

## CHAPTER V DISCERNING LIFE: THE EXPERIENCE OF EVIL

It is clear in human experience of the Transcendent that there is also an experience of the malevolent. One of the major issues in religion and philosophy has been how to explain this. In the mythology of the ancient world this was explained *polytheistically*. In other words, there were many gods and goddesses, initially patterned after the observations of natural forces, who were often neither good or bad but exhibited the same ambivalence and complexity as humans. Thus the evil which happened in the world could be interpreted as due to their caprice or hostility. In ancient Persian religion this came to be interpreted *dualistically*, that is, there were coexistent forces of good and evil. Most of the Old Testament, before the influence of dualism on Judaism, interpreted good and evil *monistically*: they understood that this was all due to the one God who was sovereign over all. This meant that the occurrence of good and evil was moralized: suffering, tragedy and evil only happen when one deserves it and are then the punishment of a just God. Today evil is often interpreted *psychologically*: it is due to the dynamics within the human psyche. Jung was an advocate of this, expressing deep concern that if humankind did not come to terms with the unconscious forces of the psyche it would be on the brink of nuclear annihilation. The psychological dimensions of evil will be given extended treatment in what follows.

### **Judaism and Early Christianity**

In the Judaism of the Intertestamental Period there developed a *modified dualism*, a dualism which did not see good and evil as co-eternal or absolute, but evil came into being as a result of a "fall" and was a lesser power than God. Thus the outcome of the struggle between God and evil was never in doubt.

In Jewish Apocalyptic the figure of the Devil, or Satan, clearly emerges; no longer God's district attorney as in Job, but now fallen and opposed to God. The condition of this world represents the way in which the Devil has exercised his power, now being ruler of this world. There is also the demonic at his disposal. The mythology of Genesis 6 (the fall of the angels) provided background for understanding the world this way, and the experience of Post-Exilic Judaism provided the raw stuff of human experience which made it believable. God was sovereign in heaven, above history, but not within this world which God had yet to wrest from the power of Satan. The exorcisms in the Gospels presuppose this. Both human illness and natural catastrophe were often understood as due to demonic origin. Even human nature was understood dualistically. Rabbinic psychology spoke of a good and an evil impulse within a person, while Apocalyptic psychology saw little good in human flesh (note Paul's description of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5). The fleshly body was viewed as being inadequate to resurrection existence, and so the resurrection would provide one with a spiritual body, like that of the angels, to take the place of the problematic fleshly body which by itself could produce little good. Spirit and flesh were opposed to each other.

Somewhat similar to the gods of the ancient mythologies were the principalities, powers, elemental spirits, etc., mentioned in the New Testament. Frequently identified with the astral powers, they were essentially neutral, but often ignorant of the purposes of the cosmos and the intent of God. They represent cosmic, natural, historical and political forces. Paul says in I Cor. 2:6ff that the rulers of this age would not have crucified the Lord of glory if they had understood what God was doing in him. To speak about these powers is to recognize that political, cultural, and natural structures are needed for human existence. In

Galatians 4:3 they are the custodians of humanity, along with the Law. They make their contribution though they may also be destructive.

Much of what was expressed in the biblical materials about the nature of our world and the causes of what we experience has naturally become a part of the Christian traditions which also sought to interpret life experience. Since the biblical tradition represents such a long history with varied approaches to the nature of human experience, and evil, it is no accident that Christian opinions are varied. Sometimes persons even hold views that are seemingly contradictory because rooted in different parts of the biblical tradition: e.g. that there is a moral nature to suffering (if it comes, there must be a reason), which is an Old Testament view, and that Christ seeks to be sovereign over the evil powers of this world (which means that the world does not reflect God's will and purposes), something strongly reflected in the New Testament.

There are several books which I have found provide helpful approaches to the problem of evil in the world. These are M. Scott Peck's *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*; John A. Sanford's *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, Carl G. Jung's *Answer to Job*, and Gerald G. May's *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*. Although May's title does not speak of a treatment of evil, he devotes two important chapters to it.<sup>276</sup>

### **Scott Peck, *People of the Lie***

Peck seeks to develop a "psychology of evil" and describes a "personality disorder" characteristic of those persons whom in his practice he experienced as evil:

- a) consistent destructive, scapegoating behavior, which may often be quite subtle.
- b) excessive, albeit usually covert, intolerance to criticism and other forms of narcissistic injury.
- c) pronounced concern with a public image and self-image of respectability, contributing to a stability of life-style but also to pretentiousness and denial of hateful feelings or vengeful motives.
- d) intellectual deviousness, with an increased likelihood of a mild schizophreniclike disturbance of thinking at times of stress.<sup>277</sup>

Peck sees narcissism as a crucial issue which, though in some respects a normal aspect of human development, may become "malignant", as Erich Fromm terms it. He calls attention to Fromm's description of good and evil as a continuum affected by our choices:

Our capacity to choose changes constantly with our practice of life. The longer we continue to make the wrong decisions, the more our heart hardens; the more often we make the right decision, the more our heart softens -- or better perhaps, comes alive. ... Each step in life which increases my self-confidence, my integrity, my courage, my conviction also increases my capacity to choose the desirable alternative, until eventually it becomes more difficult for me to choose the undesirable rather than the desirable action. On the other hand, each act of surrender and

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<sup>276</sup> M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil*, Simon and Schuster, 1983. John A. Sanford, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, Crossroad, 1984. Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, transl. by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. Gerald G. May, *Will and Spirit: A Contemplative Psychology*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982.  
<sup>277</sup> M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*, p. 129. It would be interesting to compare the description of this "personality disorder" with the "works of the flesh" in Gal. 5.

cowardice weakens me, opens the path for more acts of surrender, and eventually freedom is lost. Between the extreme when I can no longer do a wrong act and the extreme when I have lost my freedom to right action, there are innumerable degrees of freedom of choice. In the practice of life the degree of freedom to choose is different at any given moment. If the degree of freedom to choose the good is great, it needs less effort to choose the good. If it is small, it takes a great effort, help from others, and favorable circumstances.... Most people fail in the art of living not because they are inherently bad or so without will that they cannot lead a better life; they fail because they do not wake up and see when they stand at a fork in the road and have to decide. They are not aware when life asks them a question, and when they still have alternative answers. Then with each step along the wrong road it becomes increasingly difficult for them to admit that they *are* on the wrong road, often only because they have to admit that they must go back to the first wrong turn, and must accept the fact that they have wasted energy and time.<sup>278</sup>

Peck also discusses the possible origin of evil beyond the human psyche in a chapter entitled "Of Possession and Exorcism".<sup>279</sup> He mentions his experience with two persons he believes were possessed and discusses their exorcism. He relates his treatment of cosmological evil to psychological evil through the term "Father of Lies" as descriptive of Satan. He laments the resistance of the church to dealing with this area and suggests the need for a data bank and study center to explore the nature of experience in possession and exorcism.

Peck's sixth chapter is on "Mylai: An Examination of Group Evil," a helpful exploration not only of the Viet Nam experience, but of what happens in groups, institutions and nations. He treats this in relation to the problem of specialization (which removes individuals from total responsibility), the effects of stress (which produces regression and psychic numbing) and group dynamics (which make the individual dependent and subordinate to the self-interest/narcissism of the group. Peck asserts that "The effort to prevent group evil -- including war -- must therefore be directed toward the individual." Children need to be taught that "laziness and narcissism are at the root of all human evil."<sup>280</sup>

Peck's thesis regarding the various types of evil with which he deals is that whereas most people will try to avoid pain and attempt to escape legitimate suffering, the evil try to escape a particular type of suffering: "the pain of their own conscience, the pain of the realization of their own sinfulness and imperfection." "The problem is not a defect of conscience but the effort to deny the conscience its due. We become evil by attempting to hide from ourselves."<sup>281</sup> Thus evil in humans is identified by "people of the lie" and cosmological evil is identified as the "father of lies". Peck probably does not adequately deal with the social reasons for the dulling of conscience (though it is treated in his case studies) and the need for love and support so that people can deal with the pain of conscience (though this is implied in his treatment of the need for the presence of loving persons at the exorcisms he presents). He also does not deal with the distortions of conscience created by some approaches within Christianity which make dealing with conscience painful beyond toleration and force persons to the lie.

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278. Ibid., pp. 81-82, quoting from Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil*.

279. Ibid., pp. 182 ff.

280. Ibid., pp. 252-253.

281. Ibid., pp. 77, 76.

**John A. Sanford, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality, and Jung's Answer to Job***

John Sanford, a Jungian analyst and Episcopal priest, treats evil as "The Shadow Side of Reality," the "dark side" of the psyche. Because he uses a Jungian paradigm, the views of Carl Jung will also be discussed, especially his significant treatment of evil in *Answer to Job*.

In Jungian psychology the Shadow is that part of the psyche which is unconscious or repressed for the sake of the ideals of the ego and therefore functions autonomously, on its own, without the awareness of consciousness or integration into it. It is regarded as an Archetype, as it is present in the subconscious of all persons. Persons frequently treat it with denial and projection, especially if societal and religious values make it unacceptable. It is a continuing part of the psyche, though the person who is in a healthy process of growth is involved in seeking to allow elements of it to become conscious and be integrated. As integrated, its dynamics are then at the service of the Self.

Jung's criticism of the Christian doctrine of *privatio boni* (evil as the absence of good, as not having substance in itself) was that it regarded evil as not existing in itself, but only being a diminution or deprivation of the good.<sup>282</sup> Jung wanted to affirm evil, or the shadow side of existence, as a permanent and natural part of human existence. One of Jung's criticisms of traditional ideas of Christ and God was that no provision was made for their Shadow and thus Christ was deprived of becoming a full paradigm of the human Self.<sup>283</sup> In his *Answer to Job* Jung points out the consequences of regarding God as light alone in the Johannine literature where the Shadow of the writer lurks beneath the pages of the book of Revelation.<sup>284</sup> Jung, in his biblical exegesis, sees the history of God as a process of God coming to consciousness of his Shadow, and doing so in confrontation with Job who becomes conscious of God's dark side. As God becomes conscious of his Shadow, Wisdom (*Sophia*) emerges in Jewish tradition, in a sense the feminine side of God, which finds its full expression in the developing role of Mary in the New Testament. Jung says:

There must be some dire necessity responsible for this anamnesis of Sophia: things simply could not go on as before, the "just" God could not go on committing injustices, and the "Omniscient" could not behave any longer like a clueless and thoughtless human being. Self-reflection becomes an imperative necessity, and for this Wisdom is needed. Yahweh has to remember his absolute knowledge; for, if Job gains knowledge of God, then God must also learn to know himself. It just could not be that Yahweh's dual nature should become public property and remain hidden from himself alone. Whoever knows God has an effect on him. The failure of the attempt to corrupt Job has changed Yahweh's nature.<sup>285</sup>

The history of this change in God is then "reconstructed" from the biblical materials.<sup>286</sup> It is important to keep in mind what Jung means when he says "God", otherwise one will misunderstand and may for this reason reject Jung's significant insights. What is the story of God's becoming self-conscious, aware of God's dark side, is really the story of the archetypal or collective human soul. Thus his treatment of

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282. The prevalent view of evil in the church from Augustine to Thomas Aquinas, influenced by Platonism, was that God was the truest Being and source of all perfection. Evil is absolute imperfection, has no being, and therefore does not exist.

283. Jung said that since the Incarnation was really incomplete in Christ, separated from real humanity by the Virgin Birth, it remained to be complete in the entry of the Spirit into the lives of those who were fully human. Carl G. Jung, *Answer to Job*. transl. by R.F.C. Hull, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, pp. 67-70

284. *Ibid.*, pp. 73ff.

285. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

286. *Ibid.*, pp. 29 ff.

Judaean-Christian history, literature and dogma, is really a treatment of the archetypal complexes of the Judaean-Christian soul. Though Jung's personal experience seems to bear witness to the God outside the soul, how these archetypes relate to the God outside the soul one cannot say when working within the limitations of science:

It is only through the psyche that we can establish that God acts upon us, but we are unable to distinguish whether these actions emanate from God or from the unconscious. We cannot tell whether God and the unconscious are two different entities. Both are border-line concepts for transcendental contents. But empirically it can be established, with a sufficient degree of probability, that there is in the unconscious an archetype of wholeness which manifests itself spontaneously in dreams, etc., and a tendency, independent of the conscious will, to relate other archetypes to this centre.<sup>287</sup>

Sanford's book presents much helpful material on the problem of evil in mythology, the biblical material, post-biblical mythology and folklore, approaching this through the paradigm of Jungian psychology. He includes an extended interpretation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This alone makes the book worth reading. Sanford tries to retain and reinterpret the doctrine of the *privatio boni*, providing an extended critique of Jung's objections to it, arguing that it does not deny the reality of evil.<sup>288</sup>

But Jung's concerns must be clearly heard. Though Jung is ambiguous on some of his statements, his argument was that humans must come to terms with evil as a part of existence, as a part of the psyche, and that its dynamics can be changed by making it conscious. Jung says:

The difference between the "natural" individuation process, which runs its course unconsciously, and the one which is consciously realized, is tremendous. In the first case consciousness nowhere intervenes; the end remains as dark as the beginning. In the second case so much darkness comes to light that the personality is permeated with light, and consciousness necessarily gains in scope and insight. The encounter between conscious and unconscious has to ensure that the light which shines in the darkness is not only comprehended by the darkness, but comprehends it. The *filius solis et lunae* is the symbol of the union of opposites as well as the catalyst of their union. It is the alpha and omega of the process, the mediator and intermedius. "It has a thousand names," say the alchemists, meaning that the source from which the individuation process rises and the goal towards which it aims is nameless, ineffable.<sup>289</sup>

Jung's understanding of the mythology of the "devil" is that, as with "God", it also describes the drama of the psyche:

The question we are confronted with here is the independent position of a creature endowed with autonomy and eternality: the fallen angel. He is the fourth, "recalcitrant" figure in our symbolical series ... Just as, in the *Timaeus*, the adversary is the second half of the second pair of opposites, without whom the world-soul would not be whole and complete, so, too, the devil

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<sup>287</sup>. Ibid., pp. 106-107.

<sup>288</sup>. Sanford, pp. 140-150.

<sup>289</sup>. Jung, *Answer to Job*, p. 106. The individuation process is Jung's term for the human developmental process which has as a major goal the integration of elements of the psyche and particularly the bringing to consciousness of what is unconscious.

must be added to the *trias* as *to en tetarton* (the One as the Fourth), in order to make it a totality ... Through the intervention of the Holy Ghost, however, man is included in the divine process, and this means that the principle of separateness and autonomy over against God -- which is personified in Lucifer as the God-opposing will -- is included in it too. But for this will there would have been no creation and no work of salvation either. The shadow and the opposing will are the necessary conditions for all actualization. An object that has no will of its own, capable, if need be, of opposing its creator, and with no qualities other than its creator's, such an object has no independent existence and is incapable of ethical decision. At best it is just a piece of clockwork which the Creator has to wind up to make it function. Therefore, Lucifer was perhaps the one who best understood the divine will struggling to create a world and who carried out that will most faithfully. For, by rebelling against God, he became the active principle of a creation which opposed to God a counter-will of its own. Because God willed this, we are told in Genesis 3 that he gave man the power to will otherwise. Had he not done so, he would have created nothing but a machine, and then the incarnation and the redemption would never have come about.<sup>290</sup>

The contribution of these psychological studies is important because they help us to look at the problem of evil and its relationship to the human psyche with fresh vision and new empirical evidence, not merely as a theological discussion held within the walls of the assumptions of Christian tradition and theology.

One of Peck's contributions is the way in which narcissism and avoidance of suffering related to conscience, produces "people of the lie" who function in evil ways -- actually describing this as a "personality disorder." His treatment of the experience of possession and exorcism is a valuable contribution to an area frequently shunned by clergy and counselors with a purely psychological mind-set. It might be suggested that his desire to collect empirical evidence on possession should establish contact with specialists in multiple personality, some of whom assert that they have never found a "demon" who could not be dealt with by ordinary psychological means. One psychiatrist I know says that he has seen things as bad as in *The Exorcist*.

The particular contribution of Jungian psychology is that what often emerges as evil from the psyche acts this way because it has not been integrated into the Self and has not been raised to consciousness. Thus it operates without the balance which comes from being a part of the whole person. When integrated it lends its energy to the healthy functioning of the person and in the struggle for integration it creates dynamics for the growth process. If Jung is right, then Christian rejection of the flesh and the unconscious together with unreal perfectionist ideals do not produce real righteousness, but a false righteousness with the Shadow lurking in the unconscious, to attack where and when it is given permission, wherever anger and violence may be considered appropriate and sexuality may be hidden. In Jung's individuation process, for the integration of the Shadow into the Self, one must accept, and then transform, what is unacceptable and "sinful".

It should be recognized that to talk about psychological insights into the nature of human evil is not a new thing, but there have always been psychological insights into the functioning of the human inner life, a number of which are reflected in the biblical material. Thus one must deal with the question as to whether the biblical views of the psyche have the aura of ultimate truth or whether they may be qualified by or exchanged for insights of more recent psychology. There is some possibility of indicating that Jesus did

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<sup>290</sup>. Sanford, *Evil: The Shadow Side of Reality*, pp. 150-151, quote from C. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, Pantheon Books, 1963.

not buy into the approaches to the inner life of persons which in the early church moved in dualistic directions. John Sanford presents an interesting study of Jesus in Jungian terms in *The Kingdom Within: The Inner Meaning of Jesus' Sayings*.<sup>291</sup> Jesus fought the moralistic legalism and suppression of feelings characteristic of the Pharisees and seems to have been able to accept persons in his society who represented "unacceptable feelings" --- and he exemplifies many of the Jungian aspects of human wholeness. Yet the attempt to enter into the mind of Jesus has to answer to the canons of the historical critical study of the Gospels.

### **Gerald May, *Will and Spirit***

Gerald May's approach in *Will and Spirit* is contemplative. He understands "willingness", in contrast to "willfulness" (the attempt to control), as central in dealing with the psyche and in surrendering to the Transcendent mystery that gives human existence meaning. The question of evil is raised in the context of surrendering oneself to the mystery which one encounters in contemplation. May describes the issue:

Thus, although willingness and self-surrender are imperative in the search for our true nature and although ultimately they must be absolute and must consist of a realization of "not-knowing," *they cannot be blind*. .... What is called for here is a way of seeing clearly and precisely without having to understand or comprehend, a way of *perceiving* accurately with all one's faculties that does not in the process lead us into believing we are our own masters.<sup>292</sup>

May distinguishes *sin* and evil by indicating that sin is a *condition*, primarily the willful approach to life, while *evil* is a *force* or energy that gives impetus to willfulness and compels us away from realizing union with God. He comments that contemplative authors seem to deal with evil primarily in ways to avoid its influence, rather than trying to explain it or reflect on it.<sup>293</sup> In a way this is to be expected, because contemplative writers shrink from trying to define ultimate reality, for definition is a way of distancing oneself from it. <sup>294</sup>

A particular difficulty is that for contemplatives the "unitive" experience of the mystery of reality is central.

We have proposed that all polarities, including the problem of good and evil, exist only as a direct consequence of dualistic thinking. During unitive experiences no dichotomies are made between good and evil, light and dark, creation and destruction, this and that, me and it. The world, and all within it, are One, and this One is not even labeled, for to do so would separate it from "two or "many". It is the absence of dualistic distinction that makes unitive experience so difficult to talk about and impossible to understand, for both language and understanding are dualistic vehicles. In union, all is One, one is All, and this All/One is given completely in every timeless moment.<sup>295</sup>

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291. John Sanford, *The Kingdom Within: The Inner Meaning of Jesus' Sayings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1970.

292. Gerald May, *Will and Spirit*, p. 245. See the discussion of May's views in the chapter in this book on Psychological Models.

293. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

294. *Ibid.*, pp. 245f.

295. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

May argues that contemplatives need to deal with duality and speaks about how avoidance of duality may be used to avoid psychological distress and the problem of good and evil. He advises "ambivalence:

... *ambi*, meaning "both", and *valens*, meaning "to value" or be strongly affected by. To value and be strongly affected by both "realities" can result in wholeness and a goodly measure of peace if one is only willing to allow the dichotomy to exist without trying to solve it. It is possible for the paradox to be embraced without being resolved. The fifteenth-century Nicholas of Cusa said, "And I have learnt that the place wherein Thou art found unveiled is girt round with the coincidence of contradictories, and this is the wall of Paradise wherein Thou dost abide."<sup>296</sup>

If the ambiguity can be accepted, what does one then do in the contemplative encounter with evil? How does one know what one is surrendering to? May suggests that the only way out is to trust the God in the mystery.

In this trust, one is forced into "the fundamental contemplative statement concerning good, evil, and God" which expresses the contemplative "leap of faith":

I DO NOT KNOW. I do not know what is ultimately good or evil, nor even what is real or unreal. But I do know that there is no way I can proceed upon my own personal resources. In this as in all things, I am utterly and irrevocably dependent upon a Power that I can in no way objectify. I call this Power God, and God is beyond my understanding, beyond good and evil, beyond doubt and trust, beyond even life and death. God's love and power and Spirit exist in me, through me, and in all creatures. But God is unimaginably BEYOND all this as well. I also know that in my heart I wish to do and be what God would desire of me. Therefore, in humility and fear, I give myself. I commit my soul to God, the One Almighty Creator, the Ultimate Source of reality. Good or bad, right or wrong, these things are beyond me. I love, but I do not know. I live and act and decide between this and that as best I can, but ultimately, I do not know. And thus I say, in the burning vibrancy of Your Love and Terror, **THY WILL BE DONE.**<sup>297</sup>

In the contemplative traditions of East and West there has been an emphasis on spiritual warfare with evil. However, May feels that this is dangerous not only because the forces with which one battles may be overpowering, but "because of the immense narcissistic opportunities available in such an identification."<sup>298</sup> He goes on to say that the "spiritual assertiveness" which has a legitimate place in the "outside world" is "the simplicity of doing what is needed."

In the "inner" world of one's own mind and heart, when encountering an evil inclination or a questionable force, the most ideal form of this spiritual assertiveness is the advice we have encountered earlier: The best response is no response. Asked how to deal with visions and influences encountered in quiet prayer and meditation, the Desert Father Evagrius advised only "*apatheia* and short, intense prayer." The *apatheia* prevented fascination and undue self-importance, and the short prayer acknowledged one's dependency on God for guidance, protection, and everything else in life. .... It is important to understand here that "not paying

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<sup>296</sup>. Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>297</sup>. Ibid., p 227.

<sup>298</sup>. Ibid., p. 279



attention" does not mean dulling or blinding oneself to the point of being unaware. In fact the opposite is true. Paradoxically, "not paying attention" constitutes a panoramic vigilance that sees all things with the same clarity and does not distinguish "exciting," "fearful," or "significant" phenomena from anything else. In other words, voices, visions, strange sensations, feelings of evil, and the like should be noticed along with everything else but not identified as special. Most importantly, none of these things should sidetrack one's attention.<sup>299</sup>

This means that avoiding fascination and attachment is not only a way of dealing with life in general for the contemplative, but also an important way of dealing with evil. It is not our role to be "vanquishers of evil." The vanquishing of evil is God's concern, ours is to surrender to God, be willing to go where God leads, and to have a radical trust in God's power to keep us.<sup>300</sup>

Though in graced moments of silence the above may be so, in daily life we must also

... stand up and act. We must dive into the world of dualities and attachments in which we are thrust and pulled and tricked, a world in which we must evaluate and decide and commit and struggle. And then, no matter how experienced we are, we lose some of our simplicity. Countless dualities besiege us ...<sup>301</sup>

Here all of the contemplative traditions advocate "discernment", to seek to understand the directions in which the forces of life lead. The Ignatian method of discernment is an analytical approach and the most popular. Others are more simple, advocating a sense of what produces peace, humility, love, or simplicity and what produced distress, willfulness, animosity or confusion. Sometimes discernment involves relationship with a spiritual friend or guide.

For many an understanding of what May is saying will necessitate a reversal of the analytical, objective, dualistic Western perspective, but it is well worth heeding. Deal with evil we must, but can it only be dealt with by our aggressive attempts to control our world and ourselves? Beyond the world in which we live which objectifies and separates realities, there is a more basic reality from which we gain our existence and our meaning. Even though evil is here also, we must trust the Mystery we encounter so that this "rootedness" may guide as we act in our world.

### **Concluding Comments on Evil**

This writer is coming more and more to the conviction that there are both psychological and ontological/transcendent elements to the human experience of evil. The persistence of evil within the world, and those occasions when it seems to structure itself into societies, programs, movements, or institutions, would point towards elements which transcend the human. In working with troubled persons one often encounters dynamics whose strength and persistence are difficult to explain merely in terms of personal history or bio-chemical malfunction. In multiple personalities one frequently encounters evil persons often bent upon the destruction of the others. Such a person may be the introjection of a malevolent person from experience, functioning as an autonomous part of the psyche, which may be treated by psychotherapeutic means. And yet at times this seems to be more than an aspect of the psyche.

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<sup>299</sup>. Ibid., pp. 280-281.

<sup>300</sup>. Ibid., p. 283.

<sup>301</sup>. Ibid., p. 288.

As Christians we affirm the reality of God's spiritual world and the reality of the human soul. It is not really such a long step to affirm the reality of other spiritual powers, something that was part of the Christian perception of the world before modern science depopulated the spiritual world. One thing science has done for us is to explore the way the natural world functions. Historical and sociological studies have helped us to understand the social and political factors of historical experience. Thus it is right that we do not understand storms, earthquakes, famines or political conflict in transcendent terms. Even the human process has been explored biologically, psychologically, sociologically, with real benefit. However, when one comes to persons and all those structures and institutions in which humanity is involved, one begins to discover the possibility of transcendent spiritual forces at work. The way in which the spiritual world may impinge upon the human world is through the human psyche/mind. Modern studies in ESP have indicated an extra sensory dimension to human communication and perception.

I would like to suggest that though some affect of spirit upon matter may be possible,<sup>302</sup> the primary affect of the spiritual world upon our world is through persons.<sup>303</sup> This would mean that *both* God and the demonic affect the world primarily through persons. The confusing thing is that there are so many possibilities for the explanation of human experience and action that what happens in some persons may be merely explained as a personality disorder. Yet I believe that it is through our disorders and human difficulties, though our anger and selfishness, through the very biological needs that are necessary for life, that the demonic can work its will. This does not mean that our humanity is evil, but that the problems of our human existence can provide occasion for the work of God or the demonic, as can the societal and cultural distortions of human existence.

There are those times in the experience of life when evil seems to do too much, when there is too much tragedy and human suffering, when a sequence of events seems to be without explanation unless one assigns to it some intent, when the persistence of destructive dynamics in persons cannot be understood without explaining that the personal dynamics plus something else is present. Then, as there are moments in life when we experience God, we may find ourselves experiencing the Evil One. Like our God experiences, these experiences of Evil may later seem unreal, but perhaps we must cling to them as glimpses into the nature of existence which help us to deal with life in all of its dimensions. The recognition of Evil is not a cause for despair, for it was there before it was seen. Actually its disclosure causes it to lose its power. It functions most effectively when it is unrecognized and while operating autonomously within the psyche suggests to one courses of action that one identifies as coming from oneself. When it is unrecognized we become its victims operating from dynamics akin to post-hypnotic suggestion.

It is important for those going into religious professions, and all those deeply committed to God, to be aware that you are a prime target for Evil. Evil usually bothers only with those who are God's and therefore a threat, or those whose destructive dynamics can be significantly used. As servants of God, *you must know your vulnerabilities and seek to be conscious of your issues*, for that is where Evil will attack you. There is a clear perception within mysticism that as spiritual life grows so does the struggle with Evil and one's humanity.

You must also recognize that Evil will attack not only you, but those dear to you. This is really where you are most vulnerable. This is not something to fear, but to recognize, providing spiritual protection for your family. The New Testament message is about a Christ who subdues the cosmic powers (Col. 2:15).

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302. There has been a great deal of research in psychokinesis, the effect of mind on matter, which could be supportive of this.

303. See a further discussion of this in the section on "The Four Worlds of the Person" in the chapter on psychological models.

Ephesians 6:10 speaks of putting on the "whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." God is a primary participant in life and history. Paul was clear in Rom. 8 that this did not guarantee protection from everything. However, one was secure in the love of God whatever life would bring.

When you are aware, you can recognize and deal with Evil, and it is much less dangerous. Unfortunately, there is no life without danger and risk, and this applies not only to the possibility of Evil, but life in general. Life is only what it is and we have no other life now than this life. To pretend it is different will make it no different. When I shared this with someone who has been through a great deal of the darkness in recent European history, he said "But when there is so much darkness, you must look at the light." This is also true.