

THE SOUL OF THE KHMER ROUGE

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When James Hillman first began repopularising the term ‘soul’ in the 1960s, it had a dark tone: one of the soul’s jobs, he wrote, is to ‘hew and bevel the ship of death’.¹ Of late, however, as well as being overused to the point of cliché, it seems to have taken on a rosier hue, connoting something warm and fuzzy, like an inner Labrador that will love us if only we feed it. Here I want to return some shade to our imagination of soul, by exploring how the soul of a people can become twisted and crushed, and how this phenomenon might relate to us, too, apparently thousands of kilometers and decades away from the horrors of Pol Pot’s Cambodia.

Year Zero

On April 17, 1975, after a five-year civil war between the Chinese-backed Communist Party of Kampuchea (or Khmer Rouge, as they are better known) and the American-backed Lon Nol government, Khmer Rouge troops entered Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. The city had swelled from several hundred thousand to between one and two million inhabitants in the last years of the civil war, as refugees flowed in from a countryside devastated by ground fighting and American bombing. As Cambodia scholar David Chandler tells it,

What happened next was completely unexpected. In the early afternoon, Red Khmers with loudspeakers began circulating in the city, in trucks, ordering

¹ *Re-Visioning Psychology*. (1975). James Hillman. New York: Harper and Rowe.

everyone to leave immediately ‘for a few days,’ claiming that ‘American planes are coming to bomb the city...’

By April 19... houses and shops and hospitals were empty, and a sea of people, hardly moving at all, filled the roads leading away from the capital. Over 2 million inhabitants of Phnom Penh walked away from the city. Those in the northern part of the city went north, those in the western part went west, and so on. Armed revolutionaries walked alongside, making sure that no-one tried to escape. When asked for explanations, they gave none but referred to the *angkar padevat* (revolutionary organization), which, they said, ‘had to be obeyed.’

The ‘April 17’ people were allowed to settle in the country, where they were put to work growing rice and digging irrigation canals. Conditions were harsh; the revolution was the same everywhere. Little by little, the ‘revolutionary organisation’ took over every aspect of everyone’s life.

The revolution overturned the past. A radio announcement not long after the liberation [sic] of Phnom Penh said that ‘two thousand years of Cambodian history have ended.’ The winners believed that a new era of independence had begun, when there would be ‘no exploiters and no exploited, no masters and no servants, no rich and no poor.’ When everyone was equal, it was thought, everyone would be happy. Cambodians were being asked to start their lives from zero. By the 1990’s, some of the scars of the revolution had healed. Many remained. Nothing could make up for the terrible losses nearly everyone had

endured. In some cases, only one or two people survived from families of ten or eleven.²

Such a summary of events cannot begin to describe the experiences of loss, privation, torture, random violence, and the omnipresent threat of death common to nearly all Cambodians during this period. I therefore feel obliged to quote an eyewitness account of Khmer Rouge brutality. It is told matter-of-factly – it is but one of many such atrocities he witnessed – by Haing S. Ngor, the doctor who played journalist Dith Pran in Roland Joffé's *The Killing Fields*:

Later a new interrogator... walked down the row of trees holding a long, sharp knife. I could not make out their words, but he spoke to the pregnant woman [tied to a tree not far from me] and she answered... He cut the clothes off her body, slit her stomach, and took the baby out. I turned away but there was no escaping the sound of her agony, the screams that slowly subsided into whimpers and after far too long lapsed into the merciful silence of death. The killer walked calmly past me holding the foetus by its neck. When he got to the prison, just within my range of vision, he tied a string around the foetus and hung it from the eaves with the others, which were dried and black and shrunken.³

What could possess people, not just a few, but tens of thousands, who a few years earlier had gone to school, harvested rice and prayed in their local temples, to act so cruelly, and apparently remorselessly? Certainly war is full of atrocity, and in civil wars soldiers kill their own, albeit

² *The Land and People of Cambodia*. (1991). David Chandler. New York: HarperCollins.

³ Haing S. Ngor with Roger Warner, *Surviving the Killing Fields: The Cambodian Odyssey of Haing S. Ngor* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1988), p. 223.

usually other soldiers, or civilians of another ethnic group. But this was after the civil war was over, when the victors had supposedly liberated their people and were leading them to a new age of peace, prosperity and equality.

There are, naturally, legitimate historical and political reasons for the Khmer Rouge coming to power; and we cannot ignore the personality of Pol Pot himself. However, I want to focus on two psychological elements of the tragedy of Year Zero: the brutalising effects of the ‘cycle of violence’, and false idealisation as a response to this brutalisation.

Firstly, there is a scene in *The Killing Fields* in which the American journalist played by Sam Waterston receives an award for his reports from Cambodia, and responds angrily to press suggestions that this was just another stupid civil war: ‘You have 200 million pounds of bombs dropped on you in six months and see how you’d react!’ he replies. The covert American bombing of Cambodia that took place between 1969 and 1973, supposedly to neutralise supply lines for the Ho Chi Minh Trail, led to up to 150,000 civilian deaths and created at least a million refugees. Kiernan calls the ‘US economic and military destabilisation of Cambodia... probably the most important single factor in Pol Pot’s rise.’⁴ The bombing destroyed much of the countryside, forcing many people into towns and the capital as refugees, while others retreated to the jungles and mountains and became supporters and soldiers of the Khmer Rouge. Poor, uneducated and possibly hostile to the urban middle class, the young Khmer Rouge cadres who entered Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975 also were made up in part of people who had been dispossessed, injured or orphaned by American bombing raids.

⁴ *The Pol Pot Regime*. (1996). Ben Kiernan. New Haven: Yale University Press.

That is, the brutalised became the brutalisers, in the ‘cycle of violence’ familiar in domestic violence, where children who are victims of abuse are much more likely than others to be abusers themselves. No wonder Haing Ngor, when he saw the young Khmer Rouge fighters on the day they swarmed into Phnom Penh, wrote:

There was something excessive about their anger. Something had happened to these people in their years in the forests. They had been transformed. They were not like the Cambodians I had known, shy and a bit lazy and polite.⁵

He goes on to refer to *kum*, retribution, as a national characteristic: ‘*Kum* is a Cambodian word for a particularly Cambodian mentality of revenge, to be precise, a long-standing grudge leading to revenge much more damaging than the original injury’;⁶ and the Khmer Rouge cadre, who were generally poor peasants, as *kum-monuss*, revenge people: ‘All they know is that city people like us used to lord it over them and this is their chance to get back.’⁷

Many people suffer some degree of brutality without feeling the need to wreak revenge, especially on people with no direct connection to the original wrongdoing. And this cannot explain the deep paranoia that enveloped the Khmer Rouge, especially from 1977 onwards, when it became obvious that agricultural targets could not be met and construction projects were failing, and the leadership, instead of recognising the impossibility of their targets, blamed subversives and Vietnamese insurgents within.

Other than becoming brutalisers themselves, the Khmer Rouge reacted to the destruction rained on them by rejecting the world of the present and idealising a partial

⁵ Ngor, pp. 79-80.

⁶ Ngor, p. 9.

⁷ Ngor, p. 157.

and partially imaginary age of Khmer glory. They were not only reacting against past wrongs: they were also trying to go forward by going back. 'We have obliterated 2,000 years of Cambodian history', Pol Pot proclaimed.

In Year Zero, there was no sport, music or entertainment; no schools, or even books; no shops, money or private property; no family life; no cities; and to admit to a past as any kind of educated or important person, or even to wear glasses, was to sign one's own death warrant. Phnom Penh was emptied so that its population could return to the lives of peasants, before corruption by the modern world. Children were separated from their parents to be indoctrinated into the way of Angkar (the Organisation, referring to the Khmer Rouge leadership). Building dams and irrigation channels was all to be done manually. It is slightly more opaque, but in emptying the capital of its two million inhabitants and painting out the street signs, the Khmer Rouge announced not just their ideology but also their mythology just as surely as did Marx with *Das Kapital*, Hitler with *Mein Kampf* and Mao with his *Little Red Book*.

In *Cambodia: A book for people who find television too slow*, Brian Fawcett argued that what the Khmer Rouge did to Cambodia, the globalisation of media is doing to all of us: that is, obliterating memory and imagination in the quest to make us subservient to a new elite 'in the name of efficiency, simplicity and purity.' In respect of the painting over of street signs, he suggests that

Perhaps, like the Calvinist zealots of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who painted over the muralled churches, they wanted to obliterate particularity, direction and local memory, creating in its stead a single focus on the monadic truth, the City of God.⁸

⁸ *Cambodia: A book for people who find television too slow*. (1989). Brian Fawcett. London: Penguin, p. 63.

The single-minded, ruthless devotion to an abstract ideal may have been the same, but instead of a City of God, in Pol Pot's Cambodia it was Year Zero, the recreation of a imagined utopian past, that was the object of quasi-religious devotion.

What was so special about this golden age? Firstly, it was (to be) a world free of the corrupting influences of American imperialism and Vietnamese aggression. Khmer Rouge propaganda was filled with hostility towards foreigners, and Pol Pot referred to himself as the 'Original Khmer', in spite of having part-Chinese ancestry.⁹ But this was no sentimental nostalgia, for their rejection of modernity was filled with hostility and hatred – and not only towards foreigners. Consider these Khmer Rouge sayings: 'If they [the urban 'new people'] live, there is no gain. If they die, there is no loss, and 'No-one will take care of you. You have to take care of yourselves.'¹⁰ This cynicism extended to local cadres: as one refugee recalled, 'Sometimes they would throw the body parts of a boy they had cut apart into the rice paddies as we worked. "Fertiliser", they would say.'¹¹

Similarly, forcing children into the vanguard of the revolution saw the destruction of the family. The word for 'family' became the word for 'partner', children lived and were indoctrinated separately; the sexes were segregated, with conjugal visits perhaps once a month; a mistrust of parents and grandparents as authority figures was fostered; and 'familyism', missing one's kin, became a capital offence. Such antihuman sentiments suggest that Year Zero was less a golden age to be rediscovered than a desperate place to retreat to. Imagining the culture as an individual psyche, this response to the problems it faced in entering

⁹ Ngor, p. 396.

¹⁰ Youkimny Chan, in *Children of the Killing Fields*. (1997). Dith Pran. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

the modern world, defensive towards outsiders, self-destructive to its own, and seeking a refuge in the safety of the imagined past, suggests a mass repression bordering on autism: a shutting down that might conceivably be a necessary prelude to cultural rebirth, were it not for its cynical and defensive posture.

Angkor

The Khmer Rouge's reaction to modernity was partly fueled by a desire to return to the glory of the Khmer civilization which dominated much of Indochina between the ninth and fifteenth centuries, before it was engulfed by jungle, to be rediscovered and gradually uncovered and restored (barring looting and vandalism by Khmer Rouge among others) by French archaeologists from the 1850's onwards.

Angkor, the Khmer capital, was a huge network of stone temples and palaces surrounded by moats (and houses, markets and other structures related to everyday life, leaving no remains) in north-western Cambodia. A brief description of its two most famous monuments must suffice to give an impression of the city's character.

The most important monument is the temple Angkor Wat, the largest religious building in the world. Completed soon after the death of King Suryavarman II in 1150, it served as both a temple and a tomb. It is dominated by a central temple representing Mount Meru, home of the gods, which is surrounded by four other temples representing the four corners of the cosmos, and is enclosed by a wall and a moat one mile square. There are three galleries (each carved with scenes from Hindu mythology) between Meru and the moat, which together represent the four *yugas* or ages of Hindu mythology (about 1.1 million years in all). Entering the first gallery, one leaves the present, corrupted age (the *kaliyuga*) and heads back in time to 'a golden age when

men and gods inhabited the world together' until coming face to face with Suryavarman II, identified with Vishnu.¹²

The final great monument at Angkor, the Bayon, was built by the last of the major Angkor kings, Jayavarman VII, in the 1190's. The Bayon is famous for two things. First, it was the first (and only) Angkor temple to depict scenes from daily life, rather than from Indian mythology and the lives of the kings. Secondly, it contains sixty huge towers, each of which has four serene faces with eyes half closed, mouths in half-smiles – probably modeled on the king himself, in the guise of a Buddha.

Pol Pot was ambivalent about the Khmer legacy: he urged the population to work harder by proclaiming that 'If our people can build Angkor, they can do anything!' but he also asked rhetorically, 'How many of our people must have died to build Angkor?' Still, the Khmer Rouge followed other recent Cambodian governments in putting the silhouette of Angkor Wat on its flag. This is surprising for such hardline communists, and reflects the deep symbolic significance of this monument even for modern Cambodians.

The closer one looks, the more parallels emerge between the ancient Khmers and the Khmer Rouge. For instance, the latter had a slogan, 'Angka has the face of a pineapple', meaning that it looks everywhere, sees everything. This recalls the many faces of the Buddha-king of the Bayon, which looked out over the provinces under the rule of Jayavarman VII.¹³ Likewise, Khmer Rouge double-speak ('You'll soon be feeling better' meant 'You'll soon be dead'; 'Going to Angka' meant 'Going to die') and Pol Pot's desire to hide not only his own name and position, but even the name of the party he headed, recalls the place

¹² Chandler (1991), p. 67.

¹³ *Angkor: Monuments of the god-kings*. (1975). Joan Lebold Cohen. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975.

of illusion in the design and sculpture of Angkor, where false doorways, lintels, pediments, *trompe-l'œil*, and the like, lead Mabbett and Chandler to conclude that at Angkor, nothing is as it seems.¹⁴ Then there is the ruler as god-king, something that the Khmer rulers shared with (former King, now Prince, since his voluntary abdication in 1960) Noradom Sihanouk (who treated Cambodia as his fiefdom and the people as his children), but perhaps also with Pol Pot (who regretted nothing, right up to his death, blaming any 'mistakes' on American and Vietnamese subterfuge)¹⁵ and even current Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has a similarly authoritarian style of leadership.

The idea of such parallels was first brought to my attention by Fawcett, who argues that

The Khmer Rouge regime of 1975-1979 consciously attempted to return Cambodia to... the glories of Angkor Wat. In order to accomplish this, they tried to change both word and world. Prior to the Khmer Rouge coming to power, the Cambodian word for revolution had a conventional meaning: *Bambah-bambor*—'uprising', 'reconstruction'. Under Pol Pot's regime, the word for revolution became *pativattana*: 'return to the past.' The ways in which the Khmer Rouge carried out their revolution was precisely *pativattana*. They attempted to obliterate all that was not ancient Khmer.¹⁶

They were rooting out and exterminating all that was not purely and indigenously ignorant of modern urban civilization. If a person could perform any task that was not done in the twelfth century reign of Suryavarman II, that person was a traitor. A Khmer Rouge slogan says it all:

¹⁴ *The Khmers*. (1995). Ian Mabbett and David Chandler. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

¹⁵ See Chandler (1991), p. 155.

¹⁶ Fawcett, pp. 68-69.

Preserve them – no profit
Exterminate them – no loss
We will burn the old grass and the new will grow.

This... shows precisely the same limited logic of ancient Khmer cut-and-burn agriculture. It serves until the natural vitality of the soil is exhausted. After that, the jungle returns, or the desert enters.¹⁷

Scholars remain unsure about why the Khmer civilisation disappeared, but one explanation is that the complex and lengthy irrigation system on which the city depended became increasingly difficult to maintain, consuming resources that were needed for farming and defence. This reflects the highly artificial nature of Khmer civilisation, at least as it appears to us. Just as the regular, geometrical form of Angkor and its irrigation network was imposed on the tropical landscape, so the religion of the Angkor rulers was grafted onto the indigenous folk religion, which revolved around the worship of nature spirits and ancestors. Beyond the fact that the Khmer Rouge were similarly (and less successfully) obsessed with irrigation and dam-building, Khmer Rouge ideology was also imported – from Mao's China rather than India, with few adaptations for geography or culture. Even this disjuncture between the ideal and the real is prefigured at Angkor, where 'the king is portrayed, not as the individual he is, but as an imitation of an ideal king in heaven':

...the creations of Cambodian art, architecture and ritual strove not to be themselves but images of themselves, like endless reflections in a hall of mirrors... each particular earthly form was trying to purify itself and become the ideal heavenly one.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 72-73.

¹⁸ Mabbett and Chandler (1995), p. 18.

Idealism and Brutality

There are different ways to respond to experiences of oppression and brutality. We can crawl back into our shells, either shutting off from the world or inventing a substitute fantasy world that provides us with more comfort. Or we can fight fire with fire, either internalising our rage in self-hatred ('If they were bad to me, I must be a bad person') or externalising it in violence and revenge. The Khmer Rouge did all of these: in its almost autistic xenophobia; in regressing to a largely imagined glorious past; in its paranoid attempts to exterminate internal as well as external threats; and in its somewhat half-hearted attempts to annex territory from Vietnam (providing sufficient pretext for Vietnam to invade in 1979, confirming their fears of foreign domination).

Year Zero is a classic example of what happens when idealism (the desire for change, for a better life, and the belief that one can lead others toward it) hardens into a rigid ideology that is imposed on people, rather than arising out of the reality of their existence. A number of Jungians have explored idealism and its psychological shadows. In *Longing for Paradise*, Mario Jacoby relates strong paradisaical fantasies to an unsatisfying mother-child bond, so that a desire develops in the child (and often remains in the adult) to 'recover' a union that never was.¹⁹ From a less developmental perspective, James Hillman argues that when consciousness is dominated by the figure of the senex – represented not only by the father, but by authority figures and structures more broadly, idealism will always be followed by savagery:

... a morality based on senex-consciousness will always be dubious. No matter what strict code of

¹⁹ *The Longing for Paradise: Psychological perspectives on an archetype*. (1985). Mario Jacoby. Santa Monica: Sigo Press.

ethical purity it asserts, there will always be a balancing loathsome horror not far away, sometimes quite close – in the execution of its lofty principles. Torture and persecution are done in the best of circles for the best of reasons: this is the senex.²⁰

In *Puer Aeternus*, Marie-Louise von Franz sees brutality as the reverse of the high-mindedness of the eternal youth:

Here, usually, is a very cold, brutal man somewhere in the background, which compensates for the too idealistic attitude of consciousness, and which the puer aeternus cannot voluntarily assimilate. For example, in the Don Juan type, that cold brutality comes out every time he leaves the woman... This brutality, or the cold realistic attitude, very often appears also in matters related to money... the puer generally achieves his purpose behind his own back—with his left hand, so to speak. He obtains the money, God knows from where, and in rather mean ways.²¹

Finally, Marion Woodman asserts that

... a person who is being driven by ideals will become a killer, because we are human beings, and we have to recognise our own human limitations, and our own shadow, our own dirt... The highest form of idealism was in... Nazi philosophy: 'We will create the best possible race of human beings', and anything that doesn't fit in with that has to die.²²

²⁰ 'On Senex Consciousness'. (1990). James Hillman. In *Fathers and Mothers*. Patricia Berry (ed.). Dallas: Spring Publications.

²¹ *Puer Aeternus*. (1976). Marie-Louise von Franz. Dallas: Spring Publications.

²² 'Language of the Soul'. Marion Woodman. Audio cassette.

Each of these authors offers individual remedies for the polarity between idealism and brutality. From a Jungian perspective, though, each of us must find our own way between this Scylla and Charybdis. In the spirit of which, I offer two of my own dreams on this theme, from the period when writing this paper.

Lord of the Flies

While writing this paper, a documentary screened on television about the return by Peter Brooks, who directed the film of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* some thirty years ago, to the Caribbean island where it was filmed, with five of the men who as boys played the lead roles. To summarise the plot, a planeload of English schoolboys lands on an isolated tropical island; in true English fashion, the first thing they do is to elect a chief, but soon a clan of hunters emerges to challenge the chief's power; two of the 'good' boys are murdered, and the last of them is about to be murdered by the hunters when the British navy rescues them.

Studying *Lord of the Flies* in high school, it appeared as a rather negative meditation on the baseness of human nature once the trappings of civilisation are removed. Of course it is more than that, but of particular interest here is the way that the debates between the boys (about what constitutes legitimate authority) are balanced by a subplot involving a beast lurking in the jungle that might eat them. The beast is the shadow of the boys' need for order and hierarchy, but the symbolism is obvious. It eventually takes the form of a pig's head, who Simon (one of the goodies) imagines says to him, 'Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!... You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close!'²³ (177)

²³ *Lord of the Flies*. (1958). William Golding. London: Faber & Faber.

Order and chaos, civilisation and brutality, are revealed to be each other's shadows. But this connection is further elaborated in the introduction to the Faber and Faber edition, which provides background to the boys' presence on the island:

...there has been an atomic explosion... and the children have been evacuated in an aircraft with a detachable passenger tube. Flying over tropical seas... the aircraft has been attacked and has released the tube, which has crash-landed in the jungle of the island. The aircraft has flown off in flames... the remains of the tube having been swept out to sea in a storm. (249)

This reminds us that brutality is self-perpetuating, as the boys who had themselves been traumatised by being wrenched from the safety of their homes and families become brutes themselves. *Lord of the Flies* was first published in 1954, not long after World War II: Hiroshima and Nagasaki. A world brutalised by mass death and destruction forms the backdrop to the desert island scenario.

In Peter Brook's documentary *Time Flies*, he tries to discover whether the young actors' lives were profoundly affected by their experience filming *Lord of the Flies* thirty years earlier. Unfortunately for him, most of them said no. The documentary goes nowhere, until one of the twins reads out his early morning thoughts about how each of them has, in a way, become the part they played in the film. The night after watching *Time Flies*, I had the following dream:

1. I'm on a ship, on the bow deck, with two other men. One, a big, pale, red-headed Englishman (the twin referred to above), points to a square vat or box on the deck, full of a jelly-like liquid. We're talking about three men who were involved in something (a

war? an accident?) that so brutalised them that this was all that was left of them. It is understood, though, that somehow there's enough of them left to reconstruct. To this end, the Englishman (who is also one of the three) throws a few potatoes in the vat. I jokingly ask him which one is him.

That the men were reduced to jelly shows the extent of their brutalisation, which has rendered them 'spineless'. The jelly reminded me of the clear, jelly-like horseshoe-shaped objects that get washed up on a beach near home, which are actually the egg sacs of sea slugs. While they appear lifeless, look closely and you can see tiny specks that are the seeds of new life. The potatoes thrown in the vat suggest to me the primal nature of the process of reconstitution that is taking place, but also its ordinariness: nothing complex or fancy but a regrowth of life from the 'vegetable soul.'²⁴ This is reinforced by the Englishman who throws them, who struck me in *Time Flies* with his ordinariness. This dream suggested to me that while brutalisation had occurred in the past, it was now being healed by being contained (in two ways: in a box, on a vessel), and that the vessel for this process was, in effect, ordinary life, free of heroic strivings or puer(ile) longings.

Here is the other dream, some six months later:

2. I'm keeping Pol Pot prisoner in a large, dark, empty room next to my dog, Cooee, before he's to be delivered to the authorities for trial. I go out to get something from another room, convinced there's no way he can escape, but Cooee sneaks out through a door I've left slightly ajar, and Pol Pot follows. When I come back, he's gone. I'm scared.

²⁴ *The Greening of Psychology: The Vegetable World in Myth, Dream and Healing*. (1990). Peter Bishop. Dallas: Spring Publications.

This Pol Pot is, like the real one, a dangerous man, both contemptuous of my presumption of control, and angry about his incarceration. What is curious is that he escapes not through his own strength, trickery or whatever, but through the actions of Cooe, a sweet, loyal blue heeler. This suggests that Pol Pot (who was not bombastic or megalomaniacal, but apparently self-effacing, unremarkable, yet sneaky and paranoid) appears in my life at least not in brooding anger or violent rage, but in the many little ways that I manipulate, cajole, undermine, divide: wherever, in other words, the beast of destruction lurks behind the moon-face serenity of a Buddha or the stooped humility of a martyr.

Conclusion

There is no 'evolution of consciousness' readily apparent in this pair of dreams, rather reflections from different angles on the origins and healing of brutality. Of course, any brutality I have been experienced is nothing like compared to that of the Cambodian people. Nevertheless, there are parallels. For me, too, brutality has been the shadow of idealism: one born not of political oppression and the adoption of abstract ideology, but primarily of the experience of 'father' (inner, personal, social, and spiritual) – as the embodiment of authority – as hard and distant; and the consequent wanderlust, woundedness and evasiveness of the *puer aeternus*, the 'winged god of eternal youth', who would live in an ideal world because the real one has proved painful and difficult.

In *The Land and People of Cambodia*, Chandler reproduces a 1982 drawing done by a Cambodian refugee. It is his recollection of a drawing he once saw in a school book, of two warriors sculpted at Angkor. Mirror images, they are locked in a dance, swords in one hand. As the boy, Ta Rony, recalls,

The teacher said that at one time they had been inside a single body, but because one was good and the other evil, they broke apart and have been fighting ever since. See, they are tied at the wrists and cannot escape. I think Cambodia is still like this...²⁵

What this wise teenager has noticed, and what I have been trying to explore at greater length, is how evil may be the creation of attempts to do good, where these arise not from the ground of our own culture and lives but are imposed from above or without. Writing on the first anniversary of the Indonesian Army's attempt to destroy East Timor and massacre its people in the name of the 'unitary state' of Indonesia – compounded by the well-meaning but naive and poorly executed desire of Western nations for the East Timorese to determine their own future – it seems critical that we reflect on the sometimes tyrannical implications of our ideals.

²⁵ Chandler (199 1), p. 165.