The One Supposed to Know  
David LICHTENSTEIN, Editor

In a front-page article published by the New York Times on February 2, 2013, Alan Schwarz reported the circumstances surrounding the suicide of 22-year-old Richard Fee. The story involves addiction to prescription amphetamines, an apparently psychotic reaction, and the profound failure of the mental health system. There are many lessons to be drawn from these events regarding the excessive use of psychiatric medications and the assumptions and practices that support this excess. However, it is also a story about the link between knowledge and power in clinical work, and about the erosion of an ethic that recognizes and respects the limits of the flesh in order to moderate the effects of the latter.

A unique feature of Schwarz’s article were the verbatim records of the clinicians treating Richard Fee, and who continued to prescribe the medications that were apparently causing him such great harm. The records were obtained by Richard Fee’s father, the legal representative of his deceased son. They provide rare access to the recorded reflections of various clinicians, the ability to assess their impressions and their doubts, and to do so in relation to how the actual events unfolded in real time. They are clinical notes and thus not necessarily comprehensive, but they are candid, credible, and strongly convey a certain quality of clinical thought, a quality characterized by a tragic lack of inquiry.

We also have the story as told by Richard’s parents, Rick and Kathy Fee, who were aware that their son was in trouble,
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Ideological Destructiveness: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on the Massacre of July 22, 2011

Siri Erika CULLESTAD

On July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik, a 32-year-old white Norwegian man from one of Oslo’s well-to-do neighborhoods, set off a bomb at the Norwegian Government Headquarters in the center of Oslo, killing 7 people and injuring many more. Dressed as a policeman, he then drove to Utoya, about 40 kilometers from Oslo, to the summer camp of 600 young people from the Social Democratic Party. During 1 hour he killed—cold blood—69 youths and children, one by one, shot in the chest and in the head, through hands helplessly trying to protect the face. Pretending to be a policeman who was there to protect them, Breivik induced them to leave their hiding places. Groups of children hiding under rocks or behind their leaders were massacred.

Breivik’s original plan was to execute Gro Harlem Brundland, former prime minister of Norway, who had given a political speech at Utoya earlier that day; the decapitation of Brundland was to be videotaped and put on the Internet, modeling al-Qaeda operations. The plan had to be changed, however, because Breivik was delayed.

The shock in Norway was total. How was this possible? How can we understand these acts of evil? In his own view, Anders Behring Breivik was motivated by extremist right-wing ideology. The bombs and the massacre were intended to be a wakeup call: Breivik wanted to save Norway, just before the massacre he sent out a manifesto in presenting his new book (Hagvet, Sorensen, & Steine, 2011) on the Norwegian radio, pointed out how Breivik "thinks in terms of centuries, stigmatizes his enemies and sees himself as morally justified to save Europe.” The question is, however, what makes a person join an ideology that justifies the sacrifice of innocent people by reference to a superior aim? Is it possible that the demonization of Muslims and Europe “fits” into a psychologically threatened universe and a murderous lust for revenge, i.e., that Breivik’s attitudes rather have to be understood as expressing inner, dynamic forces? This is the main question to be discussed here. While I am not in a position to give a full report about Breivik’s personality, my aim is to discuss some concepts and models of thought that may help elucidate the horrendous acts that appeared incomprehensible to the Norwegian people.

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On Evil

In the events of July 22, are we confronted with the acts of someone mad—i.e., is Breivik psychologically ill, or is he evil? "Evil" is a term belonging primarily to moral philosophy, theology, and everyday language. Within the field of psychology many prefer the term "aggression," considering "evil" to be a moral judgment. Basically, aggression may be viewed as a drive and inherent human potential for self-defense and for marking of one's "territory." However, the driving force of aggression may obviously be used either constructively, i.e., in the service of self-representation, or destructively, in the attack and maltreatment of others. As for destructiveness, there is an old discussion within psychology whether aggressive impulses should be regarded as a response to frustration, or rather as an inherent potential. Then there is the matter of sadism as a particular kind of aggression, specifically studied by clinical psychoanalysis, and defined as acts of inflicting pain and humiliation that provide drive satisfaction (Freud, 1905).

As for the concept of "evil," July 22 gave rise to a debate in Norway about the fruitfulness of the term. Some researchers on terrorism maintained that evil is not a good concept for scientific understanding, as it risks blocking the search for explanatory variables. This is undoubtedly true if one says about an act simply that "this is evil," or about a mass murderer that "he is evil," and stops there. In my view, however, we need a concept of evil, not as a global moral term, but with precise reference to evil actions, defined as actions where a person—consciously or unconsciously—intends to destroy or harm the victim, physically or psychologically. Defined in this way, evil actions are specific instances of aggression—that may or may not be sadistic in nature—that are aimed at destruction rather than at self-defense. In this sense, the massacre of July 22 undoubtedly was an act of evil. The aim was to kill and harm as many young people as possible. In Breivik's eyes, the killings served the "higher" aim of highlighting the dangers of multiculturalism.

All through the 10-week trial, Breivik—immovable—maintained that he realizes what he did was "incredible." It was, however, "necessary." The destructiveness was, according to Breivik's understanding, ideologically motivated.

Ideology and Personality

How can we understand such ideological motivation? Psychoanalysis since the 1930s have tried to analyze the authoritarian, destructive ideologies that came forward in the 20th century. Nazism and Fascism, which affected many psychoanalysts themselves, i.e., as Jews in Germany. One was Wilhelm Reich, who was a communist in addition to being Jewish. To understand the growth of Nazism, one needs analyses of historical, economic, social, and cultural circumstances. An in-depth understanding, however, also requires a psychological analysis. For Reich, a crucial question was why masses of people were attracted to National Socialism and anti-Semitic ideology. What type of personality is drawn to these ideas?

This is the question posed by Reich in The Mass Psychology of Fascism (Reich, 1933), and by the Frankfurt School through their studies of the authoritarian personality (Fromm, Horak, 1936; Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950).

In brief, according to these studies, the psychological attraction of Nazism may be explained by an authoritarian education of children within a patriarchal family structure characterized by denial of sexuality, producing an authoritarian character type with aggressive feelings. Aggression cannot, however, be directed toward parents or powerful people, but are instead directed against weak minority groups.

A disputing question arising from these studies is whether the individual may actually exist to be part of hierarchical, authoritarian structures, i.e., that the individual may harbor an "authoritarian longing" (Hagvet et al., 2011). Erich Fromm's suggestive title Escape from Freedom (Fromm, 1941) captures the same motive from another angle: the wish to escape from burdensome personal responsibility. The motive of "authoritarian longing" is elaborated in recent psychoanalytic studies seeking to identify deep structures that are common to authoritarian ideologies (Bohléker, 2010). According to Bohléker (2010), the essence seems to be fantasies of unity and purity. Unity refers to ideas of "being one with something bigger: Nazism contained ideas about the nation and the Aryan " Volk (people); fundamentalist Islam has the conception of ummah; radical right-wing ideologies have the idea about a homogeneous Europe restraining Eurasia. In this perspective, the "flight from freedom" comes forward as an expression of the deeply rooted human need for safety and attachment. On an unconscious level "the fatherland," "the native country" may represent safe parental figures: safety is obtained through belonging to a group, submitting to the rules of the group, maybe under the leadership of a father figure.

A closely linked idea is that of patriarchy. Within the group, individual distinctive stamps are denied and substituted by identification with group members of one's "own" kind—difference and otherness is experienced as impure. Within Nazi ideology, it was the Jews that became the carrier of impurity, Nazi propaganda producing a vast range of metaphors relating to the Jews as "parasites" and scavengers attaching themselves as leeches to the "ethnic body" (Volksgemeinschaft), or as contaminating "vermin" and a "pestilence." Within radical right-wing ideologies of today, Muslims are the carrier of impurity. When fantasies of unity and purity dominate a group, identity is affirmed through mirroring from group members identical to oneself. Groups of this kind tend to become increasingly radical. No deviations are tolerated; purity is maintained through exclusion and finally through ethnic cleansing. In this way, ideologues of uniformity and homogenization via purification trigger persecutory aggression, perversion, and violence.

Endorsement of an ideological worldview often takes place in young adulthood, at a point of time at which it is expected that the individual separates from their parents and establishes an independent social identity through occupation and choice of a partner. When analyzing adherence to ideological movements it may be fruitful to take as a point of departure this separation-and individuation process, which always unfolds within a specific social environment. Maybe identification with the nation and a "pure" people represents a "solution" if the individual identity project appears too complicated? The question of "Who am I?" is replaced by "Where do I belong?" (Bohléker, 2010), and the young adult is spared the challenge of forming a separate, individual identity—in a world of rivalry, competition, and plurality.

In my view, it should be emphasized that in an ideology worshipping one's own people, belonging "the other", "the stranger" often comes as a response to real social and political frustration and experience of loss, e.g., of jobs or status as a man. Therefore, ideological motivation has to be analyzed in a social and cultural context as well. As stated by a member of the radical right-wing English Defense League in England about Muslims, "They arrive here—and take our jobs and our women." This statement indicates that loss of traditional privileges in relation to women, family, and society experienced by a lot of whites, Western men may be a stronger motive than we would like to think.

That right-wing young adults project their dreams and longings onto a uniform, homogeneous, and pure Europe bears witness to how difficult it is to "find oneself" in a multicultural society. However, although ideologies may apparently represent "solutions" to real social problems, the intensity with which they are defended testifies to un-
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conscious motives being actualized: the way "the others" as a group is portrayed, undifferentiated and without individual variations, suggests that the very perception of them as well as of the historical and social circumstances they are embedded in is colored by fantasies and projections. It is the explanation of this projective element that psychoanalysis can contribute to specifically.

Certainly, the wish to belong to a pure unity is relevant to grasp why people are attracted to authoritarian ideologies. Nevertheless, a limitation of theories focusing on common unconscious fantasy structures is that they are quite general in their proposal. Symbiotic fantasies of melting together—yearning for abandonment or for being embedded in a safe embrace—these are universal human longings, and many people harbor such fantasies without behavioral values. This seems to be the deepest root of his attack on multiculturalism and fear of Eurabia. He is strongly concerned about the demography of modern Western societies, with declining birth rates of "valuable," white, Christian people, and vehemently rages against feminism and cultural Marxism: "I feel shame on behalf of my city, my country and my civilization. I despise the postwar cultural conservatives that did not manage to stop the Marxist cultural revolution manifested by the 68-generation" (Breivik, 2011). Indeed, the "feminization" of the whole society, and also of him, is something specifically loathed by Breivik, as stated both in his manifesto and in his self-defense during the trial: in the school he was attending as a child he was, he says, "forced to learn to knit and sew." Paradoxically, during his teens he was attracted to masculine, not "feminized," boys from minority cultures, like the Muslim culture of Pakistani people, characterized by codes of honor.

Breivik's hatred is also directed against the dissolution of sexual morality: "An alarming number of young girls in Oslo, Norway, start giving oral sex at the age of 11 and 12. This might happen at an even younger age if sexual education is liberalized further. This development must be reversed to avoid complete collapse" (ibid.). This portrayal of the sexual behavior of the Oslo girls of 2011, having no empirical basis, clearly demonstrates the projective element of Breivik's perception of society.

To restore order, in Breivik's wished-for society, postcolonial Marxist feminist changes in family life, which was changed from a patriarchal to a matriarchal model in the 1960s, will be reversed in order to combat an excessive feminization of family structure and males in particular. The goal is to reintroduce the father as the authority figure and family head and therefore strengthen the nuclear family. It is estimated that these changes will result in a decline of the divorce rate/broken families by approximately 50%.

Furthermore, the father can, without fear of being punished by the law, reassert an authority role in the family. Physical disciplinary methods will once again be a factor in the upbringing of children (ibid.).

In this wished-for society, women's choice will be reduced to "essentially three options—be a nun, be a prostitute, or marry a man and bear children." In conclusion, Breivik forcefully states that in the near laws "fathers should be favored (prerogative rights) when child custody cases are decided in courts" (ibid.). As he stated repeatedly in court, "Who governs the crib, governs society."

Psychiatric Assessment

How did Anders Behring Breivik come to feel this way? And what is the relationship between his way of thinking and his actions, i.e., between his ideology and the massacre? Immediately after Breivik was imprisoned it was decided that he should be subjected to forensic psychiatric obser-
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Anders was born into an extremely conflict-ridden relationship between his mother, a nursing assistant, and his father, who had a master’s degree in business administration and worked as a diplomat. While childhood relationships as assessed by outside observers can never fully explain the deeds of the adult, the quality of these relationships may nevertheless shed light on the dynamics of hatred and revenge. Both parents had children from previous marriages—his father two sons and a daughter, and his mother a 6-year-old daughter. After a short, turbulent marriage, living in London due to his father’s job, his parents got divorced. Anders was then 18 months old. After the divorce Anders continued to live with his mother and half-sister in Norway, seeing his father only seldom. According to family friends, his mother perceived her ex-husband as a "monster," the "devil" incarnate, whereas she saw her as "mad" and "impossible to talk to" (ibid, p.43).

When Anders was 2 years old, his mother sought official help, asking for a weekend home for Anders because she was worn out both physically and psychologically, and because Anders was a demanding child, "vehement and capricious, and full of unpredictable ideas" (ibid). The application was granted, but Anders’s mother ended the arrangement because the weekend home did not, she felt, fit Anders. At this time close acquaintances of the family witnessed a mother-son relationship full of violent conflicts followed by emotion-

in a remarkable book called A Norwegian Tragedy: Anders Breivik and the Road to Utoya (2012)—which has recently received a lot of attention in Norway—Age Borchgrevink addresses this question of

mental state by turning his attention to Breivik’s childhood and youth. It is an exceptional book, as it is based on extensive interviewing of people that knew the Breivik family during Anders’s childhood and of friends of Anders, as well as on confidential information conveyed by the case records from the psychiatric institution that observed and evaluated the family when Anders was 4 years old. Interestingly, Borchgrevink’s original project was to explore the catastrophe of July 22 as a political reaction to “globalization and modernity” (Borchgrevink, 2012, p.334). Studying Breivik’s manifest, however, it struck him that the most affect-laden parts of it does not deal with Muslims, but with “anger and frustration” toward women in general and his mother in particular (ibid, p.59). From studying Breivik’s political ideology, Borchgrevink was led to Breivik’s personal background and specifically to his relationship with his mother.
al reconciliations. Andor's mother was extremely unstable in her attitude toward the little boy, furious at one moment, treating him as if he were a prolongation of the hated father, and then showering him with carcasses (ibid.).

When Andor was 4, his mother again sought help, and this time was referred to a well-known child psychiatric unit, where the small family was admitted for observation for about 3 weeks. A team of 8 persons, including a psychologist and a chief psychiatrist, observed the family, providing assessments of both mother and Andor and of the interaction between the two of them. Rendering the case record, his mother had wished for an abortion when pregnant with Andor, but was indecisive. Already during pregnancy she experienced her baby as difficult—someone heard her say that from the moment she felt him kicking, she knew her baby boy was "evil." She stopped breast-feeding him alter 10 months because his sucking was so "reprehensible and aggressive that it damaged her" (ibid.). In his mother's view, Andor was "aggressive, clinging and extremely demanding."

The clinic's observational team describes a mother alternately drawing her little son tightly toward herself, "sympathetically," and then pushing him aggressively away—an interaction pattern characterized by "double communication," oscillating between sweet talking and open expression of death wishes (ibid.). Her relationship to the boy is described as "sexualizing" and as "projecting primitive aggressive and sexual fantases, everything that she feels as dangerous and aggressive in men" (case record, cited from ibid., p.341). As for the psychiatric evaluation, Andor's mother was regarded as having weak mentalizing ability—everything was the fault of other people—and was diagnosed as functioning on a borderline level.

The psychologist assessing Andor at the age of 4, partly through the method of play therapy, reports that "Andor has become a somewhat anxious, passive child warding off contact, however with a manic defense with restless activity and a put on, sverting smile" (ibid., p.42). Andor was unable to play, and was characterized as "pedantic" and "extremely orderly" (ibid., p.48).

In spite of language proficiency, he lacked ability for "expressing himself emotionally" (ibid., p.46). There was a "complete lack of spontaneity and appearance of joy and pleasure" (ibid., p.46).

The report of the psychiatric clinic concluded that Andor ought to be placed in a foster home. After reading the report, Andor's father claimed custody over the boy. As his mother refused, the case was brought to the court, which decided in favor of the mother. After this verdict, Andor only occasionally visited his father and his new wife, then living in France. From when Andor was 15 years old there was no more contact between father and son. When Andor was 12, his mother got a new partner, who became a kind of stepfather to Andor, although they did not live together on a regular basis.

Self-Identity and Splitting

Psychiatric diagnoses, on the basis of descriptive symptoms, aim at correct categorization rather than at understanding the individual. Indeed, there is not much to "understand," if one conceptualizes the person's condition in terms of a biologically based illness. By contrast, a psychodynamic personality description seeks to build an understanding of the individual's psychological development and functioning—perhaps even if the condition should be psychiatric. While it is ethically problematic for a psychoanalyst to speculate about unconscious dynamics—as the psychoanayst's words have a professional authority that is different from those of a journalist or a novelist—there is a need to try to understand, and in my view the case calls for an in-depth psychodynamic understanding. In a piece written for a Norwegian journal in January 2012, I presented two psychoanalytic concepts that I found valuable in a discussion of July 22, namely, splitting and personal myth (Gullestad, 2012). Combined with access to the psychiatric assessments and Borchgrevink's interview material, I now find those concepts even more relevant in throwing light on Andor Behring Breivik's deeds.

As demonstrated by modern studies of psychological development, the formation of a separate, coherent, and positively colored self-representation is a complex process, crucially dependent on the child's emotional interaction with significant others. Whereas Freud's theory put the main emphasis on sexuality and aggression as motivational driving forces, contemporary psychoanalysis, in line with developmental research, focuses on relational needs (Gullestad & Killingmo, 2005). Three types of relational needs appear particularly important: safety, self-affirmation, and intersubjectivity. The first refers to the child's need for attachment to a "secure base" (Bowby, 1978) that can be sought when needed. The second refers to the child's need for emotional feedback that affirms the feeling of being a self in one's own right and with value (Kohut, 1971). Such affirmation will gradually be internalized, i.e., the child can appreciate himself. Intersubjectivity refers to the need for sharing subjective experience—that another can understand one's feelings and thinking (Stern, 1985).

The utterly ambivalent attitude of Andor's mother, and Andor's defensive behavior, clearly points to disturbances in attachment. Also, Borchgrevink (2012) chooses attachment-disturbance as a main theoretical concept. I will particularly emphasize what seems to be a symbiotic quality of this relationship—there seems to be a lack of normal boundaries necessary for development of an authentic separate self. His mother's way of describing her relationship to Andor is telling in this respect: to the psychologist she said that she wanted to "poo him off herself". She wanted to push him away, while at the same time pulling him close. After the divorce Andor slept in her mother's bed at night. His mother had made some half-hearted efforts to break this habit, but, according to the case record, it looked like she "may be does really not want to" (Borchgrevink, 2012, p.342). Double communication, alternating between closeness and rejection, says the clinic. It would seem that the state of unclear boundaries between mother and son remained. According to the police interrogations, "For a joke," Andor gave his mother a vibrator when her relationship with a lover ended in 2004. Interestingly, Andor did not want his mother to be present in court or to see her during the trial, stating that she is his "Athelica's hood" and the only person that can make him "emotionally unstable."

In a thought-provoking article about July 22, the Norwegian novelist Karl Ove Knausgård (2012) also focuses on the theme of unclear boundaries. Breivik's ideological universe, with its particularly strong hatred of feminist values and its defense of the firm and simple traditional family unit of the 1950s—an absolute masculine world—is characterized by what Knausgård calls a fear of "boundlessness." In Knausgård's reading, the same kind of fear also marks Adolf Hitler's world of ideas, as expressed in Mein Kampf. For both men this fear of boundlessness probably originates in a relationship to an excessive, limitless mother and an absent father. Breivik, as a consequence, has a need to protect himself against inner chaos, caused by a mother who is alternatively engulding and rejecting.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, lack of emotional feedback that affirms the child's feeling of being a separate self in his own right and the resulting fear of boundlessness will likely lead to a splitting of the self. Splitting means that two sides of a psychic phenomenon is kept apart, so that only one side is represented in consciousness. Splitting implies lack of ability to contain simultaneous presence of contradictory emotions, e.g., love and hate. According to Klein (1946), it is a question of keeping
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Anders Behring Breivik grew up in a time of great social and cultural change—Oslo West was at this moment confronted with multiculturalism for the first time. During the 1980s the subway between Oslo West and Oslo East became connected for the first time, allowing for easy transportation between different regions of the city. This was a time of child robberies, i.e., gangs of immigrants coming from the east to rob "naive" children living in white neighborhoods, taking their money, expensive jackets, etc. I myself at this time had children attending the same school as Breivik (my own son was robbed, as it was the son of my best friend), and there were a lot of meetings between the school and the parents to discuss how to take action against the robberies. This was the context of Breivik’s adolescence.

At the age of 13 Anders began identifying himself with the hip-hop milieu of Oslo East, talking their specific slang, and also becoming friends with an immigrant Pakistani boy belonging to one of the "cool" gangs, who in a way served as Anders's "protector". At the same time Anders started tagging, soon trying to be-come the toughest, most fearless in the gang. His signature was "Morg," a name taken from a cartoon, known as the executioner with a double-headed axe used for the execution of Morg's own people. Morg (the word sounds like "morgue") was the first of Anders's "doubles"—later he created different fictitious characters playing Internet games, among them Jusiticiary Knight Andrew Berwick, the avatar that would eventually carry out the Utøya massacre (Borshgevik, 2012).

Growing Up: Oslo West in the 1980s

Disturbance in attachment, although most significant for identity development, cannot in itself explain actions like those we witnessed on July 22. Many children experience a decisive deficit (Kellinro, 1989) in early parent-child interaction, e.g., in the form of unclear boundaries and limits, without becoming a mass murderer. Attachment-disturbance may be a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient condition in explaining the massacre. Another important variable is the formation of a personal identity through interaction with peers and the social world. As stated before, ideological and political ideas are often developed in young adulthood, at a point of time when the young adult is expected to separate from parents and to form an independent social identity through work and choice of a partner. It seems that Anders Behring Breivik fully developed his ideological worldview, focusing on the fear of "Eurabia," from the time when he moved back to his mother's apartment in 2006, when he was 27 years old. He did so after a lot of social and economic defeats.
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When reading interviews with Anders’s schoolmates (Borchgrevink, 2012), one is struck by the fact that he never became fully integrated in any group, although apparently a member of a gang-sooner or later he was somehow left behind. Indeed, it is heartrending to realize how he always remained—somehow—an outsider, experienced by many as somewhat strange. Maybe the child he presented to peers lacked authenticity to a degree that made normal friendships difficult.

Personal Myths

Splitting may result in the formation of personal myths (Kris, 1956; Gallestad, 1995). Myths—having metaphysical, cosmological, ontological, and psychological functions (Campbell, 1976)—can be analyzed from anthropological, philosophical, and psychoanalytic viewpoints. Myths supply answers to certain irreducible psychological problems inherent in the biology of our species (ibid.). The myths of a society contain images and models that the individual can arrive toward—a “range of metaphorical identities” (Bruner, 1990)—serving as collective identity solutions. In accordance with its ideals, society molds the younger generation through its mythology: “myths are instruments of socialization” (Arrow, 1961, p. 329).

The concept of “personal myth” was introduced by Kris (1956) to refer to an autobiography that has a defensive function and at the same time represents something cherished. In line with Freud (1932), myths, like dreams and symptoms, are pictured as compromise formations, expressing at the same time a wish and the defense against this wish. The mythical story is concealing: in a disguised manner, it expresses screen memories and central unconscious fantasies. It should be understood that from a psychoanalytic point of view, personal myths have a wish-fulfilling function. They are distinguished by a narrative that implies a mythification and heroization of the self (Green, 1991; Gallestad, 1995). Evoking the universe of fairy tales and remarkable deeds, the logic and language of the myth correspond to the level of the child’s way of thinking. Myths may contain fundamental aspects of the individual’s existential being-in-the-world, as this state is stored in an infantile form. Thus, the myth may serve as a bridge to the archaic domain of psychic reality.

A personal myth expressing “nothing is impossible for me” is analyzed in Gallestad (1995). In this case the myth implied a heroization of the self that protected against strong underlying feelings of weakness and worthlessness. Maybe Anders Behring Breivik’s picture of himself as a “savior of Europe” may be regarded as a personal myth of this kind. In this perspective, the double Justiciary Knight Andrew Breivik represents a blow-up self-image shield- ing against the experience of being a loser. Generally, a main function of the myth is to help with overcoming anonymity and becoming special (Gallestad, 2012).

Provided that “fear of boundlessness” is a correct description of Breivik’s existential world, we know from the clinical context that the response may be intense aggressive feelings: what is at stake for the child is the protection of his very self. Certainly, the formation of a personal myth may have a function in this context. A deep function of the myth concerns liberation from the figure of the mother, often experienced as seductive, enacting, and destructive (Green, 1991; Gallestad, 1995). Through heroization of the self, the original dependency on the mother is denied. The individual liberates himself both from the part of the mother wishing to keep the child in a dependent position and from the part of him wishing to stay in this position.1

Sadism at Utøya

Psychodynamic hypotheses of disturbances in attachment and narcissistic failure notwithstanding, the main problem in explaining July 22 is the passage from thought to action. Also, it is a question of understanding the quality of the aggression unfolding at Utøya. To start with the latter, one of the most conspicuous features of the killings was how machinelike Breivik appeared, like a robot. According to survivors, he was utterly calm and composed. In line with Borchgrevink, when following the trial and the documentation of the assassies, I was struck—and shocked—by the manner in which the killings were carried through: an extraordinary amount of shots to the head against the wounded and the youths pretending to be dead—“I gave him [or her] a head shot,” Breivik repeated through the trial. It is the systematic head shots that accounts for the fact that the ratio between killed and wounded people was 2 to 1, which is an unusually high number of deaths in a massacre (Borchgrevink, 2012). Breivik also told psychiatrists that he was surprised that the sound of the head shots differed from what he knew from video games.

When following the trial and the account of the survivors, I was also struck by the icy cruelty of Breivik when faced with the helplessness of his victims: he shot them in the face at short range, while they lay in the position of a fetus, praying for their lives. Indeed, helplessness did not trigger the usual human response of empathy—on the contrary, it seemed to trigger spitefulness. Although stating that it was “a hell” and that he himself found the killings “horrible” and “traumatizing,” Breivik’s emotional response was inadequate—as we all could notice when seeing him in court. The expert psychiatrists (Harby & Sørhe- im, 2011) comment on Breivik’s special, introverted, and frozen smile when he talked about details linked to the massacre—a smile we also repeatedly witnessed in court.

To me, this smile conveys the distant attitude of an outside observer, not affectively present in what he talks about.

In the film American Beauty, the colonel is a brutal man of discipline, attracted by Nazi ideology, a collector of weapons and old Nazi symbols. His attitudes and values, emphasizing honor and masculine strength, are militaristic and patriarchal, with a strong contempt for weakness. He is also extremely prejudiced and particularly provoked by homosexual men. What the film illustrates is that the colonel’s homophbic attitudes are based on repression of his own homo- sexual longings. The tragedy of the film is elicited the moment these longings break through: the colonel kills the man who has witnessed that what he despises so intenc- tively proves to be part of himself.

The murder in American Beauty is an act resulting from an affective breakthrough—what we witness is “warm” aggression. In contrast, the massacre of July 22 was the outcome of Breivik’s thorough planning over several years and instrumental preparation for the moment of killing through, for example, the use of drugs and of medita- tion-like techniques to “de-emotional- ize” (Breivik’s own expression) himself—a rare discipline and self-control. Unlike the murder in the film, Breivik was, it seems, killing in cold blood—Breivik himself de- scribed that after having crossed a “border” through the first murder, he experienced the rest of the massacre like a video game. In my view, this way of displaying destructiveness may be understood as a result of a splitting mechanism: The killings are, as it were, committed by an alien, split-off self.

There are more to the aggression than cold distance, however. Survivors of Utøya also tell about excited shouting—"You will all die today, Marsklett!" This kind of exultation would seem to be a sign of "pleasure in murdering, thus indicating a sadistic component. Borchgrevink, also emphasizing the sadistic elements in Breivik’s actions, has a specific background in studies of al-Qaeda’s way of executing their victims, by decapitating them while alive. As mentioned earlier, this practice served as a model for Breivik, describing “head-lancing” in his manifest (Borchgrevink, 2012).

1 On the unconscious level, the myth may play a similar role as an “open line” to the mother, thus offering a wish-fulfilling symbiotic relationship that brings comfort in the impossible reality of separation. As concerns Breivik, hypotheses about unconscious dynamics of this kind would be more speculative.
COMMENTARY

From a psychoanalytic point of view, sadism is an act of inflicting pain or humiliation that provides instinctual satisfaction (Freud, 1905), although the term is also used as a synonym for maltreatment of the object (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1967). Thus, sadism is not synonymous with aggression; rather, it is aggression and lust combined. Psychoanalysis is probably the only theory accounting for the pleasure experienced through sadistic actions, thereby highlighting the most provocative human actions, for example, children slowly and meticulously tormenting an animal, or the systematic and impious torture committed in a place like the Abu Ghraib prison.

Ideology and Personality

As to the question about the passage from thought to action—after all, many right-wing extremists think like Breivik without endorsing his actions—in my view, psychology provides no definitive answer. At the same time, psychological knowledge may shed some light on the topic. As is well-known from social psychological studies (Zimbardo, 2007), belonging to a group represents a mighty driving force for evil deeds. Executioners and torturers do not act as individuals, but rather as members of a collective identity. On the contrary, the killings of Utøya apparently are the work of a loner. Is there, however, a group involved in this case as well—at least an illogic one? Within the fictional world of Internet games grandiose self-images and myths may be acted out. Games like World of Warcraft and Call of Duty replace real trials of strength. Breivik’s first question to his defense counsel the day after the massacre was, “How many did I kill?” The answer to the question gives the basis for imaginary heroic deeds. The pretense would also make possible the making of a group needed for feeling connected, not through the encounter with a real “you,” but through mirroring from anonymous fellow partisans, in an echo room. In this room ideology is created, which in turn serves to justify one’s actions. In this perspective, terrorist actions may have their foundation in personally motivated hatred and vindictiveness, i.e., a subjective war scenario that is displaced and projected and justified with reference to a war “out there.” The individual thus generates the ideology that in the next round makes actions “necessary.” In this manner, the relationship between psychological motives and ideology becomes dialectical: one seeks an ideology that “fits” one’s (partly unconscious) intentions; the ideology, however, is indispensable to legitimize actions. This ideology can only be reduced to underlying causes; it must also be analyzed on its own premises.

Given this background, we need to underline the connections between psychological dynamics on the one hand and the ideological world of the terrorist on the other. The feeling of being threatened by inversion as well as hatred toward an annihilating object—these seem to be themes on the psychological as well as on the ideological level. This is in sharp contrast to the first forensic report through psychiatric “glasses” focusing on illness, there is no link between the diagnosis and Breivik’s manifest—the ideological ideas are seen as delusions resulting from psychosis. In contrast, a psychoanalytic perspective opens up for comprehending why the mass murderer felt threatened and called for defense and revenge. In this view, there are links between psychological explanations on the one hand and Breivik’s self-understanding and values on the other. At the same time, connections to the cultural, social, and political Norway that has also formed his personality are established. In this analysis ideologies are interpreted in a dialectical movement, both through a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Rücker, 1965), with a view to grasp psychological causes, and in a “teleological” frame (bid), with a view to the values and intentions that the individual identifies with.

Concluding Remarks

In the eyes of Breivik, the terrorist perpetrated against the government building and the Utøya massacre carried a message: the violence should introduce a manifest and at ideology, conveying the message of a threatened Europe and the mass murderer as a savior. The killer wants us to look at him, and it is as a rescuer that we have to see him. However, the director does not control the stage. In an imaginary reality he might, within a relational scenario without a “real” you, without friction, but not so in the real world. Here we do not control the eye of the other. One of Breivik’s 1947 fictional figures says, “Hell, that is the others”—a hell because we do not control how other people see us. The terrorist wants us to perceive his actions as he himself does. For those of us trying to understand his actions, however, the explanation of the ill deeds is not to be found in his self-understanding and his ideology, which cannot be taken on face value. Philosophers have criticized psychoanalysis for “describing” attitude, which does not take the person at his words but acts through the reasons given by the person himself. Confronted with horrendously subjective actions like Breivik’s, a “describing” look is not only advisable, but also difficult to avoid. The mass murderer has staged a scene, with uniforms, medals, and specific bodily postures. He wants us to look at him in a specific way, but what we see is someone who wants to be looked at in this specific way. Anders Behring Breivik does not have it his way! What the world notices, confronted with his ill deeds, is not what he wants us to see. What we see is unfathomable evil.

REFERENCES


dynjandis Galleria.

