

Self, Spirituality, and Mysticism

with William Simpson, "The Mystical Stance: The Experience of Self-Loss and Daniel Dennett's 'Center of Narrative Gravity'"; David Rousseau, "A Systems Model of Spirituality"; and David James Stewart, "The Emergence of Consciousness in Genesis 1–3: Jung's Depth Psychology and Theological Anthropology"

THE EMERGENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN GENESIS 1–3: JUNG'S DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

by David James Stewart

Abstract. The development of a robust, holistic theological anthropology will require that theology and biblical studies alike enter into genuine interdisciplinary conversations. Depth psychology in particular has the capacity to be an exceedingly fruitful conversation partner for theology because of its commitment to the totality of the human experience (both the conscious and unconscious aspects) as well as its unique ability to interpret archetypal symbols and mythological thinking. By arguing for a psycho-theological hermeneutic that accounts for depth psychology's conviction that myths about the origin of the world are always simultaneously myths about the origin and emergence of human consciousness, I demonstrate that the presence of numerous Jungian archetypes in Genesis 1–3 suggests that the narrative can be read from a psychological perspective without diminishing or marginalizing the dominant theological themes of exile and return. Furthermore, such a reading fundamentally suggests that the narrative is not about how sin entered into creation, but rather how consciousness emerged in human community.

Keywords: archetypes; Christianity; consciousness; hermeneutics; interdisciplinarity; Carl Gustav Jung; myth; psychology; theological anthropology; theology and science

EXPANDING THEOLOGICAL HORIZONS

Theology has the capacity to be a field-encompassing discourse. Whether or not God is confessed in faith to be a metaphysical reality independent of human thought, theologically the concept of God is always a

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metaphor through which the whole of reality is filtered and understood by a community speaking words-about-God. This means theology is not just words-about-God, but also words about the totality of the universe and everything contained therein. For theology to become a legitimate field-encompassing discourse, it must first learn to become genuinely conversant with disciplines in other fields, because conversation does not presume that one discourse rules.

Conventional wisdom assumes that theology and the sciences—quantum physics, depth psychology, and everything in between—are incommensurable.¹ Ostensibly, theology is based on faith and revelation, while the sciences on empirical evidence and research. While theology and the sciences are clearly separate disciplines, neither reducible to the other, this is not quite the whole story. As it turns out, *fides quaerens intellectum* (“faith seeking understanding”) is not exclusive to theological and religious discourse. All knowledge requires commitment and has a faith component—mathematics and the natural sciences are no exception. In the 1930s, Kurt Gödel’s incompleteness theorems demonstrated that mathematics, understood as a system of fundamental axioms, cannot prove its own consistency, and that truth is a much stronger and more compelling notion than provability (Hofstadter 1979). Then, in the 1950s, Michael Polanyi’s postcritical philosophy argued that all knowledge—even scientific knowledge like $e = mc^2$ —is personal in nature and necessarily contains fiduciary elements (Polanyi 1958). If faith and commitment go all the way down in every discipline, then theology has common ground with other disciplines; a basis for conversation.

In a healthy conversation, neither participant is assimilated by the other, neither is consumed by the other, and neither is ignored by the other. But both are encountered by the other, and honored distinctly as an other. In a healthy conversation, theology will not be reduced to its conversation partners nor eliminated by them—but it might be challenged by them to expand its horizon. In the 1970s, John Dominic Crossan recognized that, in the future, “Biblical study will no longer be conducted under the exclusive or even dominant hegemony [of a single discipline, but rather] through a multitude of disciplines interacting mutually as a field criticism” (Crossan 1977, 41). This essay is a humble attempt to expand theology’s horizon by bringing it into conversation with depth psychology.

Depth psychology has the potential to be a fruitful conversation partner for theology because depth psychology is concerned with the full spectrum of human experiences. Theology and depth psychology are both disciplines concerned with our becoming human (Wink 2007, xiii). Polanyi affirmed that we *know* more than we can tell (Polanyi 1970, 88–94) and depth psychology affirms that we *are* more than we consciously know (Neumann 1954, 7). Ergo, we *know* more than we consciously know, and we *are* more than we could ever tell. As a field-encompassing discourse, theology has a

vested interest in the fullness of the human experience in all its ambiguity, beauty, and complexity.

ORIGIN STORIES

One specific idea championed by depth psychology contains a surplus of untapped theological potential. Depth psychology recognizes that whenever a myth develops in a culture addressing the question about the origin of the world, it is always “at the same time the question about the origin of man, the origin of consciousness and the ego; it is the fateful question ‘Where did I come from?’ that faces every human being as soon as he arrives upon the threshold of self-consciousness” (Neumann 1954, 7). My claim is that this single insight can have exceedingly positive implications for the development of a robust theological anthropology. Such a theological anthropology will be capable of interdisciplinary conversation, it will take the biblical narrative seriously, it will be mindful of core Christian theological commitments, but it will not be “more of the same” (Tracy 1987, 15). I will lay the groundwork for the development of this theological anthropology by reading Genesis 1–3 from the perspective of depth psychology, thus reading it as a story about the development of human consciousness. Instead of doing damage to the text’s historical and theological contexts, I will argue that such a reading enhances them.

My analysis of the text will initially focus on numerous manifestations of different archetypes in Genesis 1–3. The particular representations of these universal archetypes will then be placed against the backdrop of two theological concepts: exile and return. I will demonstrate that exile and return have particular and universal aspects in this text. The particular aspects are specifically related to Israel’s experience of exile in Babylon. The universal aspects are related to the emergence and development of differentiated ego-consciousness in humanity in general. The text is driven by both conscious and unconscious motives. One of my central arguments is that these are not mutually exclusive categories. Reading the narrative from the perspective of depth psychology allows us to appreciate the historical/theological context of Israel’s particular experience of exile and hope for return as well as the psychological context which is the universal human experience of being a differentiated center of ego-consciousness moving toward individuation—which Jung understood as a reintegration with the Self and thus with the Divine. I will tentatively conclude that not only will such a reading allow the particular aspects of exile and return to accentuate their universal aspects, and vice versa, but that such a reading of Genesis 1–3 strongly suggests that humanity’s exile from the garden was not the result of moral failure, but the necessary consequence of a differentiated ego-consciousness. The narrative attests to the fact that humanity’s universal alienation from God is the very thing that makes genuine relationship

with God possible. A robust, holistic theological anthropology ought to account for this.

FUNDAMENTALS OF DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY

To appreciate the gravity of Erich Neumann's claim that myths about the origin of the world are also myths about the origin of consciousness, we need to describe the fundamental presuppositions of depth psychology. Essentially, depth psychology holds that our general conscious experience comprises only a portion of the totality of our experience and identity. There is also an unconscious element to the human psyche. From a Jungian perspective, the unconscious is itself divided into two parts: personal and collective. The personal unconscious consists of things we might have forgotten or have repressed, but is, either way, uniquely shaped by our own individual experiences. The collective unconscious, on the other hand, is the deepest part of the human psyche, a common reservoir of potentiality shared by every human person, rooting and assimilating every experience of every member of the species. The collective unconscious is a "system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of preexistent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents" (Jung 1953–79, 9.i.90). Hence, we *are* more than we [consciously] know.

Even so, our conscious experience is not exhaustively scripted by the collective unconscious, inasmuch as the two constitute a dialectic: "It is quite clear that the unconscious only makes sense if we presuppose consciousness. As long as there is no consciousness, there is no meaning in the word unconscious, there is no such thing! So as soon as we begin to speak about the phenomenon of consciousness, we set forth, logically, the counteraspect, the unconscious" (von Franz 1995, 109). Neither precedes the other; they came into existence together and develop in tandem. The collective unconscious autonomously assimilates the conscious experiences of individuals, thus, it is to be understood as plastic and responsive—though it is not a thing, *per se*. We can think of the collective unconscious along the lines of natural selection: it is not a mystical, other worldly phenomenon, but something that happens naturally, from the inside; a feature of the human experience as we know it. According to Jung, "Whatever the unconscious may be, it is a natural phenomenon producing symbols that prove to be meaningful" (Jung 1964, 102).

Given the purely hypothetical nature of the collective unconscious in Jungian psychology, it is quite appropriate to raise questions about the scientific status of depth psychology's fundamental presupposition. To begin with, Jung insisted that notion of a collective unconscious was not

a particularly new idea: it can be understood as a new formulation of the archetypal “world-spirit” of the Stoics; it can also be seen as a development of the Gnostic “on-grown” soul (von Franz 1980, 78). As far as Jung was concerned, the primary purpose of the collective unconscious hypothesis *qua* hypothesis was to unite traditions of the idea as found in cultural history with “the empirical findings of contemporary natural science and through which the dualism of matter and mind/psyche may perhaps at the same time be overcome” (von Franz 1980, 77). In considering the collective unconscious as a scientific hypothesis, we must keep in mind that Jung never speculated about its contents for the simple reason that the contents belong to the province of experience alone. Nevertheless, Jung did demonstrate that the contents of the collective unconscious could be investigated empirically in the dreams of men and women, and even more importantly, through comparative mythology (von Franz 1980, 78).

Jung describes the totality of the individual, consisting of conscious and unconscious processes, in terms of the “Self” archetype. The “ego” is not to be confused with the “Self.” The ego is the subject of consciousness. It is as much a content of consciousness as a condition of it, but it is not the totality of the psyche—the totality is the Self. The evolution of individualized ego-consciousness “is as much a collective human phenomenon as a particular individual phenomenon” (Neumann 1954, xx). The ego is initially contained in and undifferentiated from the unconscious (Neumann 1954, 5). By eventually learning to represent the world symbolically, the ego becomes aware of itself and its position in the world (Neumann 1954, 367; cf. Deacon 1997, 23, 322, 436, 448–52). With the capacity to symbolically represent, the ego becomes a subject to itself in the same way the external world becomes a subject to the ego.

What all this means, is that collectively and individually, the threshold of ego self-consciousness “was a Rubicon that was crossed at a definite time and in a specific evolutionary context” (Deacon 1997, 23). Thus, from the perspective of biosemiotics and evolutionary biology, as a species, we were not always conscious as we are today; humans do not come equipped with an innate individualized consciousness at birth (Dennett 1991, 218). Consciousness develops over time (Cassirer 1955, 175). Consciousness has an origin (Jaynes 1976, 66). And yet, because the only reality humanity can speak about is the reality of which humanity is aware, “It is therefore understandable that stories which are supposed to describe the origin of the real world are completely intertwined and mixed up with factors which we would rather call stories of the preconscious processes about the origin of human consciousness” (von Franz 1995, 11).

As early humans became aware that they were aware, they began to ask questions; questions familiar to us all. Their questions were similar to ours in the sense that all of humanity’s deepest questions originate in the same collective unconscious. Yet, their questions about the origin of the

world are categorically different from ours. In no way were early humans interested in abstract philosophical speculation in a modern sense. It cannot be overstated that the symbols comprising their origin myths are not the product of philosophical speculation (Neumann, 1954, 104). Something much more profound is at work when the collective unconscious erupts into the conscious world through origin stories: "The symbolic story of the beginning, which speaks to us from the mythology of all ages, is the attempt made by man's childlike, prescientific consciousness to master problems and enigmas which are mostly beyond the grasp of even our developed modern consciousness" (Neumann 1954, 7). As Jung and Neumann argue, because the human psyche is the source of all cultural and religious phenomena, "It is sometimes revealed very clearly that [origin myths] present unconscious and preconscious processes which describe not the origin of our cosmos, but the origin of man's conscious awareness of the world" (von Franz 1995, 5).

Much more could be said about the relationship between evolution, symbolic representation, and the development of human consciousness, but for this essay it must be sufficient simply to acknowledge that the fundamental convictions of depth psychology are clearly congruent with what contemporary science is saying about the origins of human consciousness.

DEPTH PSYCHOLOGY AND MYTHOLOGICAL THINKING

The concept of "myth" does not carry negative connotations in depth psychology as it does in some theological systems. As far as depth psychology is concerned, myths are not fairy tales. Myths are not the result of premodern naiveté or an unsophisticated primitive worldview. Neumann argues that there is in fact genius in mythological thinking: "Mankind is not infantile and is not to be fobbed off with wishful thinking. Despite all the idiosyncrasies of human nature, a purely illusory sort of thinking, even in the case of primitive man, stands in flagrant contrast to his genius for adaptation and his sense of reality, to which we owe all the elementary inventions that make civilization possible" (Neumann 1954, 208). Myths are imaginative and symbolic eruptions of humanity's collective unconscious into the conscious realm—not the result of primitive philosophical speculation. Myths are true in the psychological sense (Hanna 1967, 45). Myths can thus be understood as "the imaginative literary form which connects the depth of human individual consciousness to something beyond it and greater, whether the future, the nation, or God" (Drury 1977, 65). And in the characteristically insightful words of Rollo May, "There is surely no conflict between science rightly defined and myth also rightly understood" (May 1991, 25).

THE FUNCTION OF JUNGIAN ARCHETYPES

Myths consist of primordial symbols known as archetypes, and their function and effect “is not to inform the mind but to awaken consciousness” (Rollins 2007, 100). An archetype is a pattern of experience, rooted in humanity’s collective unconscious, devoid of specific content until the experience of an individual fills it out (Jung 1953–79, 7.219; Kille 1995, 40). These patterns of experience are rooted in the unconscious collective mind of humanity, revealed to the conscious individual mind symbolically in mythological thinking. On an individual level, the unconscious reveals these primordial images to the conscious mind in the form of dreams, fantasies, and so on. But on a collective level, these primordial images are manifest in rituals and mythological types (Neumann 1954, xv).

Jung was convinced that the concept of an archetype was often misunderstood. The archetype, as a general pattern of human experience, is not to be confused with the way it is represented in particular images or ideas mediated to us by the unconscious: “They are very varied structures which all point back to one essentially ‘irrepresentable’ basic form” (Jung 1953–79, 8.417). The representation of an archetype can vary a great deal in detail without losing its basic pattern (Jung 1964, 67).

For the archetype to have life and be a dynamic force it must be charged with emotion (Jung 1964, 96). The failure to recognize the unique, real-life experiences and situations that give shape to the basic pattern of an archetype will lead to an analysis that will inevitably “end with nothing more than a jumble of mythological concepts, which can be strung together to show that everything means anything—or nothing at all” (Jung 1964, 96). Because the real-life experiences of a community and of an individual are situated at unique points in space and time, it is impossible to give an arbitrary or universal interpretation of any archetype (Jung 1964, 96).

Archetypes cannot be perceived directly. An archetype is always incarnated in particularity. Even though the archetype is a “psychic organ” present in all of us, “Not for a moment dare we succumb to the illusion that an archetype can be finally explained and disposed of. Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language” (Jung 1953–79, 9.i.271). This will be important to keep in mind when we examine the ways in which archetypes manifest in Genesis 1–3. Identifying the way a myth manifests a particular archetype does not destroy the ways in which the redactors consciously shaped the narrative for their unique purposes.

Insofar as the archetype is the source of mythological thinking, and the unconscious is the source of the archetype, religious myths about the origin of the world can be understood as projections from the collective unconscious in a way that the conscious mind can experience and assimilate them (Jung 1953–79, 7.219). Archetypes are the translators of the hidden world

within every human, and of the collective unconscious in which every human participates. The archetypal psyche spontaneously produces symbols. Symbols cannot be manufactured—only discovered: “The archetypal psyche is constantly creating a steady stream of living symbolic imagery . . . Symbols seep into the ego, causing it to identify with them and act them out unconsciously; or they spill out into the external environment via projection, causing the individual to become fascinated and involved with external objects and activities” (Edinger 1972, 110). The symbol conveys living, subjective meaning, even though it points to something essentially unknown, to a mystery. The epistemological implications of this can be seen by returning once again to the core conviction of Polanyi’s postcritical philosophy: we *know* more than we can tell. Depth psychology affirms that we *are* more than we consciously know. Therefore, we *know* more than we consciously know, and we *are* more than we can ever tell. The eruption of archetypal primordial symbols from the unconscious into the conscious through mythological thinking is a testimony to the depth and incompleteness of the human psyche as well as the complexity of the human experience.

TOWARD A PSYCHO-THEOLOGICAL HERMENEUTIC

The first step in the construction of a theological anthropology capable of integrating the above insights of depth psychology is the development of a psycho-theological hermeneutic. Wayne Rollins, a proponent of such an interdisciplinary hermeneutic, identifies numerous contributions that depth psychology can make to a holistic, theological reading of the biblical text (Rollins 1995, 10). I will discuss just a few here.

Depth psychology challenges us to recognize that numerous factors shape the biblical text: “Jung challenges the Biblical scholar to recognize that the text is to be perceived not only as part of an historical, literary, social, and linguistic process, but also, and perhaps above all, as part of a psychic process in which unconscious as well as conscious factors are at work, not only in the Biblical author and his community, but in the psyche of the Biblical interpreter and his community as well” (Rollins 1987, 115). Meaning making is a holistic process involving the unconscious and conscious dimensions of human experience. Depth psychology allows us to begin to appreciate the role of the unconscious in the hermeneutic event.

Jung also challenged biblical scholars to recognize that meaning exceeds language and that scriptural language is neither univocal nor unambiguous. If the biblical text is truly imbued with a surplus of meaning, then Jung’s challenge is legitimate. Creating space for the polyvalence of the biblical text to blossom will allow us to see the ways in which the authors have consciously appropriated material with unconscious origins for specific theological purposes.²

A psycho-theological hermeneutic challenges us to recognize the plurality of effects a text can have on the reader as well. By engaging the “active imagination” we can interact with a text in a way that evokes truth and meaning latent in our unconscious; the text can move us even if we do not know how or why. Such a hermeneutic recognizes that the purely literal approaches of fundamentalists and enlightened rationalists alike are inadequate to appreciate the text’s surplus of meaning and to allow its transformative potential to come to life. Such a hermeneutic “promises to put existential meat on the theological bones of Biblical religious language, rescuing it from being mere technical indicators of antique religious experience, to become symbols of profound psycho-spiritual reality available to humankind everywhere” (Rollins 1987, 123). A psycho-theological hermeneutic will allow us to more fully appreciate the masterful ways the redactors crafted the narrative to make specific theological claims while highlighting the depth of the human experience.

THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF GENESIS 1–3

From the perspective of depth psychology, Genesis 1–3 is clearly an origin myth, the archetypes contained in the myth being rooted in humanity’s collective unconscious. At the same, while the archetypes present in Genesis 1–3 can be read symbolically from the perspective of depth psychology, we must realize that the text is not “pure myth.” We must recognize that the story was intentionally included in the greater Genesis narrative by a redactor (or redactors). Even though the roots of the symbols forming the creation story in Genesis originate in humanity’s collective unconscious, its conscious incorporation into the larger narrative demands we see it as a more than just a myth about the origin of the world. This origin story also serves important theological purposes that cannot be understood solely as a product of the collective unconscious.

Nevertheless, because depth psychology holds that a myth is fundamentally the product of the unconscious mind, “its full meaning goes beyond the present state of awareness not only of those who read the myth but of those who tell the myth” (Sanford 2007, 160–61). The redactors were doing something more than they could know or tell in organizing the narrative into its final form. Thus, it seems plausible that the traditions woven together in Genesis 1–3 can have their origin in humanity’s collective unconscious even while the final version of the story we read has a distinct Israelite flavor and is the final product of countless revisions and conglomerations of originally disparate traditions. The theological agenda, historical context, and literary virtuosity that shaped the final narrative do not eradicate the unconscious origin or the mythological elements from the text. Far from destroying the unconscious influences of the tradition

behind the text, the crafting of the narrative into its final form has beautifully preserved them.

ANALYSIS OF JUNGIAN ARCHETYPES IN GENESIS 1–3

Many of the archetypes we would expect to find in an origin myth are present in this text. The basic archetypal patterns can be identified despite the reworking of the material by redactors to serve specific theological purposes. The linguistic and literary symbolism of Genesis 1–3 “invites the reader to perceive something else or something more than what is literally expressed” (Stordalen 2000, 76). Analyzing these symbols as Jungian archetypes is one way to appreciate the “something more” of this text.

Creation of Light. The opening verses of Genesis 1 tell us that, “At the beginning of God’s creating of the heavens and the earth, when the earth was wild and waste, darkness over the face of Ocean, rushing-spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters—God said: Let there be light” (Genesis 1:1–3).³ In all peoples, cultures, and religions, creation first appears as the creation of *light* (Neumann 1954, 6; 104; Cassirer 1955, 94). The creation of light is the archetype of “consciousness raising itself from the dark oblivion of unconsciousness” (Neumann 1954, 6). The body of the universe and the consciousness archetype are one and the same: “If light is awareness, the creation stories, beginning with light, are man telling about himself” (Kushner [1977] 2000, 115). Jewish mysticism recognizes that “light is more than just some opposite-of-darkness in which our eyes can see. Light is the medium of consciousness” (Kushner [1977] 2000, 115).

In the evolution of individualized ego-consciousness, the origin of consciousness projects itself in cosmic form, as the beginning of the world, the mythology of creation. Before the ego is fully differentiated from the unconscious, the world and psyche are united. The psyche knows itself as the world and in the world experiences its own beginning as a becoming-world. This beginning can be understood collectively and individually, as the dawning of humanity’s consciousness in history and as the emergence of differentiated ego-consciousness during childhood, respectively. The creation of light is the dawn of consciousness.

The Separation of the World Parents. One of the most fundamental archetypes is the notion of opposites. In the context of the conscious mind beginning to differentiate itself from the unconscious mind, Neumann refers to this archetype as the separation of the World Parents (Neumann 1954, 102). A central feature of the creation narrative in Genesis 1 is undeniably the separation of opposites into corresponding pairs. Light is called forth from darkness and day is separated from night (Genesis 1:5). The earth is differentiated from the heavens as the waters that were “below

the dome” are separated from the waters that were “above the dome” (Genesis 1:6–8). The waters on the earth are given further boundaries so that dry land can be separated from the waters under the heavens (Genesis 1:9–10). God calls forth from the earth “plants that seed forth seeds, fruit trees that yield fruit” as life on earth begins to differentiate at the behest of the divine word (Genesis 1:11–13). It is not until the fourth day that the “lights in the dome of the heavens” are spoken into being so that day can be separated from light and so that they can serve as signs for days and years (Genesis 1:14–19). The two great lights created on the fourth day are the moon for ruling the night and the sun for ruling the day. Life on earth becomes further differentiated still when God calls forth to the waters to “swarm with a swarm of living beings” and “fowl [to] fly above the earth, across the dome of the heavens” (Genesis 1:20–23). God created these creatures, saw that what was created was good, and blessed them, telling them to bear fruit and multiply. On the sixth day, God brings forth living beings on the dry land, “herd-animals, crawling things, and the wildlife of the earth after their kind” (Genesis 1:24). The life occupying the dry land is differentiated further still when God creates a life form to have dominion over all the other creatures. Humanity is created in the image of God, in the image of God humanity is created, male and female, a further separation of the world into opposites (Genesis 1:25–27).

Following each act of differentiation during the first six days, we hear the poetic refrain, “there was setting, there was dawning” (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). It is telling that darkness precedes the dawn in each account. Each day begins in darkness, and ends in the dawning of a new facet of creation. This fits with the pattern of ego-consciousness gradually differentiating from the unconscious. The mythological stages in the evolution of consciousness “begin with the stages when the ego is contained in the unconscious, and lead up to a situation in which the ego not only becomes aware of its own position and defends it heroically, but also becomes capable of broadening and relativizing its experiences through the changes effected by its own activity” (Neumann 1954, 5). Each day in the creation cycle is a fractal of humanity’s ever expanding experience of consciousness out of the unconscious toward the goal of an encounter with the Self—with the Divine.

Adam Kadmon, Original Man, Atman. Another prominent archetype we discover in Genesis 1 is the archetype of the great hermaphrodite; what the Hindus call Atman, what Plato called the Original Man, and what Jewish mysticism calls Adam Kadmon (Neumann 1954, 9; Kushner [1977] 2000, 105–09). When God creates humanity in the divine image in Genesis 1:26 the Hebrew word is simply ‘*adam*. A word that simply means “humankind.” In the Priestly narrative, it is not until the following verse (Genesis 1:27) that ‘*adam* is said to be *zakar* and *nēqebah*, “male” and

“female.” In the J narrative, this becomes even clearer when we notice a clever play on words in the Hebrew. In Genesis 2:5 the narrator again uses the word ‘*adamah*’ which we first saw in 1:25 as the earth/soil upon which all other life crawls. Humanity is thus the ‘*adam*’ taken from the ‘*adamah*’—an earth creature taken from the earth. As God breathes the breath of life into the nostrils of the ‘*adam*’, ‘*adam*’ becomes a *nephesh*, a “living being.” The point is that ‘*adam*’ first appears as an androgynous earth creature undifferentiated in gender, and this is a common archetype in ancient creation myths. This archetype attests to the fact that ego-consciousness begins undifferentiated in the unconscious collective.

Paradise. The paradise archetype is another prominent symbol in origin myths. The word paradise, as such, does not show up in Genesis 2–3. But the similarities between paradise and Eden are readily apparent. The Hebrew word ‘*eden*’ simply means “delight” or “pleasure” (Fretheim 1969, 71; Boss 1993, 52; Kushner [1977] 2000, 19). The paradise archetype serves a number of symbolic roles in the Genesis narrative. It can be an archetype that symbolizes the time when the psyche existed only as an embryonic and undeveloped germ of ego-consciousness in the collective unconscious. Paradise can also be a symbol that represents “the time before the birth of the ego, the time of unconscious envelopment, of swimming in the ocean of the unborn” (Neumann 1954, 12).

However, given the thorough separation of the World Parents in Genesis 1, it seems to me that the paradise metaphor, as an archetype, is symbolic of the naive ego-consciousness that exists in the liminal space between being completely undifferentiated from the collective unconscious on the one hand, and a fully mature, individuated ego-consciousness on the other. One reason for this is that biblical literature features a type of symbolism quite foreign to Western literature: “Proper names regularly express a semantic content” (Stordalen 2000, 55). Moreover, this semantic content was fully present to the original audience. Inasmuch as “names with semantic sense have a symbolic potential akin to metaphors or metonymies,” the original audience would almost certainly have understood the paradise symbol, Eden, as a time of blissful ignorance and adolescent naiveté—an idealized reflection on the type of existence Israel enjoyed prior to the exile.

There is another important facet of the paradise archetype here. In a sort of off-hand fashion, the narrator tells us that, “YHWH, God, planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the human whom he had formed” (Genesis 2:8). Notice that Eden is not the same as the garden, but rather the garden is in Eden. What is important here is that the garden is said to be in the *qedem*, in the “east.” In the Hebrew language, the cardinal directions are idiomatic of a particular concept and embody semantic content much like proper names. “East” is indicative of “beginnings.” Not only is the garden planted in the East, but after eating the fruit of the

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the humans will be “caused to dwell eastward of the garden of Eden” (Genesis 3:24). The bookending of the garden narrative with a metaphor for “beginnings” supports the theory that this origin story is also a story about the origins and development of human consciousness. The emergence of consciousness is nothing else if not a new beginning for humanity.

Four Rivers as Uroboros/Circular Mandala. Many biblical commentators do not know what to do with the five verses dedicated to the four rivers in Genesis 2:10–14. Von Rad declares that the passage concerning the rivers “has no significance for the unfolding action” (von Rad 1972, 79). He concludes that the story about the rivers “must therefore be considered an originally independent element which was attracted to the story of Paradise but without being able to undergo complete inner assimilation” (von Rad 1972, 79). If anything, von Rad thinks the inclusion of the rivers in the narrative was for the purpose of indicating Eden’s physical location. Similarly, Brueggemann sees Genesis 2:10–14 as the intrusion of a disparate tradition into the text, and although he notices that the text has a parallel in Ezekiel 47:1–12, he concludes that, “The rivers play no part in the Genesis narrative” (Brueggemann 1982, 45–46).

We can, however, see the four rivers as the expression of two different archetypes and thus appreciate the part they play in the narrative from a psychological perspective. First, they are a symbol of water that has been brought under control from a previous state of chaos, subsequently ordered in such a way by God that will nurture growth and fertility (Bechtel 1993, 95). The extremely symmetrical and orderly description of the four rivers runs directly counter to the waters/deep in Genesis 1:2 that are symbolic of death and chaos. On this level, the four rivers symbolize God’s ability to create a place of delight for humanity out of the primordial chaotic deep. Whereas disordered waters are chaos/death archetypes, ordered waters are life/growth archetypes. The four rivers can be understood as symbols of order, maturity, and completeness.

The four rivers are also a development of the *uroboros* archetype in the sense that they represent the circular mandala, a symbol of fully differentiated consciousness. While the *uroboros* is a prominent symbol in origin myths, represented by a circle, a sphere, a circular snake, or a primal dragon swallowing its own tail (Neumann 1954, 9–10), it is the symbol of the circular mandala that stands at the beginning and end of the development of self-consciousness: “In the beginning it takes the mythological form of paradise; in the end, of the Heavenly Jerusalem. The perfect figure of the circle from whose center radiate the four arms of a cross, in which the opposites are at rest, is a very early and very late symbol historically” (Neumann 1954, 37). The circular mandala with its four arms, a manifestation of the *uroboros* archetype in mature form, is symbolic of “the roundness

of the psyche, life's wholeness, and perfection regained. It is the place of transfiguration and illumination, of finality, as well as the place of mythological origination" (Neumann 1954, 37). This is the ego-consciousness reintegrating with the Self via individuation.

Another striking feature about the rivers is that there are exactly four of them, just like the arms on the mandala. This indicates that Eden is a place of transformation and illumination for humanity, as well as a promise of future completeness and wholeness. Eden is the place where human consciousness is born in the presence of God. Eden is the place where consciousness experiences consummation. But the consummation of consciousness is never merely a return to the garden in the same way that a return from exile is never merely reclamation of lost land. Because the garden is supra-geographical (i.e., in/out of Eden), the process of individuation, where the ego reintegrates with the Self and experiences the Divine, is a genuine possibility even after the original naïveté of Eden is lost. Eden is the place where ego-consciousness returns after exile to encounter the true Self, to encounter the Divine. Eden is not a return to naïveté—it is redemption, reconciliation, and return from exile. All of this is symbolized by the four rivers archetype.

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is a manifestation of a combination of archetypes as well. The Tree plays a distinctive role in Genesis compared to other origin myths. On the surface, the Tree is a further development of the separation of the World Parents archetype seen in Genesis 1. Good and evil are identified separately in the Tree's name, but they are contained together as one in the Tree's fruit.

The prohibition not to eat from the fruit of the Tree is one of the turning points in the narrative (Genesis 2:17). Mircea Eliade points out that the prohibition *not* to eat from the Tree is a unique idea on the ancient Near East landscape (Eliade 1978, 166). The prohibition creates the possibility for future differentiation by creating a threshold to be transgressed. This is typical of what we expect from the World Parent archetype. Humanity enjoys one state of existence prior to eating the fruit and will experience a new form of existence subsequent to eating: "Eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolizes the birth of consciousness with the dawning awareness of the opposites" (Edinger 1986, 20). The Tree symbolizes the future for potential maturation and it is God's very prohibition to not eat the fruit that incites humanity's desire for it (Lacan 1977, 275). The desire created by the prohibition not to eat the fruit of the Tree turns out to be the catalyst that prompts humanity to move from a nascent ego-consciousness toward a fully differentiated ego-consciousness. There is no going back once this threshold is crossed. The crossing is painful and complicated, although it is precisely the crossing of this threshold that

opens up the possibility of the realization of the most foundational human experiences—relationship with the Divine.

Serpent. The third chapter of Genesis introduces a new, complex character into the narrative: the serpent. Among other things, the serpent is a manifestation of the Great Mother archetype. As the ego-consciousness begins to emerge from the primordial *uroboros* and its connection with the safety of the womb (i.e., the unconscious) is severed, the ego begins to experience the world in a new way. The nascent ego becomes aware of pleasure and pain and discovers the ambivalence of the world with respect to its existence and flourishing. The Great Mother can be understood as the symbol for the simultaneous experience of nature as wicked and destructive, as well as affectionate and nurturing (Neumann 1954, 39).

When the Great Mother takes physical form, it is usually in the form of a phallus, a symbol of fertility (Neumann 1954, 48–49). Because the serpent is also symbol of the “fertilizing phallus,” the Great Mother is often connected to snakes inasmuch as the serpent embodies both fertility and hostility: “The robotic form of the oldest Mother Goddess is the snake, mistress of the earth, of the depths and the underworld, which is why the child who is still attached to her is a snake like herself” (Neumann 1954, 49). This is one reason why the serpent is introduced as the woman’s companion and not the man’s. This connection is both strengthened and complicated upon learning the woman’s name in Genesis 3:20: *hawwâ*. Her name means “mother of all living” and is closely related to the word for snake: *hiwyâ*.

Furthermore, insofar as the closed circle of the *uroboros* archetype is representative of nascent ego-consciousness, the serpent, an unraveled, uncoiled circle, can be understood as a symbol of a more mature, highly developed ego-consciousness. This dovetails with the narrative’s description of the serpent as “more shrewd than all the living-things of the field that YHWH, God, had made” (Genesis 3:1).

Original Guilt. The nascent ego-consciousness breaks free of the collective unconscious in the same way a human baby enters the world from its mother’s womb—in a labor process that is painful, difficult, and messy. As the nascent ego separates the World Parents into opposites, the ego experiences this process as a type of violence/aggression against the very world that both nurtures and threatens it: “The ego is bound to experience its aggression as guilt, because killing, dismemberment, castration, and sacrifice remain guilt even though they serve the necessary purpose of vanquishing such an enemy as the *uroboros* dragon” (Neumann 1954, 123–24). The guilt and anxiety that accompany the maturation of the ego-consciousness as it separates the World Parents is a fundamental feature of a fully differentiated ego-consciousness.

The archetype associated with the experience of guilt or anxiety as the nascent ego crosses the threshold into a fully developed conscious experience manifests as the human and his wife eat the fruit of the Tree and hide from the sound of God's voice upon having realized they are naked (Genesis 3:9–10). For the purpose of recognizing the archetype at play here, we can simply point out that whereas the human and his wife are naked and unashamed in Genesis 2:25, they experience their nakedness very differently upon having eating the fruit of the Tree in Genesis 3:6. From the perspective of depth psychology, this is evidence that a threshold has been crossed and the nascent ego-consciousness has finally begun to differentiate itself once and for all from the safety and naiveté of the collective unconscious.

EXILE AND RETURN

Regardless of how we understand the garden narrative, theologically or psychologically, the historical context of the text is almost certainly Israel's Babylonian Exile (Enns 2012, 5). Biblical scholars are fairly confident that the Pentateuch was not completed until the postexilic period of Israel's history, circa 539 BCE. This means that if the final forms of the narrative reflect the concerns of the community that produced it we can say with confidence that, although the narratives are rooted in much older material, the creation narratives were shaped as a theological response to Israel's experience of exile in Babylon. Placing Genesis in its ancient Near Eastern context allows us to see it as a sort of declaration-of-religious-independence that allows a community recovering from the trauma of exile to begin to rediscover a sense of identity.

But as I have argued, exile is both a particular and a universal experience. Israel's exile in Babylon was the experience of a particular people at a particular time in history. Yet, all of us must leave the garden of pre-ego-conscious innocence in the same way Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden in Genesis 3:24.

Consider that the woman and her husband eat the fruit of the Tree in Genesis 3 after having seen that it was good for eating, that "it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was desirable to contemplate" (Genesis 3:6). They see the fruit of the Tree is *tov*, "good," in the same way that God saw the creation was "good" after each day (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). God's seeing is an affirmation of the goodness of creation. We can understand the woman's seeing of the fruit in the same manner. Make no mistake, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was placed in the garden by YHWH and is a "good" aspect of creation—even if eating its fruit brings with it a loss of innocence and a new knowledge of life's complexity and ambiguity. Jacques Lacan would say that prohibition creates desire in the first place (Lacan 1992, 83–84). If we are to understand the

Tree as part of YHWH God's good creation, then the desire to transgress the prohibition—even with its ambiguous consequences—was also part of the good creation. The desire to transgress the prohibition was made possible by YHWH, incited by the serpent, and actualized by the humans. Unless the redactors of Genesis are insinuating that their God is some sort of cosmic trickster, the placing of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the garden should be understood as a catalyst for humanity's development—not a test of their obedience or faithfulness.

Eating the fruit of the Tree leads the human and the woman to realize they are naked. Something all children eventually realize. Upon eating, they hide from the sound of YHWH God during the breezy time of the day (Genesis 3:8). Something has changed. They experience themselves differently upon eating. If it is the eating of the fruit of the Tree that allows the human and the woman to enter into a new stage in the development of ego-consciousness, then it is also the eating of the Tree—the very experience of differentiated ego-consciousness—that opens the door for the possibility of estrangement from God, neighbor, self, and indeed from creation itself.

The human and his wife are not exiled from the garden because of moral failure. Eating the fruit enabled them to cross a threshold from childlike innocence into fully differentiated ego-consciousness. Granted, this new experience of ego-consciousness—becoming like God (in a certain sense) by becoming acquainted with good and evil—is precisely what makes it possible for sin to eventually enter into the human world.

Keep in mind that the human and his wife are exiled “eastward of the garden of Eden” (Genesis 3.24). “Eastward,” once again, is a metaphor for a new beginning. Too often the “winged sphinxes” and the “flashing, ever-turning sword” watching over the way to the Tree of Life are understood as sentinels that prevent the return of the human and his wife to the garden; the equivalent of a divine “keep out” sign. But this hardly does justice to the character of YHWH revealed throughout the Old Testament and the literary context of Genesis 1–3 in particular. It is true that the winged creature and the flashing sword are set to “watch” over the way to the Tree of Life—but it is also true that the human was placed in the garden of Eden to work it and to “watch” it (Genesis 2:15). In both instances, the root word is *shamar*, (related to *shalom*) and it means to “keep,” “guard,” “watch,” or “preserve.” The winged creature and the flashing sword of Genesis 3:24 can just as easily be understood as guarding and preserving the way *back* to the garden rather than preventing a return. Interpreting Genesis 3:24 requires a decision similar to reading the following: “GODISNOWHERE.” This can be read either as “God is nowhere” or “God is now here.” Both readings are equally valid—yet ultimately convey very different ideas. This anticipated return to the garden in the future can be understood as the final stage of the individuation process (subsequent to wrestling with the shadow

archetype—which shows up in the Genesis 32 narrative)—the encounter with the Self and the Divine.

Theologically, the narrative supports the notion of exile and return on universal and particular levels. The exile of the human and his wife from the garden in Eden is the universal experience of humanity's development of consciousness in relationship to YHWH God. It is the universal experience of exile from the garden that sets the stage for Israel's particular experience of Babylonian exile—the theological engine driving the text. Exile is not the end of the story, however. As the human and his wife are exiled from the garden the way back is guarded and preserved for them when they are ready and able to return. If there ever was a community in need of the hope of a new beginning, of a return, it is a community recovering from the trauma of exile.

CONCLUSION

This essay has essentially been an attempt to outline the features of a theological anthropology capable of participating in genuine interdisciplinary dialogue. I have attempted to show how depth psychology can be a valuable conversation partner for theology by reading Genesis 1–3 against the backdrop of the exile/return motif in light of what I referred to as a psycho-theological hermeneutic. It has been my contention that the fundamental insights of depth psychology are not only extremely congruent with what contemporary science has to say about the origins and development of human consciousness, but that the mythological, theological, psychological, and scientific elements of a robust theological anthropology do not stand in tension with one another, rather, they complement each other. Of course, much more needs to be said about how the fundamental presuppositions of depth psychology dovetail with the specific findings of evolutionary biology and neuroscience in particular, however, space constraints limit me here to simply acknowledge that these are in fact significant issues that will require further exploration and analysis—that is, if my argument is to carry any weight in scientific communities. That being said, at least from a theological perspective, this essay can be seen as a small step toward a genuine interdisciplinary dialogue that refuses to be paralyzed by perpetual discussions of scope and methodology by taking the risk of crossing disciplinary boundaries and attempting to deal with specific issues in a bold, constructive fashion.

Where has this exercise led us? It must be acknowledged that reading the text in this manner is not without precedent: a few of the most significant conclusions reached were (partially) anticipated by Hegel, for whom the original state of humanity was not one of pure innocence, innate wisdom, or even immortality, but rather one of barbarism and savagery. For Hegel this text is not a myth about the origins of sin. Instead, the garden narrative

attests to the fact that this “cleavage” or “rupture” we call “consciousness” occurred at the very beginning of human history, and that it is precisely this cleavage/rupture which allows for the knowledge of good and evil—a cleavage which ultimately creates the condition of possibility for human freedom and maturation (Hegel 1988, 210–17; 442–43).

Given the similarities between our two readings, we must also admit Hegel did not arrive at his conclusions with the aid of depth psychology. Indeed, others have reached similar exegetical conclusions without ever specifically appealing to depth psychology (e.g., Paul Tillich, Stanley Grenz, and so on) And so, we must ask: what then is the actual of value of depth psychology as part of a theological-hermeneutical tool if we can arrive at similar conclusions without it? While this is a fair question without a straightforward answer, we must admit it would be more worrisome if our psycho-theological hermeneutic led us to read the text in a way that was completely disconnected from any tradition—whether orthodox or heterodox.

Thus, the true value of depth psychology in this context is not that it allows for a completely novel reading of the text or necessarily demands a corresponding revolutionary anthropology. Its value as a theological/hermeneutical resource lies in the recognition that mythological thinking is not the product of intentional philosophical speculation—that mythological thinking and ritual are the symbolic eruption of humanity’s collective unconscious into the conscious world. Consequently, it is neither trivial nor reductive to claim that origin stories tell us something significant about ourselves as a species. This allows us to further appreciate—regardless of confession or creed—that in crafting a theological response to Israel’s experience of exile in Babylon, the redactors of Genesis tapped into the universal experience of becoming a fully differentiated, conscious human being and crafted a multilayered narrative overflowing with the ambiguity, the beauty, and the complexity of the human experience. Israel’s experience of exile in Babylon is like the experience of our ego-consciousness as it emerges and differentiates from the unconscious. Israel’s hope for life after the exile is also our hope for a return to the garden and an encounter with our true Self, the Divine. The untapped theological potential of depth psychology is precisely in that it locates the theological moment in context of the broader human experience, further preparing the way for interdisciplinary and interreligious dialogue.

NOTES

1. Theologians have traditionally had a deep reservoir of antipathy for psychological approaches in exegesis. Early in the twentieth century, Albert Schweitzer denounced psychological reconstructions of biblical narratives and characters as the product of “mediocre minds which are a patchwork of opinions and apprehend and observe themselves only in a constant state of development” (Rollins 1995, 10). Schweitzer’s scathing critique is not without merit. Psychology

has often been used to diminish the theological and religious elements of a biblical text by reducing characters to archetypes and by reducing the narrative to a psychoanalytic case study. In response, theologians have pejoratively labeled such attempts as that of “psychologizing.” However, to bring theology into conversation with psychology is not equivalent to reducing theology to psychology: “A properly chastened use of psychological insights can serve to illuminate both the dynamics within the text and the dynamics of our own relation to it. Such a use of psychology need not be reductive or totalitarian, and, if kept in genuine interaction with theology and exegesis, can aid in accomplishing the purpose of our engagement with the text: its understanding, our transformation” (Wink 1978, 145). Psychology is one tool among many that can help to provide insight into otherwise marginalized or overlooked elements of a text, and like any tool, it can be used both properly and improperly.

2. The pervasive presence of these symbols in Genesis 1–3 “is evidence we are dealing with something fundamental to the spiritual journey itself, and not merely with etiological legends invented to ‘explain the origin of things’” (Wink 1978, 142).

3. All direct quotations of scripture, unless otherwise noted, are from Everett Fox’s translation of the Pentateuch, *The Five Books of Moses* (Fox [1983] 1995).

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