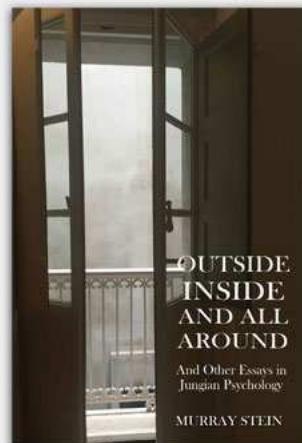


## Keep Calm and Carry On – An interview with Murray Stein about Donald Trump

By Robert S. Henderson

**MURRAY STEIN, PhD**, is a graduate of Yale University (1965), Yale Divinity School (1969), and has a doctorate from the University of Chicago (1985). In 1973, he received his diploma from the C. G. Jung Institute in Zürich. He had a private practice in Wilmette, Illinois, from 1980 to 2003, and was a training analyst with the C. G. Institute of Chicago. Since 2003, he has lived in Switzerland and is a training analyst with the International School of Analytical Psychology in Zürich (ISAPZurich). Murray is an ordained minister (retired) in the United Presbyterian Church. A founding member of the Inter-Regional Society of Jungian Analysts, he was also the first president of the Chicago Society of Jungian Analysts (1980–1985). He is a former president of the International Association for Analytical Psychology (2001–2004) and a former president of ISAPZurich (2008–2012).



He is the author of several books,

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Christianity: The Psychotherapy of a Religious Tradition, and Minding the Self: Jungian Meditations on Contemporary Spirituality, and he is the editor of Jungian Psychoanalysis.

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The title "*Keep Calm and Carry On*" was on a **motivational poster** produced by the **British government** in 1939 in preparation for **World War II**.

RH: I have wondered how Jung might have understood Donald Trump. I believed Jung had spent some time trying to understand Hitler. Do you think Jung would have spent any time trying to understand Trump?

MS: Of course. Jung was deeply interested in the political figures of his day, so I can't imagine that he wouldn't have been fascinated with Trump, just as many Europeans are. Trump is headline news in the Zurich newspapers almost every day. I just now reread the famous Knickerbocker interview with Jung (*C.G. Jung Speaking*, pp. 115-140). There you can see how closely Jung observed the political personalities in his day. The title of the interview was "Diagnosing the Dictators," and it appeared in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in January 1939, so at a very tense time in Europe. Jung showed great interest in the personalities of Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin. He doesn't diagnose them psychiatrically in this interview but rather speaks about their character types. I assume he would take the same approach to Trump. What would he say about Trump? I can only offer my best guess. I don't think he would put Trump in Hitler's category (mystical magician). More likely he would put him in the category of Stalin and Mussolini (alpha males and tribal chieftains), although he doesn't fit this profile perfectly either. Trump has such obvious trickster features, which were not evident in Stalin and Mussolini. In other words, what we project on Trump is different from what people saw in the three dictators discussed by Jung.

RH: In that famous interview, Jung said that Hitler is

"the mirror of every German's unconscious....Hitler's power is not political; it is magic.....magic is that part of our mental constitution over which we have little control and which is stored with all sorts of impressions and sensations; which contains thought and even conclusions of which we are not aware... they lie beneath the threshold of conscious attention." Do you find any of this true about Trump?

MS: No. Trump is no Hitler. His power is not that of the magician. It's blunt and often quite stupid. He does not relate to the American psyche or speak for it the way Hitler did for Germany in the '30's. Jung saw Hitler as a man without qualities, without a personality of his own. He drew his personality from entering into a state of *participation mystique* with the German collective. He was in this respect mostly unconscious and devoid of personal wishes or ambition. He was not married to a woman; he was married to "das Volk." He had little connection to his family or to personal possessions, and he showed no interest in enriching himself financially. This is totally unlike Trump. The German people spoke through Hitler using his voice, a sort of ventriloquism, and his popularity increased over time as he became more aggressive and belligerent echoing their frustration.

Trump's appeal in America is actually quite small and limited, if you consider the whole population. He doesn't inspire awe. He's more of an entertainer than a "leader." I think in Trump we see a different type of the alpha male, a titanic adolescent, undisciplined and impulsive, often comically so, with grandiose fantasies of himself as King. There is a difference between the Titans and the Olympians: Titans are gross and clumsy; Olympians have finesse. Trump would like to be an Olympian like Zeus, but he can't manage it. Obama was an Olympian. Trump is not a normal politician, a man of the party, a leader of a political group. He's more like a Mafia godfather, and it's all about the "family," not the country. A Titan does not hide his personal thoughts and feelings behind political correctness or polished ideological statements. He simply says what's on his mind at the moment and assumes it will be law. To his base this is appealing because they like an authoritarian boss, all the while thinking they can avoid his catastrophic consequences. Trump wraps them in this illusion as he tweets his mind across the globe.

Another of Trump's appeal to his base is that of a "bad boy." Resentment and inferiority feelings might be a common denominator with Hitler and his base. Trump's appeal is to the shadow of American society, as was Hitler's to Germany in his day. But Trump's appeal is quite shallow by comparison. He doesn't carry the numinous aura of an archetype, which instills fear and trembling. In our time superficial is popular, much more than profound or visionary, and that's why he's successful to the degree he is. This is the nature of postmodernity. Trump is, in a sense, a man of these times. Maybe he does belong on the cover of Time magazine after all. He represents well the spirit of these times.

RH: Murray, I know many who would disagree with you and would feel you are underestimating the devastating impact Trump is having on our country and world. These people feel that we have a mentally ill President who is being supported by the ruling party in Congress. Many feel he is destroying our democracy (by not standing up to Russia and their invasion of our electoral process) and wrecking our international relationships with his decisions. They feel we have a mad man in the most powerful position in the world running our country with no one so far able to stand up to him. The fear grows in imagining such a disoriented person individually holding the nuclear code or engaging in an international crisis. What do you say to such a person?

MS: I share those fears but have some distance, living in Switzerland. Here we feel somewhat insulated from Trump's antics and the clear threat he poses to stability, if there is such a thing in the world in these times. But even Switzerland is not invulnerable to earthquakes and political disruptions on the global scale of a Trump, and we also see in the media clear signals of the danger Trump poses. Your question about whether he is in some way like Hitler, as Jung saw the German dictator, raised in my mind many differences between them, as I have noted. There are also significant differences between the American system of government and the German one of that time. Hitler could and did become a dictator; Trump can't and won't. So this gives me some comfort.

But to this person I would also want to say: while I share your anxiety, it occurs to me that we may be missing something important here. Let's think more psychologically. What if Trump reflects the American psyche today, maybe in only a partial but still a significant way? And assume further that you and I are embedded in that same psyche. We are part of it, not totally separate even if consciously we think we are. And assume further that we are in an alchemical process of transformation of consciousness on a global scale. We know that there is a lot of turbulence as the opposites find each other and interact. The opposites can split the psyche, individually and communally. Is it possible to take this process up in ourselves and find a balanced position within that contains these opposites? First of all, we would have to find the "inner Trump." And for many of us, this is exceedingly distasteful. Trump is the disdained and hated "other."

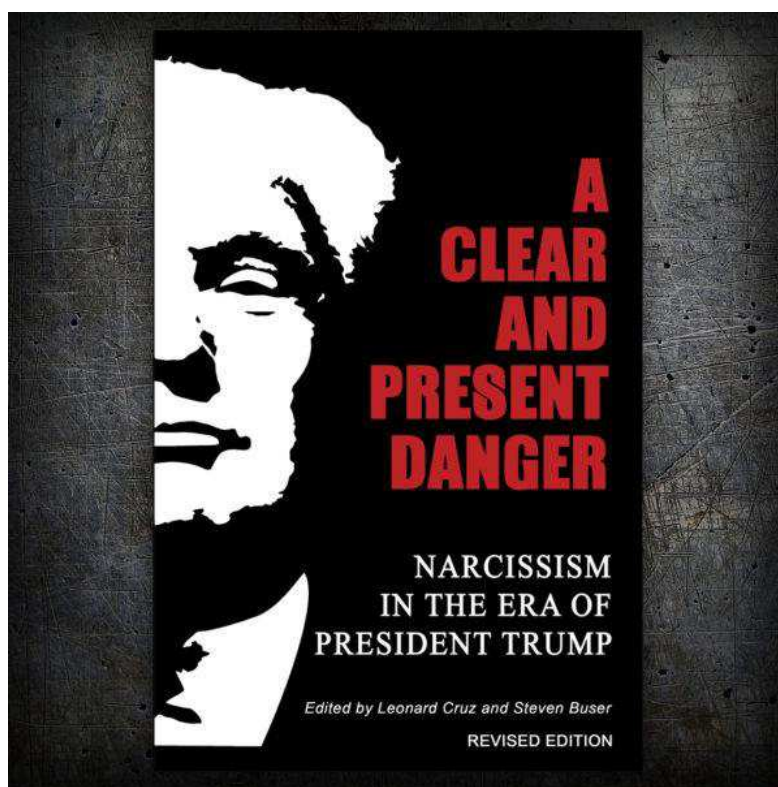
RH: How do you see the "inner Trump" in the psyche of America?

MS: "The inner Trump" is the shadow personality of the Barack Obama/Hillary Clinton intellectual progressive consciousness. Many of us identify with the latter attitude wholeheartedly and with enthusiasm. Now along comes Trump on the stage of history, and he dramatically exposes the shadow side of progressive America, its racism, its continuing Patriarchalism, its misogyny, its narcissism and selfishness and all the other unsavories that have been mentioned already by so many enlightened people (I do not say this with irony!). The psychological reality, however, is that racism, to pick just one of these negative items, will never be effectively dealt with unless we all recognize its existence in ourselves individually and collectively. That's the "inner Trump." It's not possible to ameliorate the toxic elements that make up the shadow of a culture or an individual until they are made conscious. Trump's presidency offers America that opportunity. The White House spokespeople say, in response to complaints about Trump's antics, "Well, you elected him!" and they are absolutely right. Whatever his standing in the polls, Trump represents the people – and I mean ALL the people – in the country, whether we like it or not. This has to be recognized and integrated, by which I mean it needs to be made fully conscious that racism, sexism, bullying, moneyism, entitlement and all the rest of Trump's ignominious features are a part of the face of America now on display, and they reside subtly in all of us. Liberal bullies are as nasty as Trumpists. Other countries and cultures have seen these qualities in us for a long time. Talk to our neighbors in South America, for instance, and you will hear about the nasty "gringo," more than you will

want to take in. Now with Trump up there on stage, front and center, we can see a collective self-portrait for ourselves, and it's not a pretty picture. This is who we are as a nation. Think of Trump as a mirror. So this realization has to be brought into relationship – not repressed, but also not identified with – with the noble ideals and global vision of an Obama. Personally, I feel that America did not deserve a president as balanced, brilliant, and perspicacious as Obama. He is a Nobel Peace Prize winner for good reason. If there were an anti-Nobel Peace Prize, Trump would be a top candidate for it. So we have a pair of opposites before us in these two presidents, and America has performed a classic enantiodromia in first choosing the one, then the other. What comes after this? Will it be a swing to the opposite of Trump, which would perpetuate the split in the collective, or will it be a “third,” as Jung writes about the resolution of the problem of opposites? I'm afraid that the nation's fate hangs on this question. Without a uniting “third,” the split will deepen and could destroy us as a nation.

RH: In unprecedented ways, many of our respected psychologists and psychiatrists have put forth diagnosis of Trump, leaving the impression that America has a disturbed and crazy person with unchecked access to the nuclear codes and with the power to set forth policies impacting the climate, education, Supreme Court appointments, and international relationships. Is this also part of the Shadow?

MS: To diagnose Trump is also to diagnose the collective society, if you follow my argument. From the outside, many people have diagnosed America as crazy and dangerous already in the past and not only now. The “ugly American” is a familiar figure around the world, and not only ugly but a bully and extremely dangerous because of America's oversized military. We are seeing the shadow of America in an especially dramatic way in the image of Trump. Most of us also tend to overestimate the power of the president, and this produces a kind of hysterical reaction to Trump. We expected too much of Obama, and we fear too much in Trump. The president does not appoint Supreme Court justices, for instance, he recommends them to the Senate. They have to be approved. This puts the ball today in the hands of the Republican Party. If Trump recommends an extremist for a chair on the Supreme Court and the Republicans approve him/her, you can't put all the onus on Trump. The Party supports him, and if he is crazy and they don't do anything about it, then aren't they crazy as well? And the people who elect them, aren't they crazy? It's not just one person. He is a figurehead. To say Trump is narcissistic is to say the obvious, but then is not the American collective also equally narcissistic and self-centered, concerned only with its own business interests in the world



("America First") just like Trump? Trump is playing the tune, but he didn't write the music. Look to the base of his support and all the people surrounding him who benefit from his crazy ways. In Europe now, the attitude is to go its own way and ignore Trump and America as much as possible. This isn't so bad because Europe has been too dependent on the US in the last half century. Where this may lead is one of the big questions of the day.

RH: In his poem "In Memory of Ernest Toller", W.H. Auden gives us a line which I think Jung would have appreciated: "we are lived by powers we pretend to understand." Are there powers living America and Trump now that we are pretending to understand?

MS: Yes, I think that would be an accurate assessment. There are always causal explanations for everything and now for Trump, too – the financial crisis, the loss of jobs in manufacturing, the sexism and racism endemic to American culture that generated a reaction against Obama and Hillary, the disconnect between the rich and the rest – but they don't answer the question: what is the meaning of this? What more is behind this phenomenon? I am not advocating global conspiracy theories as some people do, but it is worth considering larger forces behind the evident story of Trump and his effect on our time. We can pretend to understand, but do we? Are our explanations convincing? From a Jungian perspective, we recognize the role of the irrational in life, the power of millennial movements in the depths of the collective unconscious such the much discussed change from the Platonic Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius, the role of the archetype of the Trickster in collective life who disrupts the stable certainties and structures of knowledge built up over centuries of inquiry and rational discourse, and of course the role of acausal synchronicity (meaningful coincidence) on the disruptive movements in history. Is the appearance of Trump, who so unexpectedly and surprisingly breaks on the scene like a titanic eruption, a signal of change that we cannot comprehend until we have more historical perspective? Is the unconscious up to something that is beyond our ken right now? Are there powers in the shadows that are living us collectively and that we cannot grasp with our limited cognitive abilities? Auden lived with this question, and now we must too. I would keep an open mind. We need an oracle, but we don't believe in that any longer. Trump makes me want to visit Delphi or consult the I Ching. It's that strange.

RH: Perhaps visiting Delphi or consulting the I Ching would be helpful in surviving the era of Trump. What will you be telling yourself or doing in order to make it through the next 4 or possibly 8 years of Trump's presidency?

MS: To tell you the truth, I hope Trump won't be in office that long. But the question is valid because it is not only Trump but more importantly what supports and thrusts him forward into the limelight: how can we cope with troubled times like these and continue to grow and individuate in spite of, or with the help of, this challenge to our wellbeing and even our sanity? I think of Churchill's dry but inspiring advice to the British people as Hitler's bombs were raining down on their cities: "Keep calm and carry on." Beyond that, I would take a page from Jung's biography who, when confronted by instability and the threat of insanity, personal and collective, turned away from the "spirit of the times" and followed "the spirit of the depth" into his *Red Book* adventure. The first stage is to confront the shadow, and after that more will follow. The path is archetypal. As Clarissa Pinkola-Estes cried out upon Trump's election (I am paraphrasing because I have lost track of the text), "Jungians, be of good spirit. We were trained for this!" Deep Jungian

analytic work creates a solid resource for keeping calm and carrying on while the world goes mad. In the depths of the unconscious, there is an inner Philemon or Sophia. When Jung reached this level, he could rest. If we make contact, we will also find confidence that not only survival but a more conscious and balanced and humane and just future can emerge on the human scene. It depends on many individuals doing the necessary inner work.

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