

Jamie MORAN

The Dæmonic God

I cannot now recall when I first started using the phrase “the wound inflicted on the deep heart by the dæmonic God,” but I have used it for years and years in my writings. I did not resort to it from reading other people who have also used this old Greek term, but it found its way to me only when God laid waste my own life; in the words of a priest friend, who has been through this very recently and is still in the thick of it, the dæmonic refers to our ‘undoing’ by God.

UNDOING

God slays and destroys us, leaving nothing standing, so our existence can be dug up from the foundation and rebuilt from the rubble. We are ‘overturned’ so that, deep down, we can ‘turn over’ a new leaf: we are fundamentally changed in depth through this. The process of undoing is savage, fierce and terrible: in its throes we lose everything; not only bad or indeed evil things go, but also all the good things go, including especially the religious and spiritual things. We lose it all. We lose God, and we lose our life, and we lose our self. Once we really let it all go, this is a tremendous relief, and liberation. But in the throes of it we despair, and go into an abyss beyond any comfort; a place beyond despair: a place of dereliction and ruination and abject failure on all levels, and a place of mourning where tears, though never ending, become exhausted. Sometimes this is a place of screaming, in protest, or of crying out, in pain. Often, it is mute. It is beyond everything. All pious hopes, certainties, images, are burnt up in a furnace. We are stripped, left naked, and raw. There is nothing left; it is all gone. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,” we read—and dismiss, until it happens to us.

Only at the end of this long dark night and burning desert may there be a coming to acceptance: “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord”; but this cannot be uttered from within the midst of this process, while it is still reducing us to nothing. In this process, the whole voice of piety, of obedience to God sickens us, and we want to spit it out. It is not even that we hate God. We simply find God radically and wholly incomprehensible.

Given what has happened to us, and to those we love, and to that in the world we value, then no ‘god’ makes sense, and to continue being pious and obedient is to falsify and lie about our heart’s dwelling place, and our heart’s truth in that place. Thus I always spoke of the ‘black pain in the deep heart.’ I called it ‘existence’s wound,’ and ‘the koan for which there is no solution.’ In a short piece I wrote for my friend Four Arrows, I named it in Lakota as ‘hard *wakan*’: hard mysterious, hard sacred, hard power, hard road. GOETHE said: “The dæmonic is a mysterious power, which everyone feels, but no philosopher can explain.”

DUENDE

For me personally, the most significant echo of this struggle and suffering inflicted upon the heart, which deepens it and either strengthens and forges it in that depth, or unravels and utterly derails it there, is in Federico García LORCA’s writings on the ‘duende’ of flamenco which produces ‘deep song.’ He explicitly identifies the Greek word ‘dæmonic’

with the Gypsy/Arab word ‘duende’. This was a kindred work: I immediately recognised LORCA as on the same hunt as my life.

Before LORCA, I encountered SOCRATES speaking of having a ‘creative spirit,’ whom he called his ‘dæmon’, dynamising and driving his life work’s inspired condition; to this dæmon he felt both indebted and duty-bound, which is why he preferred to be put to death by the authorities and still keep his dæmon, rather than abandoning his post and retaining his life—but a life no longer stabbed and inspired by the dæmon. The ‘dæmonic’ haunts Greek culture as much, or more, than the ‘erotic’. The ‘paradoxes’ of HERACLITUS are all dæmonic (and centuries later, the Orthodox Nicholas of Cusa will repeat HERACLITUS in saying the Spirit, which is holy, is a “coincidence of opposites”). Similarly the Dionysian mysteries, which Friedrich NIETZSCHE contrasted with the calm cosmic order of the Apolline, are another account of the dæmonic.

LORCA, like the Greeks, distinguishes dæmonic from both ‘angelic’ and ‘demonic’. In art, LORCA argues for three kinds of inspiration: (a) the angel of light (nous); (b) the muse of beauty (soul); (3) but only duende, which scorches and rips the heart to shreds, produces the depth of passion, as in the *cante hondo* of flamenco. It is an agonised ecstasy, ‘on the rim.’ In LORCA’s gypsy poems, he refers to duende or dæmonic as the ‘knife in the street,’ and the ‘blue arrows’ shot in the night. His evocation of its impact, and our wrestling with it in the deeps of the heart, is profound.

The dæmonic is a shattering and wounding event, but it is also a spiritual power, a presence that brings and indwells such events, and can indwell us if we will wrestle with and indeed be killed by this power. The duende is a process, and a work. The duende is a spirit who destroys, yet raises, our spirit: our spiritedness of passion. It is this spirit being referred to when the Bible says, “Jacob’s heart fainted, but his spirit recovered.”

The heart is fated to be wounded by the dæmonic in this existence.

Faintheartedness is the fate of a heart that flees and refuses this fate.

In the shamanic way of the Lakota, the dæmonic is *Wakinyan Tanka*, the spiritual guardian of the West in the sacred circle. He is the spirit who sends the thunder, lightning, and storm; his is the place of danger, mystery, and the power of life and death. He is the patron of the road of the warrior, who not only ‘hungers and thirsts for righteousness’ and justice, but is asked to ‘protect the sacred origins’ of all existence. The power that fights is also the same power that heals.

There are also uses of the word ‘dæmonic’ which falsify and distort its meaning. These are too legion to mention, but Carl Gustav JUNG’s usage of this holy word is usually neo-Platonic or Gnostic, and thus has nothing to do with what is being declared concerning God, humanity and the world, only through the dæmonic ‘messenger’ and his revelation. For example, what JUNG terms the ‘archetypal’ is not in any sense ‘dæmonic’.

The dæmonic is beyond all thought, all images, all credal belief. Certainly it is not of the soul any more than it is of



the mind: it is of the heart. Most false notions of the dæmonic are false because they fail to realise the central point: that the dæmonic is the fate the heart is destined for. For the heart, it is curse and blessing, its providential pain, burden and duty: its vow and honour.

In the following passage, Martin BUBER evokes the dæmonic without ever naming it: "The world is not divine play, it is divine fate. That there are world, human, the divine person, Thou and I, has divine meaning. Creation—happens to us, burns into us, changes us; we tremble and swoon, we submit. Creation—we participate in it, we encounter the Creator, offer ourselves to Him, helpers and companions. Revelation does not flow from the unconscious; it is master of the unconscious. It takes possession of the existent human element and recasts it. Revelation is encounter's pure form."

There is no Hebrew word that exactly translates the Greek 'dæmonic', or the Gypsy/Arab 'duende'. The dæmonic God nevertheless completely overshadows the Old Testament. This God forces Jacob to fight for a blessing, then only grants this through a savage wound. This God sends huge dæmonic troubles and torments to the innocent Job. He sends to Saul, to drive him mad, his own 'evil spirit' (who is not the evil spirit Satan or Lucifer, but an aspect of God). One of (several possible) translations of 'Isra-el' is 'one who fights with God,' or 'God Who fights.' Fights for what?

Fights for heart.

Fights for truth of heart, only won from depth, a depth only opened by a wound.

The God of the Jews is the existential God, the Risk Taker, Who must fight, suffer, and make an ultimate sacrifice, to redeem the risk he took with his creatures.

He must not only join them in that risk, but let it bite and pierce Him.

Only when we know how deep is the dæmonic wound in God, for our sake, do we ever 'reconcile' to the dæmonic God's wounding of us, and indeed, not only accept its terrible loss for the sake of a greater gain, but praise this God as the ultimate lover, the ultimate existential hero.

No Greek experience really engaged, and committed to, this dæmonic God as totally as the Jews did. Yet he is the 'Unknown God' to Whom the ancient Greeks left their memorial. This is the true Father. God's name is not simply 'I Am,' nor 'One Who Is.' God's more secret name, only revealed to those in hell and in death who yet know God is the only God of the deep, suffering heart, is this: 'One Who inflicts a wound in humanity, and will not remove it from us, but joins us in it and is wounded by it.'

This dæmonic God Who is our only Father has the more intimate, passionate name: "One Who wounds, and is wounded for our sake.' Only those in the abyss of passion, in the lost place of deadness and hell, can break down far enough to break through to this secret name of God. Only these really 'know the Father.' To these God reveals all the secrets of the deep heart, in God, and in humanity.

What was the risk for? What was ventured, lost, and regained only in its lostness?

The heart.

The truth of heart that could only be reached through a wound.

The truth of heart that had to be fought for.

The truth too strange, and deep for us, but the truth about us the Father insists on: that we should have a heart like the Father.

A heart great and deep. The heart that holds all things, suffers all things, carries all things, for the sake of making good on a risk and keeping a promise.

The dæmonic God is the God of sacrifice. Judaism's central truth is that God created the world in deep passion; thus Christianity's central truth should be that the world can only be saved from utter deadening and hellishness, and redeemed in its possibility, by deep passion.

THE TEST

The dæmonic creates in us rage, despair, fear, heart-break, inexplicable black pain, and an incomprehension so far reaching, it cannot even be expressed in words.

We are being tested so something can be proved. The test and the proof are existential. It is of the heart: only passion can enter and sustain, keep going to the end of, and finally come through, this test. In Hasidic terms, we are being 'checked.' We are being checked out deep within, and checking something out deep in the world.

To kick against the dæmonic process, to object to it morally and rationally, does not help get us through it to the other side. It is a waste of breath.

The person who stays with it is changed by that. Courage, strength, compassion, wisdom—are its legacy in us. Heroism is its own reward. Such a person can suffer for the world, carry the world, include the world, in her or his heart. Henceforth she or he fights for the world, and will not leave the fight, unless dead. This person is the Christ-like suffering servant, ready to give away one's life for the world.

Only by dæmonic wounding is passion deepened to the point where its fate and the fate of the world are tied together. Love will suffer for what it loves, when it is radically enworlded: staked to the ground; and no more wanting to flee, or to rise above on the wings of a dove, but willing to stay in it and willing to see it through.

SUMMARY

In summation, it can be asserted that the dæmonic has multiple functions in human existence; these are only some:

1. It rebukes and chastises us: correcting us, calling us back from folly and error, showing us our road is bad, and requiring us to change that road by changing our bad heart.
2. It purges and purifies us: burns us to ashes, in a furnace.
3. It tests and proves us, and existence, as to our and its truth, and real worth; it can only do this by risking value to nullity, risking meaning to absurdity, risking purpose to futility. It checks us, and forces us to check out what really are life and death, heaven and hell: every edge, gap, koan and cross, upon which existence is poised, in its metaphysical fragility and ungroundedness.

The hero is forged, but must also forge something true out of his own being forged. What is 'true' of heart is a 'mettle' that is being burnt, tried out, and in the end confirmed—or disconfirmed. In a novel by André GIDE, one his characters says, "I want to ring true"; such ringing true is no abstract idea of truth, but the authenticating of truth in concrete living: only this grants a person authoritativeness. What is deep emerges, and what gets us through depth is tried and discovered.

Thus, only the truth is left standing at the end of the existential testing. Everything else is consumed, proved unreal or unauthentic. What is true, deep, real, of heart, is checked and revealed. Like the 'infernal printing method' invented by William BLAKE, the acid of the dæmonic burns away falsity, to reveal the 'fine wiry line' of truth in our entire existence in this world.

4. It strips us, and strips the world, leaving us and the world naked, raw and exposed. Our basic heart truth and the world's basic heart truth are dramatically revealed—by

clashes, crises and crashings. The dæmonic sweeps away the soap opera dramas of the petty heart, but reveals the deeper drama, in which each of us personally and all of us together are caught up. The dæmonic brings the tower down, to reveal the pit beneath. This is dramatic and dynamic: it not only exposes, but exposes in order to change, to move things on. It overturns to cause things to turn over: to go through it and reach the other side. The dæmonic chases us in our places of hiding, dragging us out into an unwanted light. When we are not true to the dæmonic's truth, we cower in fear, shame and guilt.

5. The dæmonic wounds us to reveal the primordial and deeper wound pervasive in everyone. Only the killer of the false can be the healer of the true.

6. The dæmonic is mystical as well as existential: it 'grounds' us in the depth of the heart, where only what is true can 'stand' in the unfathomable abyss in the heart.

7. The dæmonic entrusts the world to us, believes in us, helps us in the impossible: the dæmonic ventures something through us, takes a real risk with us, and thus with the world. It encourages and dignifies us in this venture, in this risk. Spiritual power comes only to those who stand in the truth: whereas those who substitute 'force' for 'truth' never receive any spiritual power, inspiration, blessing for their action.

The dæmonic fights for justice, yet also bears the sister and the brother, is merciful, is compassionate, forgives, and suffers and carries what others have fled and put down. It gathers and includes all on the heart ground common to all. Nothing upholds me, alone; I am only upheld by what upholds all, when I uphold all. In Lakota, this is called 'putting the welfare of the people in my heart.'

8. The dæmonic redeems the wound it inflicts, by being wounded by it. In the end, not only humanity, but God, 'comes through.' This is the victory the dæmonic wins. It is done in time, over time, for all time. It is done in the world, for the world. It is the true story of the beginning, middle and end of all things. This story is terrible, dramatic, tragic, and finally wondrous. It is a story of the most extreme, moving passion and the most touching, aching pathos.

Neither the light of nous, nor the imaginary colour, multiplicity or balance of the soul, can comprehend the harsh ground, the dusty road, the tears, sweat, and blood of the agonised ecstasy of the deep passion of the heart. Passion is our spirit: passion is the fire Christ said He came to kindle, and wished it was already kindled.

It will be.

The fire is coming.

This is the daemonic's doing, and it is glorious.

The daemonic will wipe away every tear. Only by its fierceness will the tenderness of God be finally revealed.

The God we passionately love and hate, hope in and despair of, want and flee, is both tiger and lamb. So are we.

The daemonic passion of deep heart is bold and vulnerable. So it is for God, so it is for us.

It just is what is.

The daemonic is what is, in all its terror and beauty, in all its mystery and danger, its dynamism and irrationality.

Let what is be what is.

Jamie MORAN was born in the United States of America, of Red Indian and Celtic descent, but he married and now works in England. At 22, he converted from Tibetan Buddhism to Russian Orthodox Christianity; he works as a therapist and senior lecturer on counselling and psychology at a university in London. He is writing a novel on the conflict between settlers and indigenous peoples in the American West of the XIXth century, and he is a sub-chief in the Cante Tenze (Brave Hearts) Warrior Society of the Oglala Lakota (Sioux) at Pine Ridge, South Dakota. His email address is J.Moran@roehampton.ac.uk. This text is about the sacred masculine mystery, the masculine side of God; that is why the author uses "He" when referring to God.

RUTH ROUSE (1872–1956)

“Mission and Ecumenism Are Inseparable”

Ruth ROUSE helped forge WSCF and preserve its memory. She was active in the SCM in its early years, its first woman secretary and its historian thereafter. She was a passionate believer in the ecumenical movement that she discovered through SCM because she saw it as a force to bring people together and make the world a better place:

“Students could organise freely, and with common sense and divine recklessness combined, they dared ecumenical experiments undreamed of by the official churches ... men and women strongly evangelical in the best sense of that word, but ready to work with other types of Christian... They found themselves in the midst of an ecumenical fellowship in actual operation. ... It was through some such experience of Christian unity that leaders of many churches ... were prepared to play their part in the modern ecumenical movement” (ROUSE 1967, pp. 343–244).

FIRST WRITINGS

One of Ruth's earliest works was *Christian Experience and Psychological Processes*, written before the Great War, in which she attempted to defend the reality of Christian experience. Despite the real existence of “suggestion, autosuggestion, and the psychology of the crowd,” she argued that God himself is at work in the human soul. By the time of writing Ruth was halfway through her time as travelling secretary, and turning her energies to action rather than reflection.

After World War I, Ruth published *Rebuilding Europe*, the story of the European Student Relief Fund, which began within WSCF and developed into a worldwide independent fund. Ruth first had the vision that this work was needed, planned it and carried it out, distributing over 11 million Swiss francs of aid by students for students in the immediate post-war years. As John R. MOTT stated in his forward to her account, the student

relief enabled a new generation to “counteract the startling development of divisive forces in the field of industrial, international, and inter-racial relations.”

