

The Version of Record (VoR) of this manuscript has been published by Taylor & Francis in Psychological Perspectives on 8 September 2025 and is available at:
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00332925.2025.2507502>

Full APA citation:

Vermeesch, P. (2025). *Star Trek's New Borg: Transformation of the Collective Shadow According to Neumann's "New Ethic."* *Psychological Perspectives*, 68(2), 237–249.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332925.2025.2507502>

Star Trek's New Borg: Transformation of the Collective Shadow

According to Neumann's "New Ethic"

Peggy Vermeesch

In light of Jungian analyst Erich Neumann's theories of the old and new ethic, I explore the collective unconscious in its devouring and destructive shadow aspect, as illustrated by the Borg in *Star Trek*. By leading a one-sided life based on the elimination of anything that is incompatible with their highest values, *Star Trek's* United Federation of Planets pushes its repressed shadow components onto the Borg, who are then compelled to live them out in an unconscious and autonomous way. The episode "Skin of Evil" (1988) is used to explore the concepts of persona identification, inflation, shadow projection, and scapegoating. The dialogues echo active imaginations. The need to integrate the shadow is clearly shown. But the journey of a single individual can make a profound impact on the collective unconscious shadow, as is hinted at in the episode "I, Borg" (1992) and clearly shown in the second season of the more recent *Star Trek: Picard* series (2022–2023). Through dialogue and negotiations with a dark inner shadow figure akin to Donald Kalsched's split-off protector/persecutor, tormented scientist Agnes Jurati ends up creating a new and more moderate Borg that ultimately saves the universe. This powerful symbol of transformation offers hope in today's times of great division and splitting. It is a different story than the hero's journey we are so used to. In line with Erich Neumann's theories about the new ethic, evil is not defeated or killed. Instead, it is accepted as part of oneself, negotiated with, and allowed to transform.

One of the greatest TV shows and spin-offs ever conceived in terms of creatively portraying Jungian and other depth psychological concepts is *Star Trek*. Set in the future with the capability of faster-than-light space travel, the different series (1966–2023) explore and amplify dynamics of both personal relationships and whole civilizations, with unlimited creative potential for exotic humanoid physiology, psychology, and societal structures.

Star Trek's One-Sided United Federation of Planets

In the *Star Trek* universe, the United Federation of Planets is an interstellar union of multiple planets gathered under a single central government, founded on the principles of liberty, equality, peace, justice, and progress. The Federation sounds like a wonderful place, but as Jungians, we have learned to be suspicious about extreme one-sidedness and wonder: Where is the opposite that keeps everything in balance? Where is the shadow?

In order to answer this question, we turn to Erich Neumann's (1949/1990) theories about "the old ethic." Neumann asserts that in any culture, certain values and ideals emerge as "absolute values": one hundred percent good, and thus ethical (p. 33). The reasons for a particular choice of values might be consciously thought out or arise out of unconscious fears, defenses, or desires. They are often historical in origin and sometimes no longer valid. Occasionally, they are completely arbitrary and the result of chance events. Other ideals have only ever been useful for the people who promoted them.

In our modern Western era, one of our most important values is our individuality and the idea that each of us is unique and important in our own right. We should therefore have equal rights and opportunities, including the freedom to choose our own unique path to a fulfilling life.

Neumann posits that the most common way to create a society according to the values we have chosen is to eliminate that which conflicts with these particular values in order to "achieve

adaptation to the ethical ideal” (Neumann, 1949/1990, p. 37). This is done using two methods: suppression and repression. In suppressing certain parts of ourselves, we make a deliberate decision not to allow those parts to be expressed or fulfilled. Our sacrifice is conscious, and through our suffering, we retain a conscious connection to those rejected parts. We remember that these parts belong to us. But when we repress the incompatible parts, we completely forget they were ever part of us. We lose contact with them completely. They are no longer under our conscious ego control and lead a life of their own in our unconscious.

Neumann (1949/1990) further explains that repression results in the formation of two systems in the personality. These two systems are the shadow, which is unconscious and contains the repressed parts, and the persona, which is the part of us that we show to the world. The individual person who suppresses the incompatible content is better off than the person who represses it, as the latter will invariably be attacked and overwhelmed at some point by “the dark forces of the unconscious” (p. 47). For the collective unconscious, however, both methods are disastrous: “In both cases the collective has to pay for the false virtue of the individual. Suppression and, still more, repression result in an accumulation of suppressed or repressed contents in the unconscious” (p. 48). Furthermore, these contents do not remain unaltered, but instead start leading a life of their own, regress, and in general become more primitive and destructive than what was originally suppressed or repressed.

The Borg as Symbol of the Collective Unconscious in its Destructive Shadow Aspect

Considering the great emphasis of our modern Western society on individuality, it comes as no surprise that the Borg, symbol of the collective unconscious in its devouring and annihilating shadow aspect, contains the extreme opposite. The Borg originated as normal life forms but evolved into a mixture of organic and artificial life with cybernetic enhancements.

They do not exist as individuals, but instead are part of one large collective. Each Borg drone is connected to thousands of voices in their head, enabling seamless communication and allowing them to function as a unified whole. When cut off from the hive mind, Borg drones become anxious and disoriented, willing to do anything to reconnect.

The Borg's primary directive is to pursue perfection, order, and efficiency. There is no room for messy emotions, personal attachments, individual thought, or anything resembling a personal soul. They show complete disregard for even the most fundamental rights of individuals—especially the right to freedom. To reproduce and expand their civilization, the Borg assimilate other species. When encountering a new species, they speak in a robotic, emotionless voice, always in unison: “We are the Borg. Existence, as you know it, is over. You will be assimilated. Your biological and technological distinctiveness will be added to our own. Resistance is futile” (Berman et al., 1995–2001). They then proceed to inject their victims with nanoparticles from their cyber-enhanced body that will convert said victims into new Borg drones. Any knowledge and memories that were once part of these individuals then become part of the Collective.

Assimilation amounts to a forced total annihilation of the individual.¹ To us, it is worse than death. It can be compared to a kind of zombification. In Jungian terms, being assimilated by the Borg corresponds to being taken over entirely by the unconscious shadow components that the Borg represent. It amounts to losing all ego consciousness and being possessed by the collective shadow.

As is the case for unconscious shadow elements, the Borg are close to invincible. They have superior strength, technology, and travel capabilities, enabling them to appear in an instant

anywhere in the galaxy. When a defense is developed or a new weapon is used on them, they collectively adapt to it within minutes.

Early on in the *Star Trek* narrative, the Borg are completely undifferentiated. They are a collective being of pure evil, and to be assimilated means you are lost forever. Borg drones, even newly assimilated friends, are not considered lives worth saving. But gradually, we learn more about them. In the TV series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Roddenberry, 1987–1994) and *Star Trek: Voyager* (Berman et al., 1995–2001), we come to value the lives of drones whose link to the Collective has been severed. In an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* called “I, Borg” (Echevarria et al., 1992), a lone and injured adolescent Borg survivor is found at a crash site. The crew wants to leave “it” to die, out of fear of being found and assimilated by the Borg, who are known to “collect their dead.” But Dr. Beverly Crusher insists “he” should be saved. A plan is set in motion to develop a computer virus, upload it into the Borg drone, and then send it back to the Collective to infect the Borg, causing a “total systems failure.”

Again, it is Dr. Crusher who represents the voice of empathy, pointing out that this amounts to “annihilating an entire race” and that “even in war you don’t kill civilians indiscriminately.” The crew effectively rationalizes their plan to commit genocide by their need to survive and by the view that the Borg are “a single collective being” and that “there’s no one Borg who is more an individual than your arm or your leg.” But from a psychodynamic point of view, they are using any justification to release their collective suppressed and/or repressed feelings of hatred, cruelty, violence, and general lack of respect for life forms and cultures different from their own. With the exception of Dr. Crusher, the crew is largely unaware that their proposed course of action is, in fact, contrary to their highest values. “All wars ... provide

examples of this coexistence between a good conscience in the conscious mind and a breakthrough of the shadow on the level of action” (Neumann, 1949/1990, p. 55).

And then things get complicated as their justifications begin to fall apart. As the members of the crew tend to the drone’s medical and cybernetic care, they interact with him, get to know him, influence him. Before their eyes, he slowly transforms into a hurt adolescent boy who feels homesick and scared. He becomes close to Geordi, the engineer, and is given a name: Hugh.

Despite the growing unease of the crew regarding the ethical implications of using him as a weapon, Captain Picard holds firmly to the belief that the Borg are the greatest threat to their existence. He knows from first-hand experience that not taking advantage of this opportunity would be a grave mistake. In the previous season, Picard was abducted by the Borg, assimilated, and given the designation “Locutus of Borg” (Piller & Bole, 1990a). While part of the Collective, he led a Borg attack on Earth that destroyed 39 starships and cost 11,000 lives. Picard was subsequently rescued (Piller & Bole, 1990b), and had to undergo the difficult process of recovering one’s individuality and thereby the ability to feel the trauma of assimilation and the guilt of one’s association with the Borg’s atrocities (Moore & Landau, 1990).

Being assimilated by the Borg is analogous to being overcome or possessed by some part of the unconscious. This could be a part of the personal unconscious (an autonomous complex), fueled by an archetype from the collective unconscious. These possessions can be short-lived and relatively common, as in a sudden fit of rage. Or they can be long-term and more serious, as in certain psychotic states. Recovering one’s individuality after assimilation is then understood as regaining ego control.

Once we return to ego consciousness, we must face what happened while we were possessed by the complex and/or archetype. We must take responsibility for the damage we

caused, and this may involve guilt, loss, and grief over the consequences of our actions.

Although Picard is in no way personally responsible for the atrocities he committed as Locutus of Borg, the theme of Picard's guilt is explored in several episodes and across multiple *Star Trek* series.

To become less vulnerable to these psychic possessions, we must become conscious of the triggers and origins of our complexes. We must integrate our shadow. This work can be done, for example, in analysis or therapy. Likewise, in order to become less vulnerable to the Borg assimilation threat, the Federation must find a way to “make friends with the Borg”—that is, to integrate the shadow components they have repressed.

With great trepidation, Picard finally meets with the Borg drone, who instantly recognizes him as the former Locutus of Borg. As a test, Picard orders him to help the Borg assimilate the entire ship. But, uncharacteristically for a Borg, he objects. Upon Picard's further insistence, we observe a significant turning point in his thinking process. Instead of saying “we,” as the Borg usually do, he now speaks for himself and says: “I.” He no longer identifies with the Borg or the Collective. He is no longer a Borg.

Once it is firmly established that Hugh is now an individual with rights of his own, the plan to use him as a weapon is abandoned. Instead, Hugh is given the choice of either returning to the crash site where the Borg will collect him, or being granted asylum and staying on the Enterprise. He responds: “Choose what I want... I would choose to stay with Geordi. But it is too dangerous. They will follow. Return me to the crash site. It is the only way” (Echevarria et al., 1992). He acknowledges, and subsequently sacrifices, his personal wish to stay on the Federation starship and live as an individual, in order to protect his friend Geordi and the other crew members from assimilation by the Borg. His answer demonstrates the transformation that

becomes possible when one is able to hold the tension between opposites. In this case, the opposites correspond to the diametrically opposed value systems of the Borg and the Federation. The Borg value community and order above all else, whereas the Federation values individuality and freedom. Hugh holds this tension by acknowledging his personal bond with Geordi, while simultaneously honoring his sense of communal responsibility through his sacrifice. It is Captain Picard's hope that the knowledge of Hugh's journey will have a moderating influence on the Collective:

But perhaps, in that short time before they purge his memory, the sense of individuality which he has gained with us might be transmitted through the entire Borg Collective. Every one of the Borg being given the opportunity to experience the feeling of... of singularity. And perhaps that's the most pernicious program of all: the knowledge of self being spread throughout the Collective in that brief moment might alter them forever. (Echevarria et al., 1992)

The courageous journey of one individual can forever change the collective unconscious and moderate its devouring and annihilating shadow aspect.

Persona Identification and Inflation

Neumann (1949/1990, p. 40) further writes that it is common for people to identify with the ethical values of their culture. When we begin to believe that who we really are is the same as the idealized mask we show the world, our ego becomes identified with our persona. Because the persona consists of collective values, we call this an "inflation." We are inflated or possessed when we are identified with the transpersonal or unconscious contents of our psyche (p. 41). In our consciousness, there is no space for the repressed contents that are incompatible with our values, so they go underground into the unconscious and lead an autonomous life as shadow.

As we are effectively cut off from certain parts of ourselves, we can no longer see what's real. Our view of reality becomes limited (Neumann, 1949/1990, p. 42). This happens both on the personal level and on the collective level. When we are born, we come into a family, culture, and society, each with their own sense of values and a corresponding collective shadow already firmly in place. It takes enormous effort and energy even to imagine moving beyond the bounds of a system that has been in place for so long and by which we have been formed since, and even before, birth.

From our narrow point of view, there is no denying that the Borg in *Star Trek* represent pure evil. Our ego, when identified with our persona, completely disavows that there could be any part of us that resembles some part of the Borg. No good resides in the Borg. But, as unconscious shadow—and thus largely autonomous—the Borg unwaveringly believe they are working toward the greater good. The Borg Queen says: “By assimilating other races into our collective, we are bringing them closer to perfection” (Frakes, 1996). “They left behind their trivial, selfish lives, and they’ve been reborn with a greater purpose” (Bragga et al., 1999). We could turn it around and view the Borg as those who are inflated and identified with their own persona—their adaptation to their highest values: perfection, order, and harmony. In the process of disowning and repressing the parts of themselves that are incompatible with that perfection, they have pushed individuality and freedom into their own shadow.

This dynamic is portrayed in the *Star Trek: Voyager* episodes titled “Unimatrix Zero” (Sussman et al., 2000a; Sussman et al., 2000b). The Borg Queen discovers a mutation in the Collective that affects one in a million drones. While these drones regenerate (the Borg equivalent of sleep), they experience their individuality and interact with one another in a virtual environment full of trees. Upon waking on the Borg cube—a ship completely devoid of nature

and esthetics—they remember nothing. Just as our shadow and other unconscious aspects manifest in our dreams during sleep to compensate for our one-sided conscious orientation, so too do those of the Borg. Of course, the Borg Queen sets out to eliminate this malfunction so that her Collective can once again embody the ideal of perfection.

If we consider both the Borg and the United Federation of Planets as warring civilizations, we might say that both make the same mistake. By living one-sidedly, based on the elimination of anything that conflicts with their highest values (Neumann's "old ethic"), they each push their shadow onto the other party, who then lives it out unconsciously and autonomously.

One might object that this is not a fair comparison. The Borg's attacks are unprovoked and threaten to annihilate what is most precious to us: our individuality. No negotiation or compromise is possible. "Resistance is futile" (Berman et al., 1995–2001). In contrast, the Federation is content to leave the Borg alone, so long as they do not infringe on another species' freedom. But that final caveat effectively limits the Borg's accepted way of life, which is based on reproduction and growth through the assimilation of other species.

From the Borg's point of view, they are not evil. Freedom, individuality, and their correlates—negotiation and compromise—are simply not part of their values. On the other hand, the Federation's commitment to individuality and the sanctity of life directly opposes the growth and proliferation of the Borg. So which civilization is more moral—according to its own values?

Collective Shadow Projection and Scapegoating

The predatory Borg, who realistically do threaten the way of life of every other species, lend themselves perfectly to shadow projection by the highly individualistic Federation. Psychologically, it must feel like a great relief to the Federation to disown the parts of

themselves that are incompatible with their values. They can remain moral and good—heroes who fight the Borg, who themselves willingly act out those rejected negative parts. But it is not always so convenient to find a perfect carrier of the collective shadow. Sometimes, the shadow projection is more arbitrary, and a scapegoat must be found—or even created.

In the *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s episode "Skin of Evil" (Stefano et al., 1988), a shuttle crashes on an uninhabited planet. When the crew of the Enterprise beams down, they encounter "a black slick." Although the word "shadow" is never used, the image in the episode clearly evokes this idea. When the shadow demands to know why the crew wishes to reach the shuttle, Commander Riker responds that they need to attend to the injured crew, and that "preserving life, all life, is very important to us. Because we believe that everything in the universe has a right to exist." It is one of the Federation's highest values. The shadow replies: "An interesting notion which I do not share." When Lieutenant Yar, a member of the main crew, tries to step across it, the shadow kills her in a brutal and senseless act that no one saw coming (Stefano et al., 1988).

Through dialogue with the shadow, we learn its origin: "Creatures whose beauty now dazzles all who see them ... perfected a means of bringing to the surface all that was evil and negative within... erupting, spreading, connecting. In time it formed a second skin—dank and vile" (Stefano et al., 1988). Then they shook off that skin and abandoned it on an uninhabited planet.

These fictional beings succeeded in doing what no society in the outer, nonfictional world could ever achieve: they projected all characteristics that did not match their values onto a second skin, and then succeeded in cutting themselves off from it entirely. In reality, we can never discard our shadow. This is true for people and their personal shadow, as well as for

civilizations and their collective shadow. Neumann (1949/1990) writes that the more we repress the incompatible parts of ourselves, the stronger our shadow side becomes, and the more difficult it becomes to maintain the split, and the illusion that we are one hundred percent good. No matter how much we persecute, discard, or even kill the designated scapegoat, we cannot eliminate the shadow in the long term, for the simple reason that it is part of ourselves (p. 56).

Neumann's "Old Ethic" in *Star Trek: Picard*

The more recent *Star Trek: Picard* series (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023) takes place 29 years after the conclusion of *Star Trek: The New Generation*. At the beginning of season two, a new kind of Borg ship comes through an artificial spatial anomaly, requesting to become a member of the Federation. At this point in the *Star Trek* timeline, the decimated Borg have not been seen or heard from in over a decade. But instantly, fear and paranoia run so high that destroying the unknown Borg ship without provocation becomes a real consideration, even if it means abandoning the Federation's highest values.

Then, a new Borg Queen, who looks nothing like previous Borg queens, cuts through all defenses and proceeds to take control of Picard's ship and the entire fleet. Then everything goes black. When Picard and his friends wake up, they find themselves in an alternate timeline. In this timeline, Picard is a ruthless war general at the head of the Confederation of Earth. Diametrically opposed to the peace-loving United Federation of Planets in the original timeline, this Confederation is xenophobic and systematically eradicates or enslaves alien races.

Picard's crew saves the old Borg Queen from public execution because she is the only one who has knowledge across different timelines and who can perform the calculations required to return to the moment when history was changed. After jumping back nearly 400 years into the past, the old Borg Queen is injured and unconscious, and the spaceship inoperative.

Agnes Jurati, a tormented scientist, proposes allowing herself to be partially assimilated in order to repair the Borg Queen from the inside and restore power to the ship. Picard is tasked with severing their connection before Jurati loses herself to the Borg completely.

Kalsched's Archetypal Self-Care System

To understand why the old Borg Queen, repulsive and terrifying to everyone else, has such a strong pull on Jurati, we turn to Jungian analyst Donald Kalsched, who has developed a model of what happens when trauma or repeated neglect occurs early in life, before the ego has had sufficient time to develop. Through his work with patients like Jurati, Kalsched discovered that one of the most influential inner figures in such individuals is deeply dark and harmful, yet also powerfully seductive—just like the Borg Queen. With early trauma, a split occurs, forming two autonomous parts: a hidden inner child and a protector/persecutor. This protector/persecutor is part of the early, undeveloped self, split into a light and a dark angel—both attempting to protect the inner child. The light angel (or protector aspect) comes to the rescue in times of psychological danger, offering solace and the feeling of eternal bliss. It is hard to resist the temptation of losing oneself in this illusory fantasy. The dark angel (or persecutor aspect) is also part of the archetypal self-care system. It is a much more severe version of the usual inner critic. It springs into action every time someone like Jurati feels the slightest glimmer of hope or connection. With its hurtful inner commentary, it sabotages any hope of happiness. It does everything in its power to prevent the person from making the supposedly horrible mistake of trusting someone, forming a true connection, and risking being hurt again.

The dark angel protects, too—however hard that is to imagine. Kalsched (2014) writes:

It would not be appropriate to attribute the archaic violent energies of this figure to the “shadow”—at least not in the way Jung intended the shadow to represent the coherent

ego's dark alter-personality, split off in moral development and later integrated in the interest of the "wholeness" of personality. Clearly, this figure belongs to a more primitive level of ego development and corresponds to what Jung designated as the "archetypal shadow" or the "magic demon with mysterious powers." ... If anything, this figure, whose unfeeling murderous acts assure psychic disintegration, is closer to incarnate evil in the personality—the dark side of the Godhead or Self. (p. 28)

The Borg correspond, indeed, to a much more archetypal and primitive shadow. They are the embodiment of evil. In the dialogue with the old Borg Queen, we can recognize that she exhibits both qualities of the protector/persecutor: seduction into the illusory bliss of the light angel, and merciless criticism as the dark angel. When Picard must leave the ship, Jurati finds herself alone with the Borg Queen, who begins to manipulate her in an effort to gain control. The Borg Queen effortlessly mixes flattery and acceptance with hurtful remarks that underscore Jurati's deepest fear: that she will never be acceptable to others. Jurati is haunted by a pervasive feeling of loneliness and longing for connection. The Borg Queen aptly names it: "unbelonging." She continues her seductive strategy and taunts: "You felt it too, didn't you? That thing for which we Borg have so very many words. Assimilation. Cooperation. Connection" (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023). Imagine how tempting the idea of an all-embracing Borg connection and acceptance must be to Jurati, who has carried the fear and shame of being unlovable her entire life. It would be like returning to the all-nourishing womb of the unconscious and forgetting all the pain she has ever suffered. The old Borg Queen is lonely too, and has long desired to find, or create, a counterpart: an equal. That was the reason behind assimilating Picard 35 years earlier and turning him into Locutus of Borg. But it did not last, as Picard was ultimately rescued by his friends and crew.

While her friends are out trying to save the galaxy, Jurati finds herself in an impossible dilemma. The Borg Queen has used trickery to take a policeman hostage. When she threatens to kill the man, Jurati pulls a gun on her. But Jurati cannot simply kill the Borg Queen—they need her in order to return to their own time in the future.

Confronted with a stalemate, the Borg Queen tries to convince Jurati to join her and become Borg:

You're alone, Agnes. In every timeline. Every permutation, every reality in this universe. You are utterly alone. That is your faith. Forever invisible. But I could change all of that. Imagine being loved completely. Every thought and whisper cherished and shared. With our minds joined as one, we could be more. I am the only one in this entire universe who has ever truly seen you. Once I am gone, you are alone. (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023)

Jurati shoots the Borg Queen to save the man. But then she is suddenly overcome with excruciating pain. She asks: “What is that?” The Borg Queen responds: “Me. Dying. I’m part of you” (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023).

We cannot kill off our shadow without losing a part of ourselves. The Queen continues: “Do you like that gnawing nothingness? Because it’s never leaving. Together, we could be so much more. ... You need me to get home. You need me, Agnes. How will you survive without me?” (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023).

We need shadow to be whole.

Finally, Jurati gives in, and the Borg Queen assimilates her. But she does not do this in the usual Borg way. She does not turn Jurati into a drone, which would mean the destruction of her individuality. Because she values Jurati as a potential equal, she infiltrates her mind instead.

Although she initially creates the illusion that Jurati is still in control, we gradually discover that Jurati's body now houses two opposing personalities. One is scientist Agnes Jurati—intelligent, compassionate, and strong-minded—who wants to help her friends save the galaxy. The other is the old Borg Queen, who wants nothing more than to obtain a starship and assimilate other species to create a new collective in pursuit of order and perfection.

In true trickster fashion, the old Borg Queen gradually takes full control of Jurati's body. As one, they sing: "We're running with the shadows of the night." The show-stopping performance of Pat Benatar's "Shadows of the Night" (Byron & Sweet, 1982) reveals just how much Jurati benefits from having shadow with her, rather than split off. While singing with the Queen, she is radiant and confident. She is no longer lonely, lost, awkward—no longer terrified of even knowing, let alone showing, her true potential. She is whole.

Neumann's "New Ethic": A Gentleman's Agreement with Shadow

Now that the old Borg Queen has gained enough control, she builds an army of assimilated soldiers to help her take over the ship. The ongoing battle between Jurati and the Queen—between consciousness and shadow—comes to a close when the Queen mortally wounds Jurati's friend Seven and refuses to show mercy. As Jurati regains some ego control, she begins a dialogue and negotiation with her inner shadow figure. This dialogue can be understood in Jungian terms as an active imagination. While retaining ego consciousness, Jurati is ready to sit with her inner shadow figure in conversation.

An important step in the individuation process takes place once Jurati stops seeing the old Borg Queen as something evil outside of herself that must be exorcised or defeated. She gives up the idea of Neumann's "old ethic": the achievement of a moral society by eliminating all that is contrary to the chosen values. Neumann (1949/1990) writes:

But as the process of individuation unfolds, the ego's former drive towards perfection simultaneously disintegrates. The inflationary exaltation of the ego has to be sacrificed, and it becomes necessary for the ego to enter into some kind of gentleman's agreement with the shadow—a development which is diametrically opposed to the old ethic's ideal of absolutism and perfection. (p. 80)

Instead, Jurati now accepts that these shadow components are part of herself. And she is ready to dialogue and negotiate:

[This is] the history of the Borg. Well, the only history that matters: the ending. How it always ends for you. A lone Borg slayer, a United Federation. They come for you. For your top-shelf overreaching, Icarus-worthy arrogance. ... In this or any other universe you always lose. That's why you fight so hard. You live with the death knell of your species across infinite timelines. You fear loss, just like we do. You long for what we all long for. Connection. Longevity. Discovery. (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023)

Both the Borg and the Federation function according to the one-sided old ethic, which is “based on the principle of opposites in conflict” (Neumann, 1949/1990, p. 45). The old ethic is a partial ethic and always ends in disaster on the collective level. The Borg are eventually attacked and destroyed. But Neumann proposes another way: an ethic which is “total” or “whole” on two levels (p. 92). The first distinction is between the individual and the collective. The old ethic concerned itself only with what takes place on the individual level. In the new ethic, we also consider the larger consequences of our individual moral stance for our fellow human beings and the environment in general.

Neumann's second distinction concerns the unconscious. The old ethic pertained only to what occurred on the level of consciousness. It did not account for the accumulation of opposing,

negative values in the unconscious—or the disasters this accumulation might cause. In the new ethic, we take responsibility for our shadow. This frees the collective unconscious from having to take on and live out that shadow content for us.

Jurati makes a proposition to the old Borg Queen that aligns with the new ethic:

What if we ask for it? [permission to assimilate others] You and I? ... The galaxy is filled with lives that need saving. One of them is lying at your feet right now [Jurati's friend Seven, who is mortally wounded]. ... What if we take this ship and build a better Borg? A real Collective, based not on assimilation, but salvation. Think about it! A Borg Collective that embraces the uniqueness of its members. ... Imagine members who would fight harder for what they chose. Who would lose no battles because they made no enemies, who would not be discarded and replaced. Attachments could grow and deepen.

(Goldsman et al., 2021–2023)

The Borg Queen accepts Jurati's proposition. She saves Seven's life. In return, she will be allowed to take the ship to the Delta Quadrant to build a new and improved Borg. Together, Jurati and the old Borg Queen "are becoming something new: something better." Before leaving with the ship, they proclaim that "the future will have no need for a Borg slayer, at least not from us" (Goldsman et al., 2021–2023).

Picard and his crew then find a way to restore the timeline and return to their own time, nearly 400 years in the future. Upon arrival, they find themselves back on their spaceship, face-to-face with the new and unfamiliar Borg Queen, who is in the process of taking control of the entire fleet. But Picard now recognizes her as the entity composed of Jurati and the old Borg Queen, and decides to trust her. She proceeds to use her control over the fleet to save the galaxy from a surprise attack by a powerful, previously unknown enemy. Jurati, now the new Borg

Queen, has honored the gentleman's agreement made with shadow centuries earlier. She has built a more compassionate Borg by inviting—rather than forcing—new members into their Collective. This new Borg not only saves the galaxy, but commits to becoming a contributing member of the Federation. Neumann (1949/1990) writes:

But the pre-digestion of evil which he [the individual] carries out as part of the process of assimilating his shadow makes him, at the same time, an agent for the immunisation of the collective. An individual's shadow is invariably bound up with the collective shadow of his group, and as he digests his own evil, a fragment of the collective evil is invariably co-digested at the same time. (p. 130)

The journey of a single person can have a profound impact on the collective unconscious. Jurati was haunted by the dark aspects of her personality, but she did not give in or take the easy road. Accepting and exploring her neurotic fears, she courageously met shadow. She sat with her—in dialogue and in battle. She took conscious risks. And then the unthinkable happened: through her effort, sacrifice, and capacity to hold the tension of opposites, she created a better, more compassionate Borg. While holding that tension within her own psyche and body, a new possibility emerged—one in line with Jung's theories of the transcendent function. Jurati took responsibility for her personal shadow, and the collective shadow was forever changed. The notion of a new and gentler Borg stands as a beautiful symbol of hope.

If our collective unconscious gives rise to an image in which even the most unredeemable, evil, and primitive shadow figure can be met with negotiation, integration, and transformation, it signals that there is hope for the society we live in.

What does this mean for the individual living according to the new ethic? Neumann (1949/1990) writes: "It is required of us that we should 'work through' our own evil in an

independent and responsible way. But the corollary of this is that becoming conscious must now rank as an ethical duty” (p. 113). To build a better world, we must become conscious of both the personal and archetypal collective aspects of our shadow and do the hard work of negotiating with those dark aspects in an effort to integrate them into our whole personality. Just as Jurati, as the new Borg Queen, saves the galaxy, we can each contribute to saving our world—if we accept the ethical obligation of doing our own work of individuation.

NOTES

¹ More information about the concept of “assimilation” as practiced by the Borg can be found at the following website: <https://www.stf-wiki.com/index.php?title=Assimilation>

Peggy Vermeesch began her career as a geophysicist, receiving her PhD from Imperial College London and conducting research for Southampton University and the University of Texas at Austin. She is the author of Making Informed Decisions on Childbirth: One Scientist’s International Perspective, published under the pseudonym Sofie Vantiers. She currently works as a Jungian-oriented therapist in private practice and teaches “English for Psychologists” at the postgraduate level for the University of Western Brittany. She is the Bilingual Content Editor for Espace Francophone Jungien (EFJ) and Jungian Psychology Space (JPS), and a contributing member of Groupe d’Etudes C.G. Jung (France).

FURTHER READING

Berman, R., Piller, M., & Taylor, J. (Executive Producers). (1995–2001). *Star trek: Voyager* [TV series]. Paramount Pictures.

Bragga, B. (Writer), Menosky, J. (Writer), Bole, C. (Director), & Windell, T. (Director). (1999, February 17). Dark frontier: Part II. (Season 5, Episode 16) [TV series episode]. In R. Berman, M. Piller, & J. Taylor (Executive Producers), *Star Trek: Voyager*. Paramount Pictures.

- Byron, D. L., & Sweet, R. (Writers). (1982). Shadows of the night [Song]. On P. Benatar, *Get nervous* [Album]. Chrysalis.
- Echevarria, R. (Writer), Taylor, J. (Writer), & Lederman, R. (Director). (1992, May 10). I, Borg. (Season 5, Episode 23) [TV series episode]. In G. Roddenberry (Executive Producer), *Star trek: The next generation*. Paramount Pictures.
- Frakes, J. (Director). (1996). *First contact* [Film]. Paramount Pictures.
- Goldsman, A., Chabon, M., Beyer, K., & Kurtzman, A. (Executive Producers). (2021–2023). *Star trek: Picard* [TV series]. CBS All Access.
- Kalsched, D. (2014). *The inner world of trauma: Archetypal defenses of the personal spirit*. Routledge.
- Moore, R. D. (Writer), & Landau, L. (Director). (1990, October 1). Family (Season 4, Episode 2) [TV series episode]. In G. Roddenberry (Executive Producer), *Star trek: The next generation*. Paramount Pictures.
- Neumann, E. (1990). *Depth psychology and a new ethic* (E. Rolfe, Trans.). Shambhala. (Original work published 1949)
- Piller, M. (Writer), & Bole, C. (Director). (1990a, June 18). The best of both worlds: Part I (Season 3, Episode 26) [TV series episode]. In G. Roddenberry (Executive Producer), *Star trek: The next generation*. Paramount Pictures.
- Piller, M. (Writer), & Bole, C. (Director). (1990b, September 24). The best of both worlds: Part II (Season 4, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In G. Roddenberry (Executive Producer), *Star trek: The next generation*. Paramount Pictures.
- Roddenberry, G. (Executive Producer). (1987–1994). *Star trek: The next generation* [TV series]. Paramount Pictures.

Stefano, J. (Writer), Shearer, H. L. (Writer), & Scanlan, J. L. (Director). (1988, April 25). Skin of evil. (Season 1, Episode 21) [TV series episode]. In G. Roddenberry (Executive Producer), *Star trek: The next generation*. Paramount Pictures.

Sussman, M. (Writer), Bragga, B. (Writer), Menosky, J. (Writers), & Kroeker, A. (Director). (2000a, May 24). Unimatrix zero: Part I (Season 6, Episode 26) [TV series episode]. In R. Berman, M. Piller, & J. Taylor (Executive Producers), *Star trek: Voyager*. Paramount Pictures.

Sussman, M. (Writer), Bragga, B. (Writer), Menosky, J. (Writer), & Vejar, M. (Director). (2000b, October 4). Unimatrix zero: Part II (Season 7, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In R. Berman, M. Piller, & J. Taylor (Executive Producers), *Star trek: Voyager*. Paramount Pictures.