



## **The Third Eye: Corporate Responsibility in a Jungian Context**

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### **Abstract**

According to a legend, some creatures have a third eye with which they can read the minds of people. Psychological theories can be used as the third eye to understand the minds of corporate responsibility (CR) actors better. This paper studies the thoughts, words and deeds of CR actors in their psychological context. The aim is to help the CR actors and others to understand different CR behaviour and to gain new insights into developing CR values, discourses and practices.

Earlier research by this author has examined the neurotic and borderline characteristics of companies and pinpointed their origins in psychological defences. Furthermore, her recent study argued that the psychopathic characteristics of many large corporations could be eliminated by applying personal values to corporate values.

This research digs deeper into the psychological resources of human mind to show what vast potentials lie there to solve the CR issues. While psychiatric criteria and most Freudian theories close down an individual or organizational personality into a cage or vicious circle, Jungian theories open up the personality and give opportunities to expand it horizontally and vertically. The Jungian prospective quality of the psyche is well illustrated by three levels of unconscious – personal, cultural and collective – which can help the development of CR values, discourses and actions of individuals, organizations, societies and the humankind.

**Key words:** corporate responsibility, Jung, self, shadow, ego functions



## Introduction

According to a legend, some creatures have a third eye with which they can read people's minds. The modern version of this legend can be found for example in a TV programme *Space Precinct*, where there are rather human-like creatures working with human police officers at a police station in space. These humanoids have a third eye in the middle of their forehead with which they can read the minds of humans and any other creatures. But we may not need to import such a skill; it may exist within ourselves. From the ancient Greek myth of *Odyssey* by Homer we know Cyclopes, one-eyed monsters, who represent the primitive form of this feared talent: the shadow of our unconscious trying to force its way into the conscious, giving us the ability to read our own minds. As all minds of human beings have the same structure, if not personal content, learning to read our own minds helps us to learn to read other people's minds.

This capability may be a double-edged sword. Most of us would probably like to be able to read the minds of other people, but who would like others to be able to read our own minds? Mind readers possess a great deal of power over the subjects of their scrutiny. With their understanding they can control and manipulate people.

Psychology has attempted to read people's minds in different contexts for nearly a century. While some psychologist – often working for governmental agencies such as the police, intelligence and military – use this potential to gain control and seize power, mainstream psychologists mostly use it for helping individuals and organizations to understand themselves and solve their problems. Psychological theories can be used as the third eye to understand also the minds of corporate responsibility (CR) actors better. This paper studies the thoughts, words and deeds of CR actors in their psychological context. The aim is to help the CR actors and others to understand different CR behaviour and to gain new insights into developing CR values, discourses and practices.

Earlier research by this author has examined the many varied neurotic and borderline characteristics of companies, like withdrawal, dependency, narcissism and paranoia (Ketola 2004) and pinpointed their origins in psychological defences such as isolation, regression, omnipotent fantasies and projection (Ketola 2004, 2006a). Furthermore, the author's recent study argued that the psychopathic characteristics of many large corporations – such as unconcern for others' feelings, disregard for others' safety, dishonesty and lying to one's own advantage, inability to feel guilt, and unwillingness to observe the laws and norms of society – could be eliminated by applying personal values to corporate values (2006b).



This research digs deeper into the psychological resources of human mind to show what vast potentials lie there to solve the CR issues. While psychiatric criteria close down individual and organizational personalities into a cage and most Freudian theories leave them running in a vicious circle like mice on treadmills, Jungian theories open up the personality and give opportunities to expand it horizontally and vertically. The Jungian prospective quality of the psyche is well illustrated by the three levels of unconscious: personal, cultural and collective. These levels of unconscious can help the development of corporate responsibility (CR) values, discourses and actions of individuals, organizations, societies and the humankind.

Jungian thoughts can provide us with explanations why individuals, organizations societies and the humankind act irresponsibly. Table 1 summarizes these reasons for irresponsibility that we shall be discussing.

Jungian explanations for irresponsibility	At all levels: - A weak ego, which allows the shadow to rule from the unconscious and the persona to keep up appearances. - Limited ego functions: either thinking, feeling, sensing or intuiting.
Levels of irresponsibility	
Individual irresponsibility	The personal unconscious is separate from and rules the conscious.
Organizational irresponsibility	The organizational cultural unconscious is separate from and rules the conscious.
Societal irresponsibility	The societal cultural unconscious is separate from and rules the conscious.
Humankind irresponsibility	The collective unconscious is separate from and rules the conscious.

Table 1. Jungian explanations for individual, organizational, societal and humankind irresponsibility.

Jungian psychology can show how individuals, organizations, society and the humankind can develop into acting responsibly under any circumstances. Table 2 summarizes these developmental tasks for responsibility that we shall be discussing.

Jungian developmental tasks for responsibility	At all levels: - Integrate the shadow into the ego and let the persona's mask fall. - Integrate the functions of thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting. => A strong, holistic self.
Levels of responsibility	
Individual responsibility	The energy of the personal unconscious is available for and controlled by the conscious.
Organizational responsibility	The energy of the organizational cultural unconscious is available for and controlled by the conscious.
Societal responsibility	The energy of the societal cultural unconscious is available for and controlled by the conscious.
Humankind responsibility	The energy of the collective unconscious is available for and controlled by the conscious.

Table 2. Jungian developmental tasks for individual, organizational, societal and humankind responsibility.



## **Personal unconscious in CR**

### *The potential of the unconscious*

Psychological theories say that personal unconscious is made up of each individual's collection of memories and ideas that stem from that person's own experiences. While Freud (1927) thought that personal unconscious contained what the conscious mind had suppressed, Jung (1964ab) saw the personal unconscious as creative and independent. For him the personal unconscious is a factor in itself, not simply a junkyard. Jung's view opens up a vast field of unused individual potential which could have a significant role in the intellectual and spiritual development of humankind.

Jung (1966, 1969) accepted that our personal unconscious includes complexes caused by psychic wounding or trauma, which have a strong inner persistence, holism and autonomy. These complexes make us repeat the same emotional reactions, mistakes and unsuccessful choices time after time for all our lives – unless we manage to dig them out of our subconscious into the conscious light and deal with them with our conscious mind. However, Jung (1968a, 1969) had an even deeper view of the subconscious. He thought that it is not just a dump of instincts and repressed memories but a positive, creative and independent actor. Novel thoughts and innovative ideas that have never been conscious before can emerge from the subconscious.

These thought and ideas begin to flow once a person becomes aware of his/her unconscious impulses and learns to manage them instead of allowing them to rule him/her from the depths of the unconscious. Jung's concepts of ego, persona, shadow and self explain the situation. The following brief account of these concepts is based on a paper I presented at a workshop at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland on 15 June 2006 (Ketola 2006c).

### *Jungian ego, persona, shadow and self*

According to Jung (1958, 1963), the mainly conscious *ego* of individuals has different kinds of subconscious counterparts, which compete and cooperate with it. The ego follows the reality principle, sticking to facts without trying to imagine, pretend or lie – or distort the reality in any other way. The ego has to deal with a partially conscious *persona* (the mask worn by actors in ancient Greek drama!), which is the face that individuals wear to meet the social world around them. The persona wants to show only the best sides of the individual to the external world, as if a human being was only what s/he would like to look like. The persona is the public person.

On the other hand, the ego casts a *shadow*. The ego is confronted with its unconscious shadow of which it is not aware. The shadow is the backside of the ego



(Stein 1998). The shadow is everything that the ego is not, good and evil. The shadow is not necessarily a hidden evil because it incorporates also the characteristics that contrast the less likeable features of the ego. If, for example, the ego of an individual is fair but unkind, his/her shadow is unfair but kind. However, since humans generally strive for developing their conscious ego towards a good self-ideal, their shadows store a great number of subconscious aggressive counter-reactions.

The shadow and the persona are both ego-alien persons that inhabit the psyche. The ego is more at ease with the persona because that is compatible with social norms. The shadow is unacceptable to the ego. The shadow stays mostly hidden and comes out only on special occasions (Stein 1998) – to the ego's disapproval and to the persona's shame. Consequently, the ego and the persona of an individual try to deny the shadow by projecting it on other people. Stein (1998) calls the pair of persona and shadow Narcissus and Goldmund, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Cain and Abel, Eve and Lilith, and Aphrodite and Hera.

The undeveloped ego, which every small child has, cannot control the energy of its subconscious, which gushes out uncontrollably. It is with children that the development of ego from month to month and year to year – with babies even from week to week – is most apparent. Children gradually learn to control their subconscious shadow to an increasing extent. A prerequisite for mental maturity is the ability to control one's impulses, one's subconscious psychic energy, with one's ego. Mental growth to genuine maturity also means that one should have less need to hide behind the persona, the publicly acceptable mask.

In Jungian philosophy the mentally developed ego is called the *self*. The ego can develop into a self by becoming conscious of the formerly subconscious shadow and other archetypes (e.g. anima or animus) and by integrating material from them into its conscious side. The self is an individual's holistic psyche, which, with its inner powers, defeats the pretentious shell of the persona.

Mentally less developed individuals uphold their pretentious persona with their words but the actions of their weak ego are in actual fact often directed by their subconscious shadow. The ego of mentally developed individuals has accepted its shadow, and they have integrated their ego and now conscious shadow into a strong self, which does not need the façade of the persona (see more in Morgan 2000). According to Jung (1963) the realization of the self through an individuation process is the ultimate goal towards which humans strive for (see also Colman 2000) – but this process is never totally completed. However hard we try to become aware of our darker



side and accept it, the shadow necessarily remains partially unconscious and carries out commando attacks from its secret hiding places.

The concepts of shadow and ego show how we human beings have all possible characteristics within ourselves: if a characteristic does not exist in the ego, it is stored in the shadow from which it is possible to retrieve through the individuation process. Each of us has potential for anything. The positive characteristics of the ego and shadow are readily available and the negative characteristics of the ego and the shadow can be sublimated. This potential can be used to develop the behaviour of all corporate responsibility (CR) actors – top managers, middle managers, experts, supervisors and workers. In addition to using their ego's responsible side to the full and becoming conscious of their shadow's opposite tendencies to be able to resist them, the CR actors can dig up the better side of their ego's worst characteristics from their shadow and turn their irresponsible actions into responsible actions. Finding our true self in the middle of corporate pressures and seductions in the market economy may be hard, and slipping from our ideals may be easy, but succeeding in truly living according to our own values makes us feel whole. Thus the Jungian emphasis on self-searching supports the idea that personal values should be the basis of corporate values so that companies could turn from irresponsible to responsible actions.

In CR it is important that the values, words and actions of the CR actor are in line. There are five main alternatives for the relationships between corporate (actor's) values, words and actions and they represent different kinds of developmental relationships between the ego, shadow and persona (see more about the individual level alternatives in Ketola 2006c and the organizational level alternatives in Ketola 2006d):

- (1) values = words = actions: the ego has developed into a strong self;
- (2) values = words  $\neq$  actions: the shadow directs the ego behind the persona's mask;
- (3) values  $\neq$  words = actions: the persona directs the ego;
- (4) values  $\neq$  words  $\neq$  actions: the shadow has defeated the ego;
- (5) values = actions  $\neq$  words: the persona and shadow direct the ego.

The way to a holistic self is long and winding but spiritually rewarding. There is an ethical dimension involved in the development of self over time, as Solomon (2000: 197, 199) explains: "the overriding teleological nature of the self's continued search to become itself, even in the face of dire internal resistance or malignant external forces [prevails]. ...This suggests a universal ethical capacity that is innate...but which, to unfold, depends on the quality of caregiving that the child receives during its early development".



























