

What Price the Primal Crime?

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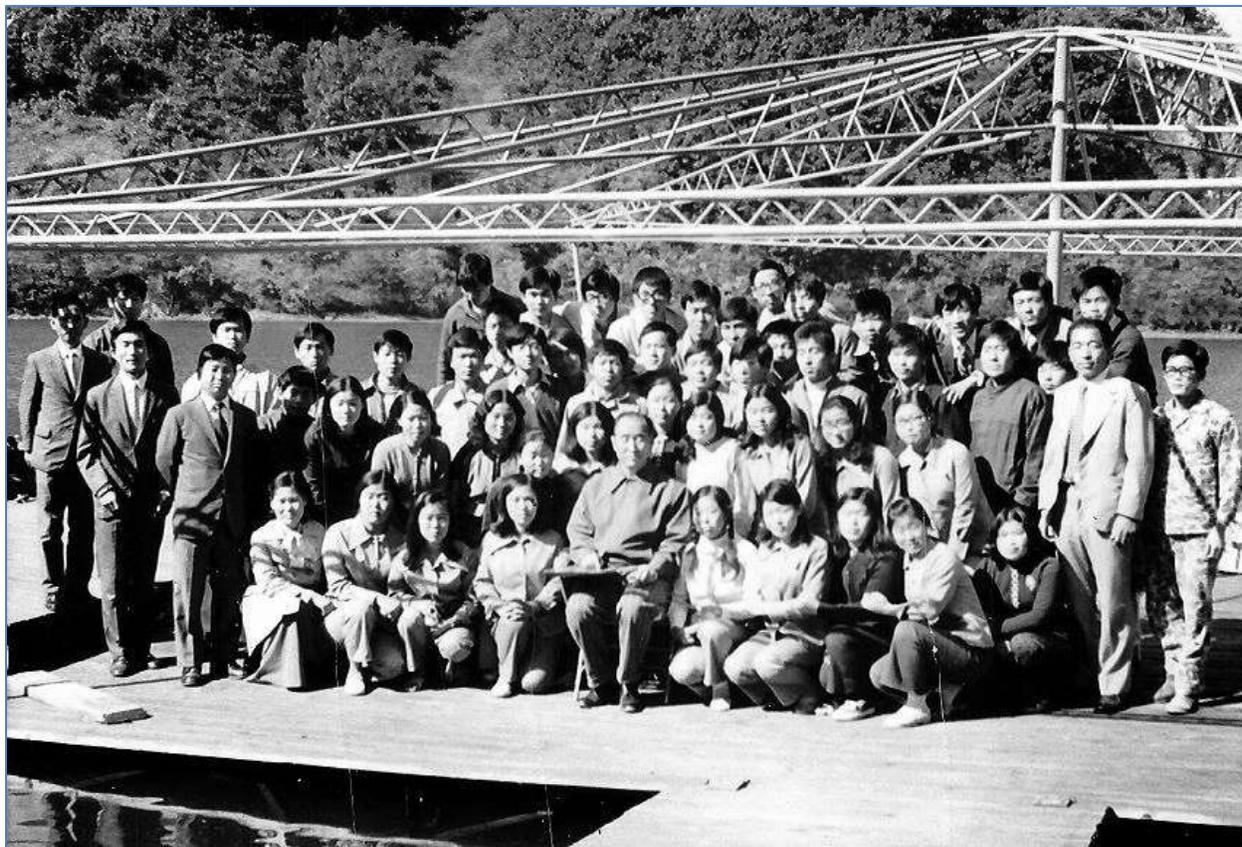


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The innate, instinctual impulse towards perfection, toward the development of a consciously creative personality, is deeply rooted in man's psyche as a need to feel whole, complete, integrated, and unified.

It has been most beautifully stated that cosmic consciousness or energy always existed. At first, it "slept in matter, dreamt in animals and waked in man:" as Charles Potter said in *The Creative Personality*.

The attainment of cosmic consciousness, the coming of age of man and of a people is the highest production of the long process of evolution on this planet. We are in a transitory stage between a lesser and a higher stage of consciousness, between a limited, fragmented society and a unified one. Yet, paradoxically, psychologist R. D. Laing (in his introduction to *The Politics of Experience*) has said we are not yet human since "we are born potentially men but born in an alienated state, and this state is simply not a natural system."

The spiritual leader Uspenskii asserts in his work on the evolutionary states of consciousness that man has just emerged from a state of "sleep" to "waking consciousness"; then his true self is still virtually unknown to him, and his intrinsic character or spiritual nature needs deeper probing. And if man is inwardly divided (his conscious mind from his subconscious mind, his heart from his body), then his turbulent outer world can be understood as an observable reflection of his own fragmented self.

Perhaps the world as we know it is a complete reversal of a natural order out of which prehuman history grew. The false consciousness and social distortions are obvious projections of this shattered sense of self. Until man's inner world can be harmonized with the outer world, man will continue to destroy the humanity of other men and continue to project his own divisions and distortions upon the world.

The foundations are now built for this breakthrough in consciousness, the attainment of true freedom. Yet man is held back by the limitations within his own nature, namely, his capacity for both good and evil, unchanged since the beginning of human history despite man's intellectual and material advancements.

Man has been searching for the very essence of his being from the very beginning of human history. But then, to get to the root of human experience, we must evaluate not only the external but the primal, internal forces and impulses that threaten man's freedom and continued evolution. What caused man to turn against himself and to destroy himself and the world in the process?

Collective guilt

If we study the growth of the individual, we find far-reaching similarities between the evolution of the individual and that of civilization. The collective state reflects the individual state: psychological problems turn into political ones and individual disorders reflect the society and world at large.

Notably, guilt manifests itself on the individual level and then the universal level. This sense of guilt occasionally emerges in civilization, as it does in the individual, and reveals its subterranean activity. The guilt feeling which is permeating and endangering our whole civilization must emerge. The expressions of the universal sense of guilt, its significant power, and its fateful tension determine the character of our whole civilization. Thus we must evaluate the role of guilt in relation to increased consciousness and to the growth and decline of civilization.

According to Theodore Reik, in *Myth and Guilt*, tension between the demands of the super-ego and the actual ego is experienced as guilt. Thus this tension manifests itself in the need for punishment to alleviate the anxiety that the guilty feeling produced. According to Freud, the repression of instinctual needs ("innate instinctual disposition") containing aggressive elements will later be transformed into a sense of guilt. Aggression in and of itself is neither good nor bad, but it was the abuse and misdirection of aggression that formed the original sense of guilt.

Origin of guilt

Guilt generally results from a forbidden deed of aggression, and becomes deeply rooted in the layers of the unconscious mind. What did man do that was so horrible, so devastating that he has had to prevent it from surfacing in his conscious mind for so many countless years, and why, just when it begins to surface, does man attempt to destroy himself and his world in the process? Reik contends that through exploring the ancient myths, one could unravel truths. Myths are more than tales of some fictitious past; they are memories of the past, told fictitiously, as they were understood by the individuals living in a preconscious era. Furthermore, myths belong to the same realm of reality as dreams, daydreams, art, and visions.

Through a comparative study, C.G. Jung concluded that the myths and fairy tales of a people and the dreams and fantasies of an individual were so close, that "the myth is a fragment of the infantile soul life of the race and the dream is the myth of the individual." Reik contends that in every civilization there is a genesis myth equivalent to the "Garden of Eden" story, with implications of a sexual transgression. Collective guilt comes from a remembrance of this original transgression.

Atonement

If we study later history to trace the collective sense of guilt, we see an almost insurmountable tension building up in the ancient Jewish prophetic and post-prophetic times, reaching its peak in Christianity. The unconscious feeling of guilt from the living reality of that primal transgression was beyond the acceptance of the people of that time; it took the form of the repressed aggressiveness of the masses in Rome, Greece, and India. The current religions and morals resulting from the repression of the primal impulse had constructed roadblocks to instincts that needed gratification. Sexual desire became intensified since it was the forbidden object. Repression of these urges indirectly increased guilt feelings. Thus, the world needed a redeemer from this primal guilt.

When Christ came, the Divine Son was sacrificed. With his death came the atonement of mankind from the primal crime, at least for the time being. At the time of Christ, the original nature of the crime was unrecognizable and its significance camouflaged. But its primal meaning was such that its exposure could possibly have endangered and even annihilated the very foundation of Jewish and Christian beliefs, because mankind could collectively deal with that impulse.

The time was not ripe; another time would mark the re-emergence of that primal impulse. The question remains, will man now be able to handle its reality or will he destroy himself and the world in the process? Perhaps our very era marks the re-emergence of that primal impulse, for our time -- the age of Aquarius or the apocalyptic or messianic era- closely parallels the time of Christ.

Results of the primal crime

Let's return to the concept of the primal crime as a survival of an earlier phase in human history which had tainted the human race, leaving mankind with a haunting, unremembered racial sense of anxiety and guilt. If at the very beginning of human history man was growing according to natural principles governing all living things, and if at one point he transgressed natural law through a misuse or abuse of sexual aggression, then the root of the primal crime is one of the misuse or abuse of sexuality or of love. It was through this transgression that man became separated from himself, from his true course of life, and from all others.

When man separated himself from the principle of creation, he separated himself from truth or reality and

his vision became distorted and unclear. It is an Oriental expression that man must have an "even conscience," one at 90° angles, to be able to perceive properly without picking up distortions. When man deviated from his original course, he lost his true vision, he lost his sense of self and became alien even unto himself. His relation to all things changed. Thus the deed became buried deeper and deeper in the instinctual structure of the individual psyche, only to later re-emerge in the form of either symptomatic behavior, (the Freudian desire to yield to the forbidden deed, to act it out over and over again) or a desire to end the impulse in order to alleviate its underlying anxiety.

The primal experience came when man was not able to deal with the consequences of his transgression. He had not attained a point of inner maturity and integration; so the experience of the union was premature or unbalanced. For unless man is united and balanced within himself first, through attaining a certain level of internal growth then there can be no true interpersonal relationships.

It is believed that the real basis for human desire for union is neither its biological purpose nor sensual gratification, but the need of the two poles for each other—the need to feel whole, unified and balanced. Sigmund Freud stated that "In the first place the sexes were originally three in number, not two as they are now; there was man, woman and the union of the two" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, p. 51). The struggle of man to return to that earlier stage and link up with his true source has not been an easy one. Herbert Marcuse has found that outside of the sexual instinct, no other instinct has a tendency to restore an earlier state, for there is a universal innate biological need, a "compulsion inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces." (*Eros and Civilization*, p. 22)

Freud felt that the underlying guilt pervading our civilization has been the reinforcement of culture. It has been said that this most destructive guilt manifests itself in the need for punishment and is one of the most powerful forces determining human destiny. This tension manifests itself in all harmful tendencies towards life and death, towards the self and others. This need for punishment or relief from this deep anxiety must be dealt with if we are to evolve as a species.

Quest for cosmic consciousness

Freud at one point in his thinking asserted that the purpose of life must be death, because of the strong and dominant death instinct within man. But perhaps this death drive is merely an attempt to end the primal impulse which is destructive to man, an attempt by the organism to become whole again.

So the purpose of life is not death, but the attainment of eternal life through the evolutionary advancement of cosmic consciousness. If true changes are to take place, man's conscious mind must be elevated to a higher truth about himself and about other people and be freed from the subconscious fears, guilts and primal images that hinder his ability to perceive clearly into reality and the depths of his own being.

If we can, as Jung has said, face our "shadow," acknowledge him for what he is, subjugate his dominance and control over us, and then transcend him, we are on the correct evolutionary path to obtaining true freedom.

Gandhi, Buddha, and Christ had all achieved this cosmic consciousness. The impression Christ left in the minds and hearts of the world has truly achieved immortality the world over. The character and person of Christ was but a mere glimpse of what man might become. But so very few people have been able to deeply comprehend the all-illuminating experience that these great men had. Most of us still struggle to achieve self-consciousness. The spark lives on within each of us that spark to link up with the universal mind, to attain true freedom, to be able to reach out and embrace all of life, and most of all, to love freely.