ish him severely, and would explain how his saying to his mother “You’re not home enough mom” was very hurtful and disrespectful to his mother since she worked so hard. His father, whom he experienced as authoritarian, would make him feel bad and anxious. He also saw him having power in arguments with his mother.

His father’s father had fought for Germany in World War II and had died in combat when his father was four. His grandfather had been in the army of the Weimar Republic before the Nazis took over. He was told that many soldiers at that time were not political and did not necessarily sympathize with the Nazis but were trained to obey and were not allowed to have any opinions of their own.

He said over the years, he watched his mother start fighting back, but he saw his father harden and in fact treat her like she could not have opinions different from his. When she resorted more and more to tears and becoming a victim, rather than continuing to try and assert herself to get her way, he would soften. His mother began using these same tactics when he would play loud music or get crazy haircuts. Her victim role always made him feel he was bad, especially when he was doing what he wanted to and expressing what he really thought. Any opinion that differentiated him from what his parents wanted of him usually resulted in his mother’s victim stance making him feel bad and his father’s authoritarian stance punishing him. His susceptibility to being compliant to his parents’ reactive ways of responding to him (rather than their being reflective: What does it mean that our son feels I’m not here enough, or likes this haircut or music? and so forth) was built on this way of their responding to him since infancy and exploiting the symbiosis and dependency they fostered early in his life. The way his parents dealt with him went back many generations and, in the Germanic culture in which he was raised, was considered a normal and effective way of making children respect adults and become “good” citizens. My client’s stance of pathological passivity was a reactive stance to his parents. His own dualistic perceptions kept this stance in place—namely, that it was bad and disrespectful to talk back, and good to be obedient to his parents’ wishes. His compliant, trying-to-please persona hid his unconscious expectations of
rejection and disapproval and anger at always having to repress his real feelings. He projected much of this on his wife, on whom he transferred these feelings. This passivity and his expectations of her evoked reactive anger in his wife, who was frustrated by his not knowing what he wanted, never taking initiative, and seeming to always expect disapproval.

Miller (1984) emphasizes, “The greatest cruelty that can be inflicted on children is to refuse to let them express their anger and suffering except at the risk of losing their parents’ love and affection” (p.106).

The dynamics in this case was typical of child rearing in Germany and much of Europe for many centuries. Demanding compliance from children was pervasive, even in Jewish families. Alice Miller’s (1984) description of Hitler’s childhood as not having anyone in whom he could confide, being both mistreated and prevented from expressing his pain, lacking children with whom to play out his feelings, and lacking education to provide intellectual outlets found resonance among many people of that time. Miller believes, “He would not have had millions of followers if they had not had the same sort of upbringing” (p. viii). For many children, this strict upbringing made them vulnerable to both authority and groups, which required conformity to benefit from the illusory aliveness, privilege, and seeming alternative to the repressive family life offered.

One elderly German woman, who grew up as a Jew in Germany, after observing her grandchildren freely talk back to and criticize their parents and the parents inviting it and responding nondefensively and nonpunitively, remarked that she would never have thought of saying “no” to her parents or disagreeing with them, and this she observed to be true of all her friends in Germany, German and Jew alike. She also said that she would observe the Hitler Youth, when she was a child, their uniforms, the fun they seemed to have, how they were always in groups, and she wished she could be part of them. They evoked envy in her. As a young child she could not understand what they stood for or the politics behind them; she only saw they had everything better—clothes, school, activities, respect, honor—and would have joined them if she could, regardless of what they stood for. From her own strong feelings of wanting to belong, she could
see the power the Hitler Youth had in drawing German children into their fold and using this strong desire to belong to mold their ideas and outlooks.

Demanding compliance was taken to an extreme in Nazi Germany: to defy the regime often meant death; to go along with it meant the death of the soul, one’s integrity and internal freedom. The greatest crime committed against German youths was the destruction of their souls: By being terrified into obedience from a young age they became numb to the part of them that would be aware of the pain they were causing themselves in being obedient to another, and consequently they became numb to the pain of others, and so without compassion.

Ideology ruled every subject in school and, for the most part, at home as well. Independent thinking and feeling was eliminated by threats of violence and exclusion from the group. They were taught that the greatest good was to live and die for their fatherland, and that they in themselves were nothing apart from this. There was more honor and greatness in dying for this cause than living for any other reason. Parental authority was undermined and even punished if it was not in total accord with these goals. People’s whole lives were mapped out for them in accord with the idea of serving the Fuhrer and their homeland. The system attempted to destroy their individuality and forced them into lives of self-denial and self-sacrifice, with unconditional faith in the purpose the Fuhrer had for them. They were victims of a system that murdered their souls and pushed them to the breaking point. The Bible says this is the most unforgivable sin, because the shell of the person remains alive to keep on murdering others. The playwright Ibsen speaks of soul murder as killing the love-life in a human soul. The victim loses his desire to live for himself and his reason for living is dictated by the other. Most tragically, the capacity to know one has been soul murdered or that one is perpetuating it on others is also most often destroyed. The capacity to think for oneself, reflect, and feel for others and oneself is the main target of soul murder—the very capacities that would allow one to “know” through the pain one is causing oneself and others, and so to be moved to remedy it. One instead creates and lives in lies, disguised as
ideology, that justify actions that perpetuate destruction of self and other.

The two capacities attacked by genocidal mentality, as mentioned earlier—empathy and the development of the symbolic/creative capacity—both involve a capacity to imaginatively feel one’s way into the experience of the other. The ongoing symbolic transformation of consciousness via the imagination is central in transcending the existent reality. This ongoing transcendence threatens authority, power, and preservation of the status quo central to genocidal mentality.

These capacities are interfered with early in the symbiotic phase where primitive identifications take over the child’s sense of self and early on impede differentiation and a sense of a separate and “real” self. Freud (1917) described this process, when people in deep mourning possess the object by becoming like the object. A child designated a replacement for a lost object may experience his self doubly lost in being identified with the lost loved one, then fused with the parent. Through these mechanisms the child is frozen into the metaphor of the parent’s life. He lives the parent’s reality. The creative soul of the child is in anguish from both not being allowed to know it is in prison and being deprived and forbidden the tools to get out of the prison. The motivation to change or escape this “prison” often seems to be in the avoidance of pain and an attempt to heal the pain, but these mechanisms, which are blindly reactive defenses against the trauma, serve to repeat the trauma, often amplifying it in successive generations.

The capacity to symbolize and create meaning is the means by which we create our souls. As Keats says, “Call the world if you please the vale of soul-making. Then you will find out the use of the world . . .” (Inglis, 1969, pp. 62–63.) Shengold (1989) extended the term soul murder to describe what too often goes on in childhood when parents see children as an extension of themselves and put children in bondage to them by forcing compliance to their wishes and ideas, rather than nurturing what is inherent in them. The fear of not complying, or its consequences, can freeze the symbolic space where one makes one’s perception one’s own and which is needed for ongoing individu-
Shengold quotes the character O’Brien in Nineteen Eighty-Four saying “You will be hollow. We will squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves” (Orwell, 1949, p. 260). Soul murder often results in the person no longer recognizing himself and feeling totally in another’s power. When one’s creative, symbolic capacities are paralyzed, the self is vulnerable to being defined externally by the other. The tyrannized soul is susceptible to tyranny and, having been terrified out of contact with its inner creative resources, may in fact seek tyranny out.

Terror arises from soul murder and becomes a form of soul murder. Terror can freeze the part of the self that reflects and shift one over to the part of oneself that protects, flees, and defends to survive. Without help in understanding the effect of the terror and tyranny on the self, and without being exposed to alternate experiences and a process to reverse the feelings and symptoms of terror and loss, one is likely to stay stuck in these feelings, keep reliving them, perpetuating them on others and not recovering or being able to transform them into more productive, life-generating experiences.

The encouragement and validation of children’s creative interests and spontaneous expressions and perceptions by providing them mediums to discover themselves from the inside out, helps them to not be afraid of what comes up in them, and to discover the part of themselves needed to become more whole people. The result of this process is a more integrated self that can offer resistance to external manipulation and imposed ideas. Children need to be allowed, through play and other artistic media, to spontaneously bring up what they are most afraid of and what they most need to know to move to the next step in their life. It may be a fear they need to conquer, a jealousy they need to experience, a hatred they need to express to understand or know who or what to avoid, or a love of something or someone that emerges to lead them on a path of what their true talents are and the work they want to do in life. The child who has freedom to explore his soul is one who most likely will develop the aliveness and character to resist tyranny and foster this freedom in others.

In creative learning, the individual is more often encouraged to transform materials or ways of existing in the world in
accordance with an inner conception, which may challenge the status quo. The creative enterprise tries to imagine what is not there or form new relationships between existing aspects of reality and manifest it. It is always attempting to liberate the self from the confines of what is. Most of our educational and psychological theories do not put a high priority on developing this creative aspect in children. If developed more universally, it would offer resistance to genocidal mentality. Woodman (2000), from her experience teaching English to adolescents for twenty years, asserts:

Kill the imagination and kill the soul. Kill the soul and you’re left with a listless, apathetic creature who can become hopeless or brutal or both. Kill the metaphors and you kill desire, the image magnetizes the movement of the energy. . . . Children have to be educated to hold their passion until their rage, jealousy, lust are transformed by the imagination into poetry, music, art. Otherwise they brutally act out in the streets. (p. 165–166)

Sarason (1990) speaks of this neglect in Freud, and sees it continuing in the present:

To my knowledge, Freud said little or nothing about creativity in children. . . . Like those who followed him, he gave no serious attention to explaining how cultural attitudes, values and practices inhibit and overwhelm engagement in artistic activity. . . . Freud did not start with the assumption that artistic activity is a universal human attribute and, therefore, he could not ask why in our culture that attribute takes the unfortunate course it does. (pp. 78–79)

One of the mechanisms used to channel children into a compliant mode of learning rather than a creative one is to make them believe that external approval is of more value to their survival and well-being than evolution in their own inner creative processes and development. Starting early in life, many children are raised to believe they are “bad” or “inadequate,” and then come to rely on those that led them to believe this to reverse this perception of themselves. Too often this spirals them into a hopeless groveling for approval from those who foster need for approval above reliance on their own creative/meaning-generating inner selves. The feelings of badness are also often projections from the parents of their own unresolved, misunderstood
feelings of badness from projections and trauma in their own lives. Often crippled in their own symbolic and creative capacities, parents are often unable to integrate these feelings in a way that allow them to help heal the wounds they have created in their own children. Instead, their own feelings of inadequacy and lack of differentiation are compensated for by needs for power, status, grandiosity, and narcissistic involvements that defend against these unintegrated feelings of badness and powerlessness. The unconscious wells of “badness” and inadequacy and shame become reservoirs for further projection onto others, which then justify one’s superiority or hatred and oppression of others.

This has led to millennia of a species showing unrelenting and unique capacity (as far as species on this earth are concerned) to make distinctions within itself, based on superficial or nonexistent differences, and so to justify violent massacre as well as emotional violence toward those they profess to hate as well as to love. As a result, many scholars, historians and psychologists have come to the conclusion that aggression, evil, and “madness” are inherent in man, have always been there and always will be. This justifies greater need for authoritarian and repressive measures in how we raise children, operate in relationships, and run institutions and countries. And so it goes on and on.

Authorities, parents, teachers, therapist, and leaders need to use their inherent wisdom and maturity to liberate those that seek help from their dependence on external authority. The unmindful or unconscious use of power to foster dependence subtly exterminates the others will, as well as his creative and growth potential, and so deepens the symbiosis and thus the susceptibility of the young to dependence on ideology and compliance to authority so as to belong. People treated this way often become one of the many ready to fit into the larger genocidal machinery. Children raised from birth to feel like good people, having access to their spontaneity and creativity as well as having the confidence and capacity to question and doubt makes this less likely. (See Schwager, 2001, on Developmental Stages of Creativity.)

It is necessary not to overlook the ordinary German population’s complicity in Nazi crimes. It is also necessary to realize that most Germans were motivated not by a willful intent to harm others
but by a mixture of cowardice, apathy, and a slavish obedience to authority. (Johnson, 2000, p. 21)

New perspectives and evidence uncovered about consequences of German people not complying with the Nazis, particularly early in the regime, shows that there were generally little or no consequences to indiscretions, even when people were informed on by others. Yet most people complied willingly with the Nazi ideology. One might hypothesize in relation to this that the inner mechanisms and fears making one obedient to authority from a young age were so firmly in place that many found the compliance with Nazi authority on a continuum with the compliance that had been commonplace throughout most of their childhood.

The tragedy of acting out of compliance, whether it is a child with a parent or youth, like the Hitler Youth, in compliance to governments, is that you lose twice—first yourself, then the other from whom one had hoped to win love or recognition, because it is never the intention, and is beyond the capacity of the one who coerces compliance, to truly love.

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