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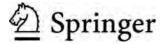# Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion

Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion

David A. Leeming, Kathryn Madden, Stanton Marlan (Eds.)

Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion

With 15 Figures and 2 Tables

Springer

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Preface

Mr. Kenneth Giniger some time ago suggested to Dr. Holly Johnson, then President of Blanton Peale Institute, New York, NY, that Blanton Peale compile an encyclopedia of psychology and religion, a comprehensive reference work consisting of articles contributed by scholars of importance in the fields of religion, psychology, psychology and religion, and psychology of religion. Dr. Johnson also saw the need for such an information source and began planning work on the project with the assistance of Blanton Peale colleagues, Dr. Walter Odajnyk and Dr. David A. Leeming. Long working together with Blanton Peale on behalf of *Journal of Religion and Health*, Springer Science+Business Media became publisher, with Dr. Leeming, Dr. Kathryn Madden, and Dr. Stanton Marlan named as Editors in Chief. Dr. Leeming became Managing Editor of the project. He has taught courses in myth, religion, and literature for many years and has published several books on these subjects, including the *Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, and until recently was Editor in Chief of the award winning *Journal of Religion and Health* and Dean of Blanton Peale's Graduate Institute. He is currently President of Blanton Peale Institute. Dr. Madden served as Dean and later President of Blanton Peale, was Associate Editor and later Executive Editor of the *Journal of Religion and Health*, and has recently published *Dark Light of the Soul* (Lindisfarne Books). She teaches and lectures regularly and is in private practice. She received her M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees in Psychology and Religion from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. She has published many articles in her field and is Editor of *Quadrant*. Dr. Marlan is a clinical psychologist in private practice. He is a training and supervising analyst for the Inter Regional Society of Jungian Analysts and is President of the Pittsburgh Society of Jungian Analysts. He is also Adjunct Clinical Professor of Psychology at Duquesne University and holds diplomates in both Clinical Psychology and Psychoanalysis from the American Board of Professional Psychology. He has been Editor of the *Journal of Jungian Theory and Practice* and is the author of numerous articles and books in the field of Jungian psychology. Parentage of the *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* comes naturally to the Blanton Peale Institute. Founded in 1937 by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and psychologist Smiley Blanton, the Institute is a mental health clinic and psychological training institute dedicated to the constructive integration of religion and psychology. The *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* provides a crucial new resource for the collaboration and mutual illumination of these two fields.

Entries are drawn from a wide variety of religious traditions, not only modern world religions, such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, but also, for example, African Animism, pre Christian Celtic and Germanic traditions, Egyptian, Greek, Gnostic, and Native North American and Mesoamerican religious movements. Approaches to the subjects demonstrate a broad range of methodologies. Each entry is intended to create a tension of meaning between traditional religious terms and psychological interpretations. The goal is not to impose *the* correct or definitive meaning, but to explore new and latent deposits of meaning that bear implications for human self understanding, cross cultural interpretation, and therapeutic possibilities.

Occasionally, more than one article on a given subject is included to present different points of view. Extensive cross referencing allows the reader to enhance understanding of particular subjects through direct access to related topics. The *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* will serve as a valuable and accessible reference work in both electronic and print versions for academic libraries and their patrons and will be of particular use to the growing community of researchers, academics, teachers, clergy, therapists, counselors, and other professionals who are involved in the developing reintegration of the fields of religion and psychology.

Acknowledgment

Introduction

The world's great religions have always served as the repository of the psychological truths and values of mankind. Religions address the fundamental questions of human existence: the purpose and meaning of life; our relationship with God; the nature of the soul; the existence of evil, suffering, and death; ethical behavior and conscience; our search for happiness, redemption, and salvation. In previous centuries theologians and religious philosophers were not inclined to differentiate between matters of "soul" or "psyche." Figures such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, Martin Luther, Pascal, and Kierkegaard were people of faith who also grappled with the mysteries of human interiority, will, and motivation.

In the course of addressing these issues, every religion has developed a definition of human nature and examined our fundamental motivations, drives, and desires. Religions have been crucibles for the time tested psychological principles that assure a sense of identity, community, and meaningful life. All religions, for example, have discovered that negative psychological states, such as pride, anger, hatred, lust, envy, ignorance, selfishness, and egotism, lead to personal and social conflict, injustice, and pain. On the other hand, positive mental and emotional attitudes, such as love, altruism, forgiveness, compassion, generosity, humility, equanimity, and wisdom, lead to a sense of personal well being and social harmony. From a psychological perspective, religions are all encompassing therapeutic systems that deal with major life events, transitions, and crises and respond in a healing, often life saving way to the travails of the suffering soul and the impoverished spirit.

With the emergence and then dominance of scientific rationalism, however, the fields of religion and psychology diverged and entered into a relation of mutual suspicion. Beginning with the Enlightenment and its materialistic, secular, and rationalistic *weltanschauung*, the previously generally accepted religious and spiritual delineation of human nature was seriously challenged. In time, a split occurred between studies of human nature based on secular definitions and the age old religious knowledge of the human soul and spirit. The two fields that should have been allied and in creative dialogue instead became estranged from each other, and often ignored or rejected the knowledge that each could have contributed to the enterprise of understanding human nature. Purely secular notions of human nature emerged: human beings were seen as rational animals; a person was born a *tabula rasa*, neither good nor evil, with parenting and education forming the personality; human beings were a composite of their economic and social relations; human beings were initially motivated by instinctive, irrational, and unrealistic drives and desires; all human behavior, emotions, and motivations and those most sublime cultural creations, religious beliefs and experiences, were the result of complex organic, neurological, and biochemical interactions. The tradition inspired by Sigmund Freud tended to view religion as an illusion, a cultural vestige of immaturity and projection. Consequently, those in the religious camp came to view psychology as a reductionist enterprise that denied the sacred and transcendent aspects of reality.

While some continue to subscribe to such stereotypes, a more sophisticated understanding of religion particularly as advanced by the field of depth psychology has done much to overcome them. The secular paradigm that has ruled the domain of psychology for the past centuries was challenged early on by pioneers such as William James, C. G. Jung, Roberto Assagioli, Viktor Frankl, Erik Erikson, and the humanistic psychologists Gordon Allport, Erich Fromm, and Abraham Maslow. During the 1970s, these thinkers were joined by the transpersonal psychologists, who have sought a synthesis between secular psychology and the great spiritual traditions. While they have accepted the stages of personal development described by various exponents of secular psychology, they have added the stages of transpersonal development evidenced in the world's contemplative and meditative traditions. Because of the cultural shift represented by the above and the persistence of religious beliefs in the vast majority of populations worldwide, contemporary psychologists are beginning to recognize that a purely secular approach to the study and treatment of human beings is inadequate. A science dedicated to the exploration of the basic characteristics and strivings of human beings and to the classification of the laws of human behavior needs to be inclusive and not exclusive of the religious dimension.

The need to address religious and spiritual problems is now deemed not only legitimate, but also clinically and ethically imperative. The 1994 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* published by the American Psychiatric Association, for example, contains a new classification, "Religious or Spiritual Problems."

This *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* grows out of the developing awareness of the need to reintegrate the sciences of the mind with the science of the spirit. By bringing together the disciplines of psychology and religion, it

unites the two areas of study concerned with the behavior and motivations of human beings and provides a crucial new resource for the collaboration and mutual illumination of these two fields. For those in the study of religion, it offers new tools for understanding the images, structures, symbols, and rhythms that constitute the vocabulary of religious experience. For those in the field of psychology it reveals deep patterns of meaning and practice that inform human culture and the personal identity of millions.

This *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* illustrates, even to the skeptical, the vital importance of religion in our world and the serious depths of its symbolic universe. For those already immersed in religious studies, it demonstrates layers of meaning that are enriched   not reduced   by the tools of psychological investigation.

We trust this encyclopedia provides comprehensive timely accessible information from a multi faceted perspective that reflects the intersection and the growing synthesis of psychology and religion.

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Abraham and Isaac

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The pivotal story of the *akedah* (the "binding" of Isaac) occurs in *Genesis* 22 wherein God commands Abraham to sacrifice his long awaited and only son with his wife, Sarah. This divine dictum is considered a test, since at the last minute when Abraham draws the knife to kill Isaac, God sends an angel to stay the sacrifice, and a ram is substituted in place of his son. God rewards Abraham for not withholding his only son from God and therefore passing the test, and promises Abraham numerous off spring, guaranteeing Abraham that he will be the "father of nations" blessed by God. It is Abraham's absolute faith in God that makes him willing to sacrifice Isaac, and it is precisely this strict obedience that renews Abraham's cov enant with God and, in turn, God's covenant with the patriarch, Abraham (which begins with God's first call to Abraham in *Genesis* 12:1 3) and his subsequent genera tions. The *akedah* constitutes the foundation of the three monotheistic (also called Abrahamic) traditions: Chris tianity, Judaism and Islam. It is Abraham's near sacrifice of his son that establishes his absolute faith in God, while simultaneously defining faith within the context of these monotheistic traditions.

Qur'anic Significance

In the Qur'an, Abraham is no less a man of faith than in the Hebrew Bible. He is considered to be the first mono theist because he is "sound in the faith," and thereby a Muslim (one who submits to God) (3:60). The sacrifice story occurs in Sura 37:100 13. There are two notable differences. First, Abraham learns in a dream that he must sacrifice his son and he reveals this to his son: "My son, I have seen that I should sacrifice thee" (37:101), to which his son replies, "My father, do what thou art bidden" (37:102).

Lastly, the Qur'an does not specify *which* son is to be sacrificed: Isaac or Ishmael, Abraham's first born through his slave, Hagar. Therefore, many Muslims assume that it was Ishmael who was offered for sacrifice, since he was the first born. However, according to some Qur'anic scholars, there are an almost equal number of authoritative state ments within Qur'anic tradition that consider Isaac the intended victim as there are those that point to Ishmael (Delaney, 1998:170).

Søren Kierkegaard

In one of his most famous, pseudonymous works (penned under the name, Johannes de Silentio), *Fear and Trem bling* (1843/1983), Kierkegaard uses the *Genesis* 22 account of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac in order to engage in a philosophical meditation on the question of faith. Although cast within the philosophical tradition, *Fear and Trembling* opens the question of Abraham to the individual and private sphere, thereby adding a psycho logical component. Kierkegaard was not the first to en gage the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac philosophically. His writings were a direct response to and critique of those of the pre eminent German philos opher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770 1831).

Like Kierkegaard, Hegel considered himself a pious Christian. Hegel's interpretation of Abraham appears in an early essay, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" (written between 1798 99 and published posthumously), and forms the basis of what eventually matures into Hegel's idea of the dialectic, which he elaborates in his famous *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1977). In his early writings, Hegel declares that "the first act which made Abraham the progenitor of a nation is a disseverance which snaps the bonds of communal life and love" (Hegel, 1984: 185). For Hegel, Abraham the Jew charac terizes "the Jewish multitude" that "wreck[s] [Jesus'] at tempt to give them the consciousness of something divine" (Hegel, 1984: 265). Abraham represents "unhappy consciousness," a term that Hegel later elaborates as

"*inwardly disrupted* consciousness" of a "contradictory nature" (Hegel, 1977: 126). In other words, Abraham as unhappy consciousness doesn't realize the implicit unity that underlies all things. Unhappy consciousness is but the second, unfulfilled step in the dialectical process, which moves from identity to difference to finally, the identity of identity and difference. As such, unhappy consciousness is imperfect and incomplete, not yet having reconciled and harmonized identity and difference, and realized the inherent unity of thinking and being.

Kierkegaard recovers Abraham as the highest and truest man of faith. Kierkegaard considers Abraham to be a "knight of faith" who believes despite reason and demonstrates that faith is a matter of lived experience. Importantly, Abraham also demonstrates that there is in fact a "teleological suspension of the ethical"; in other words, Abraham, the single individual, is higher than the universal, ethical sphere. In this way, Abraham's act cannot be comprehended by reason alone nor subsumed under the ethical order, which is dictated by reason. In an act of absolute faith, the "knight of faith relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual" (Kierkegaard, 1843/1983: 75). The individual is higher than the universal. Furthermore, for Kierkegaard, interiority is higher than exteriority. Thus, "the paradox of faith is that there is an interiority that is incommensurable with exteriority" (Kierkegaard, 1843/1983: 69). Faith, therefore, in its paradoxical absurdity (it is absurd since it cannot be completely comprehended by reason alone) involves a leap into the unknown. And this must be carried out alone by the single individual in the fear and trembling of uncertainty. This act and experience of faith is intimately personal and private.

Freudian Perspective

Although Freud wrote extensively on fathers and sons, he repeatedly emphasized the significance of the son killing the father, and not the inverse. In *Totem and Taboo*, where Freud discusses the Oedipus complex, the focus is on the son killing the father, even though the Greek story of Oedipus begins with Laius' attempt to murder his son. Freud, however, takes up the myth after these events have transpired in order to bring attention to the later part of Oedipus' life and to his killing his father. Even in *Totem and Taboo*, where Freud attempts to trace the origins of monotheism through an exploration of the primitive, primal horde, it is the act of the sons usurping and sacrificing the father that founds the basis for religion. Freud emphasizes sacrifice, but not of the son.

Furthermore, Freud's later work in which he deals with the question of Jewishness and religion, *Moses and Monotheism*, focuses on Moses not Abraham. The anthropologist Carol Delaney devotes several chapters of her book, *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth*, to this thought provoking absence, arguing that Freud's exclusion of Abraham and his omission of the dynamic of fathers killing sons point to "a glaring *scotoma* or blind spot" in Freud's work (189). Her study is an exploration of the significance of such a curious absence. Many Freudian scholars and psychoanalysts have attempted to use the Abraham and Isaac story as a corrective to what they consider to be the shortcomings of Freud's Oedipus theory. What Delaney and others possibly overlook is the feminine element that figures predominantly in the Oedipal story and thus underlies Freud's Oedipus complex. This component is not overtly present in the Abraham and Isaac story, and for this reason, perhaps, Freud chose Oedipus over Abraham.

Jungian Perspective

Jung's most extensive engagement with the idea of sacrifice occurs in his work *The Sacrifice*, (Jung, 1956: 613 682) and in *Transformation Symbolism in the Mass* (Jung, CW 11: 296 448). From Jung's perspective, sacrifice is an act of the unconscious and "the impulse to sacrifice comes from the unconscious" (Jung, 1956: 660). From the ego perspective, however, an act of sacrifice is impossible psychologically because the ego cannot decide to make a sacrifice. Rather, "an act of sacrifice takes place," revealing that "a process of transformation is going on in the unconscious whose dynamism, whose contents and whose subject are themselves unknown" (Jung, 1956: 669). Sacrifice is a mystery and can never be fully understood by ego consciousness since it is impossible to "derive the unconscious from the conscious sphere" (Jung, 1956: 670). Thus, the "I" can neither demand nor fully comprehend the sacrifice. Jung argues that, although the conscious may like to consider itself higher than the unconscious, it is the unconscious that is greater than the conscious. In "the act of sacrifice the consciousness gives up its power and possessions in the interest of the unconscious" (Jung, 1956: 671). The ego unwittingly sacrifices the "I." Read in another way, just as the ego cannot choose to make a sacrifice, the "I" can't do therapy, but therapy, nonetheless, happens. This uncontrolled and absolute giving (which is a relinquishing of the egoistic claim and therefore not overseen by ego consciousness), which is a form of self sacrifice, is a Self possession (the

autonomous, transcendental Self which includes uncon scious components as opposed to the self identified strict ly with the ego and consciousness) since the Self causes the ego to renounce its claim on behalf of a supraordinate authority and in so doing, increases Self knowledge. Every advance of the Self requires that the ego be sacrificed to something higher than itself, not unlike Abraham's abso lute act of giving to God.

See also: ❯ Akedah ❯ Freud, Sigmund ❯ Islam ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav ❯ Kierkegaard, Søren ❯ Sacrifice

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Abyss

Kathryn Madden

Origins and Images of the Abyss

Abyss from the Greek *abyssos* typically signifies a bottom less or boundless deep. The abyss appears in biblical tradition in several related senses. In the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:2, *abyssos* relates to the Hebrew tĕhōm, which most likely stems from the Babylonian *Tiāmat*, a personification of the primordial deep of waters existent before creation of world (NRSV). In Babylonian mythol ogy, *Tiāmat* as the primal sea was personified as a goddess, (Jacobsen, 1968: 104 108) and also as a monstrous em bodiment of elemental chaos (Dalley, 1987: 329).

The Egyptian worldview had a similar concept in *Nun*. *Nun* referred to the primeval water that encircles the entire world, and from which everything was created, personified as a god. In contrast to *Tiāmat's* goddess, feminine nature, *Nun* was considered to be an ancient god, the father of all the gods, which refers to his primacy rather than literal parentage (Lindemans, 2000).

Abyss became identified with *Sheol* and *Tartarus* (Job 41:24) based upon its association with notions of primor dial depth and chaos. In Greek mythology, *Tartarus* was the gloomy prison of dishonorable opponents of Zeus. *The Book of Enoch* defines abyss as a place of punishment for fallen angels.

In post biblical Jewish literature, because of its asso ciations with chaos and death, the abyss became identified as the prison of rebellious spirits and the realm of the dead. By the time of the New Testament writing, the abyss was an abode of demons (Luke 8:31) and Hades (Romans 10:7), where the devil is imprisoned in a bottomless pit (Revelations 20:2). The Gnostics of the first century made abyss, under the name of *Bythus*, into a divine first prin ciple, the source of all existence, thus representing a return to an original unity.

The images of the abyss throughout the Judeo Christian era traditionally have been symbolic of hell, destruction, or death with the exception of the Gnostic myth which attributed to abyss both the source of life and life's return to this source. The Gnostics, along with their myths, were persecuted and eliminated as being heretical to the canonical truths of the mainline Church.

Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Contemporary psychoanalyst James Grotstein speaks of the abyssal experience as "the black hole" of nothingness, meaninglessness, and chaos a "zero ness" expressed, not just as a static emptiness but as an implosive, centripetal pull into the void (Grotstein, 1990: 257 258). Grotstein, from the neoclassical school of Freudian psychology, views the abyss of the black hole as "nameless dread," an empty matrix and "container" of meaninglessness (draw ing from Wilfred Bion, 1962, 1967). The abyss or void is associated with the death instinct which prepares us to anticipate and to adapt to the ultimate horror of death.

This black hole is the "pre perception" of an experience released anticipation which warns us of the extinction of the psyche.

Grotstein claims from clinical experience that "the minds of patients suffering from primitive mental disor ders. . .are hypersensitively vulnerable to the detection of randomness and meaninglessness; they often substitute archaic, apocalyptic (meaningful) scenarios in order to prevent their minds from dissolving into the maelstrom of nothingness" (Grotstein, 1990: 265). Failure to tolerate the gap and its empty nothingness causes a default into "no thingness. . . ." (1990: 273).

Grotstein primarily focuses upon the borderline disorder and psychosis in which the person experiences "a spaceless, bottomless, timeless and yet, paradoxically, condensed, compact, and immediate yielding suffocation anxiety" (Grotstein, 1990: 281). Truly, psychopathology may prevent an individual from achieving sufficient meaning in the self and object world. A borderline or psychotic condition might make it impossible for the person to withstand the entropic pull toward nothing ness and meaninglessness   ultimately toward chaos (ran domness), the traumatic state, "the black hole" (1990: 286). Yet, there are non psychotic states of being in which a person may experience the void, or "black hole" of nothingness and return to a world of meaning.

Alternative Views of the Abyss in Analytic Psychology and Religious Experience

The more typical notion of abyss that has been passed down through history is like the sea; we fear being pulled down into the abyss to our annihilation. Yet, there is something about the abyss, as there is about the sea that exerts a strange pull on us.

There are alternative psychological understandings of the notion of abyss. Two examples of the abyssal experi ence were manifest in the imagery of Jacob Boehme, a seventeenth century German shoemaker and religious mystic, and Carl Jung, the twentieth century Swiss psy choanalyst. Both men gave witness to this layer of exis tence as not so much the "abyss of hell" but as a symbol of a unitary reality.

Boehme's abyss, which he called the *Ungrund*, or un ground, was pre existent, underlying all of creation, even God. Jung's notion of the Self exists before the beginning of the individual human being and is our ultimate goal in terms of psychological life.

The abyss, for Jung, analogous to the objective uncon scious, and the Ungrund for Boehme, provided for both men, a "window to eternity." Boehme was enabled to see through to the constellated reality of Christ, and for Jung, to the Self; for both, to something that points beyond itself to a transcendent ultimacy.

For Boehme, the abyss is a Self revealing reality that gives life to the world but is itself a mystery. Spirit meets us as a dynamic reality at the abyss level and points beyond itself. Beyond what we know, we receive glimpses of "conscious communion or participation in a timeless reality" (Wood, 1982: 209).

Following a period of melancholia, Boehme allowed himself to be drawn inward to an abyssal state where he discovered a new image of God, fuller and more complete than before. Boehme's experience inspired in him the production of a profound theme: that of the Ungrund, (unground), a groundless abyss, a state of pre being underlying not only all of creation, but even God.

The Ungrund

The Ungrund is anterior to God and anterior to Being. The Ungrund lies in the eye, the core of God and creation (Boehme, 1969: 3:1, 16:16) and is eternally a mystery to God because it is what God was before God became conscious of God's Self. The Ungrund is pre distinction, pre existent and is difficult to characterize except as *ewiges Kontrarium:* the nothing is the all; the emptiness is the fullness. The Ungrund, or abyss, contains all anti nomies, but all the contradictions are still in harmony because these contraries are only potential and not yet differentiated.

As W. P. Swainson says, "[W]ithin this Abyss is an eternal, bottomless, uncreated Will, or Byss. This Will, or Byss, ever desires to become manifest   'It willeth to be somewhat.' This is only possible in a state of duality or differentiation, for without contrast there could only be eternal stillness, nothing could ever be perceived" (Swainson, 93 94).

The Ungrund (abyss) is not the personal creator God but the absolute in itself, a moment at the commence ment of the divine life and process of self creation and revelation of Being and the divine (Boehme, 1965, 1:1).

Boehme's creation myth articulates a process in which God created God's self from the abyss through an eternal will. In A. E. Waite's *Three Famous Mystics*, Swainson describes how God differentiates himself from this abyss: "This Will, or Byss, fashions what is called a Mirror, which reflects all things, everything existing already in a latent

or hidden state in the Abyss...[and] makes them visible or manifest. The Supreme [then] perceives all things in Himself. The dual principle is latent in Him. He is both Byss and Abyss. He could not otherwise know Himself ... Boehme terms this Mirror the Eternal Wisdom, the Eternal Idea .... It is the Infinite Mother, the Will being the Infinite Father..." (Swainson, 93 95).

When the Will, or the Father, beholds Himself in this mirror, creation become active and manifest through the union of the Will and Wisdom: the archetypal Father and the Mother. The abyss for Boehme, then, is a "place" beyond time and space from which emanates all possi bilities. All of creation arises from a "breathing out of God's self" (Swainson, 209).

While Boehme's visions may have followed a disinte grating period of melancholy or psychic disturbance, the visions led to healing rather than disintegration. These were humbling, not inflationary, experiences, which left Boehme with a feeling of awe and gratitude. Boehme's (1978: 209) visions were noetic: his inner self gives over to divine will and speaking. He exhibited a diminution rather than an inflation of ego.

Themes of opposition of feminine and masculine, creation and destruction, good and evil, Christ and Lucifer, Ungrund and Sophia, life and death abound in Boehme's map. A comparison of his insight to that of modern depth psychology, places him squarely in the realm of analytical psychology and the notion of Carl Jung's the Self field where all naturally occurring opposi tions of the psyche are encountered, held, and united in harmonic tension.

The Pleroma

Carl Jung likewise experienced an inbreaking image of abyss, what he called Pleroma, during his 6 year *Nekyia*, or descent into the deeper layers of the unconscious. His experience of the Pleroma was that of a paradoxical noth ingness containing all opposites out of which God differ entiates himself.

As a culmination of a long term process of encounter with the deepest layer of the collective unconscious, spe cifically the psychoid, archetypal layer, Jung believed that we, potentially, experience something analogous to what, for Boehme, would be a pre existent unitary reality.

Jung's notion of the archetype as psychoid (Jung, 1963: 351) alerts us to a notion in which the unfolding of the Self, an archetype that unites opposites and orders our whole psyche, is an innate bridging reality that links the material and psychical, inner and outer in one reality.

Jungian analyst, Erich Neumann describes the Self field as a pre existing unitary reality that we develop mentally emerge from. We find at a certain layer of reality a unitary reality existing beyond and before the primal split (consciousness from unconsciousness) that occurs when our conscious minds develop into a polarized reality. Except in cases of severe trauma or developmental injury, most of us have experienced this unitary reality in some form while we were in the mother's womb or at a very early stage of development (Neumann, 1989: 9 10, 20).

▶ The prenatal egoless totality is associated with an un-conscious experience which can, however, be recalled in later life as a dim memory of an acosmic state of the world. In this totality there exists a pre-psychic 'nebular state' in which there is no opposition between the ego and the world, I and Thou, or the ego and the self. This state of diffusion of the world-soul and the corresponding emptiness of the world is a borderline experience of the beginning of all things which corresponds to the mystic's experience of the universal diffusion of the unitary reality (1989: 74).

Unitary Reality

The pleromatic/abyssal experience of unitary reality is something that is there from our inception. Develop mental injuries and specific traumas may impair an individual's knowledge of this unitary reality, but uni tary reality (abyssal reality) underlies all experience. Drawing from Jung (1921: para. 424), the soul is thus like a two way mirror, reflecting unconscious to ego and ego to unconscious.

The experience of unitary reality is relevant to clinical practice because abyssal experience is radically transform ing. A new reality is born to us, offering us a new intra psychic core, perhaps even restructuring the entire personality in a way the ego can better deal with its context and circumstances, one that enables us to see through to our former origins.

Spirit, from this view, is an *a priori* reality always in motion, moving toward us, shattering our consciousness, summoning us to receive that which is archetypally pres ent and spiritually actual; as Boehme attests: (...) "to wrestle with the love and mercy of God, and not to give over, until he blessed me,.... *And then the spirit did break through*" (Boehme, 1915: 485 487, italics mine).

See also: ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav

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Active Imagination

Leon Schlamm

C. G. Jung's development of the dissociative technique of active imagination, the visionary practice of "dreaming with open eyes," arose out of his early experimentation with paranormal phenomena, especially mediumship, itself a dissociative technique of contacting the dead which traces its provenance to shamanism. His discovery of active imagination led him to associate psychological and spiritual transformation with the autonomous creation and manipulation of images.

Jung's Descent into the Unconscious

In December 1913, believing himself to be threatened by a psychosis, Jung overcame his violent resistance to experiencing a series of waking fantasies, which would provide the raw material for the subsequent development of analytical psychology (Jung, 1963). In these waking visions, triggered by the suspension of his rational critical faculties enabling conscious receptivity to unconscious psychic contents (Jung, 1916/1958; Chodorow, 1997), Jung descended to the Land of the Dead (which he subsequently equated with the unconscious) where he encountered a number of significant *others* in the objective psyche, subjects independent of his consciousness (Jung, 1963). He learned to treat the numinous figures of his inner life, Elijah, Salome, the Serpent and Philemon, an Egypto Hellenistic Gnostic who later functioned as his inner guru, as objective real *others* and to engage in dialog with them as equals (first verbally and later through writing, painting, and drawing) (Jung, 1916/1958, 1925, 1963; Chodorow, 1997), thereby discovering a meditative technique for psychological healing and spiritual transformation in marked contrast to the meditative practices of stilling the mind and transcending all images associated with yoga (Jung, 1963).

Active Imagination as Confrontation with the Unconscious

The function of this visionary practice, triggering a dynamic, confrontational exchange between consciousness and the unconscious in which each is totally engaged with the other and activating a stream of powerful, unconscious emotions and impulses, Jung discovered, was to access numinous unconscious images concealed by these emotions and impulses (Jung, 1916/1958, 1955 1956, 1963; Chodorow, 1997). By consciously dialoging with the flow of images produced by active imagination, Jung learned to transform and control these powerful emotions and impulses, thereby discovering the transcendent function (1916/1958, 1955 1956, 1963), the union of the opposites of consciousness and the unconscious which he identified with the individuation process, as well as healing himself. However, it is important to remember that, for Jung, it is through the *affect* that the subject of active imagination becomes involved and so comes to feel the whole weight of reality. Numinous images encountered during active imagination are based on an emotional foundation which is unassailable by reason. Indeed, the whole procedure is a kind of enrichment and clarification

of the affect, whereby the affect and its contents are brought nearer to consciousness, becoming at the same time more impressive and more understandable (Jung, 1916/1958, 1951, 1952/1954).

Jung was well aware that the practitioner of active imagination unable to maintain a differentiated, self reflective conscious point of view in the face of uncon scious visionary material would be vulnerable to mental illness: either in the form of psychosis where conscious ness is overwhelmed by unconscious visionary materials; or in the form of conscious identification with numinous unconscious contents leading to possession by them (Jung, 1916/1958, Chodorow, 1997). However, he insisted that his visionary practice, if approached responsibly by an individual endowed with a well developed conscious ness, could bring considerable rewards. In addition to the strengthening and widening of consciousness itself (Jung, 1916/1928, 1916/1958, 1931/1962, 1934/1950, 1955 1956), dreaming with open eyes could enable the practi tioner to realize that unconscious contents that appear to be dead are really alive, and desire to be known by, and enter into dialog with, consciousness (Jung, 1963). If one rests one's conscious attention on unconscious contents without interfering with them, employing the Taoist prac tice of *wu wei*, just letting things happen, discussed by Jung in his Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, it is as if something were emanating from one's spiritual eye that activates the object of one's vision (Jung, 1916/1958, 1930 1934, 1931/1962, 1955 1956). Uncon scious contents begin to spontaneously change or move, begin to become dynamic or energetic, to come alive. Jung characterizes this process by the German term *betrachten*: to make pregnant by giving an object your undivided attention (Jung, 1930 1934, 1935/1968, 1955 1956), a psychological process anticipated by his 1912 dream of a lane of sarcophagi which sprung to life as he examined them (Jung, 1963).

These experiences which Jung characterizes as numi nous, however, require a vigorous, active, self reflective conscious response endowing them with meaning, and thereby changing them (Jung, 1916/1958, 1955 1956, 1963). Here lies the significance of Jung's claim that the dead seek wisdom from the living in his pseudonymously produced Gnostic poem of 1916, *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, itself the product of active imagination, rather than, as in mediumistic practices, the living seeking the wisdom of the dead. The dead, numinous, unconscious contents, need the living, consciousness, as much as the living need the dead (Jung, 1963; Segal, 1992; Welland, 1997; Bair, 2004). This process of continuous dynamic interaction and collaboration between consciousness and the unconscious is expressed by the German term *auseinandersetzung* coming to terms with, or having it out with or confronting unconscious psychic contents and is mirrored in Jung's religious narrative calling for divine human collaboration underlined by his heretical observation that whoever knows God has an effect on Him in *Answer to Job*, another product of active imagina tion (Jung, 1916/1958, 1952/1954; Chodorow, 1997; Welland, 1997).

Active Imagination in Western Religious Traditions

Jung himself alleged the use of active imagination in Gnosticism and alchemy on which he drew heavily in his later work (Jung, 1944, 1951, 1955 1956; Segal, 1992), and was clearly gratified by Corbin's research on active imagination in theosophical Sufism (Wasserstrom, 1999). However, as Merkur's recent scholarship tracing the history of active imagination in the West has con firmed, the incidence of this visualization technique in mystical traditions is more widespread, and can be found, for example, in Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Sufism, alchemy and more recent European esotericism, as well as shaman ism (Merkur, 1993), thus providing considerable support for Jung's claim that his post Christian, psychological practice of dreaming with open eyes is analogous to, and can be understood as a detraditionalised form of, spiritual practice fostered by many Western religious tra ditions during the last two millennia. Merkur also distin guishes between what he calls intense "reverie" states, including Jung's active imagination, and trance states. Whereas the latter involve the increasing repression or restriction of ego functions (or consciousness), the former would seem to involve their increasing relaxation and freedom.

See also: ❯ Alchemical Mercurius and Carl Gustav Jung ❯ Analytical Psychology ❯ Archetype ❯ Coincidentia Oppositorum ❯ Collective Unconscious ❯ Conscious ness ❯ Depth Psychology and Spirituality ❯ Descent to the Underworld ❯ Dissociation ❯ Dreams ❯ Ego ❯ God ❯ God Image ❯ Healing ❯ Individuation ❯ Inflation ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion ❯ Jungian Self ❯ Numinosum ❯ Objective Psyche ❯ Projection ❯ Psy che ❯ Psychospiritual ❯ Religious Experience ❯ Self ❯ Shamans and Shamanism ❯ Transcendent Function ❯ Unconscious

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Adam and Eve

Stuart Z. Charmé

One of the central features of creation stories in most cultures is a description not only of the genesis of the cosmos but also of the appearance of the first human beings. Such stories often serve etiological purposes, explaining the origin of the different forms and characteristics of human beings. The Biblical story of Adam and Eve is the most well known and influential story of human creation and is often used as a "proof text" justifying particular values and models related to family, marriage, sexuality, and gender roles. Yet it is important to remember that creation stories are a form of religious myth. Their importance and meaning do not lie in the literal, historical accuracy of their details, and to focus on such issues misses the level on which their power and truth exists. The Adam and Eve story offers profound theological and psychological insights about human beings' place in the world, their relationship to each other and to a transcendent dimension of reality. Biblical editors linked the Adam and Eve story (Gen. 2) with the seven day creation story that precedes it (Gen. 1) as a further elaboration of the nature of the sole creatures who were made "in the image of God." The famous story of Adam and Eve's loss of paradise as a result of ignoring God's instructions has a far more complex message than that disobeying God is bad. Indeed, Jewish tradition takes little notice of Adam and Eve and certainly does not hold them up as the main reason for a flawed human nature. Only later are they elevated to their Christian status as the original sinners.

The multi dimensional nature of religious myth makes it impossible to encompass the full meaning of a story in any single psychological interpretation. Nonetheless, psychological approaches to the Adam and Eve story help us to attribute meaning to the peculiar details in this story: a man created from earth, a woman born out of his rib, a tree with forbidden fruit, a seductive serpent, nakedness and shame, punishments and expulsion, etc.

Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Adam and Eve

From a psychoanalytic perspective, religious myths are expressions of both conscious and unconscious human struggles, projected onto archetypal figures. Accordingly, one way to look at a story like that of Adam and Eve is to see it as an expression of the struggle between fathers and sons and the ambivalence of their attachments to one another. On the one hand, it emphasizes the importance of the son's subordination and submission to the authority of the father. For Freud, God is both a loving and protective father, but also one easily provoked to anger and punishment. He represents the power of the super ego to keep instinctual desires under control. Yet the story also

contains a thinly disguised expression of Oedipal revolt, not simply in the son Adam's striving to become like God the father through the acquisition of knowledge, but also in giving expression, yet simultaneously condemning, the forbidden intimate relationship between mother and son. Such an interpretation is able to make sense of some of the peculiar details of the story and the obvious suppression of a mother figure. Taking the story at face value, Adam has a father but no real mother, and even Eve is born out of a male body. This creation of Eve out of Adam's rib makes more sense, however, as a disguised inversion of their true relationship, for it is out of the bodies of females that males are born and it is only a mother who can rightly call her child "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). If Eve, who is later called "the mother of all the living," is regarded as the missing mother figure in the story, thereby reconstituting the Oedipal triangle, then the nature of Adam and Eve's sin in thrown into a whole new light. God the father forbids his son Adam the one kind of instinctual knowledge that a father and son should not share. A phallic serpent who tempts Adam and Eve to taste the fruit, a sense of shameful nakedness after the act, and a punishment that highlights female desire, pregnancy and childbirth all offer a strong subtext of sexual taboos that have been violated in this story. Confirmation of this view may be seen in Adam and Eve's very first act after their expulsion from the garden, their immediate exercise of the new sexual knowledge and desire they have acquired (Gen. 4:1).

Although greater responsibility for the fall is projected onto Eve and indirectly on all women, it is primarily a cautionary tale addressed to sons regarding the danger of challenging the rights and prerogatives of the father. The central characters in subsequent Christian myth can be seen as a reenactment of this same Oedipal ambivalence. This time, however, it is through absolute obedience to the authority of God the father that Jesus, the second Adam, and the Virgin Mary, the new Eve, ultimately displace the father when they ascend to heaven and are seated side by side as celestial king and queen.

Jungian Interpretation of Adam and Eve

Other psychological interpretations of the Adam and Eve story do not see the fundamental tension in the story as related to sexual prohibitions and violations. For many of them, the fall of Adam and Eve describes the difficult process of human growth and development. For Jungians, for example, the garden of Eden is an archetypal expression of primordial wholeness that is both the origin and

ultimate goal of human life. At the beginning of human consciousness, there is an undifferentiated unity between the individual psyche and nature, God, and the unconscious. The story of Adam and Eve is an account of the growth of consciousness and the emergence of an ego with awareness of the tension of opposites in human life. Thus Adam is created not as a male, but as the original union of male and female in all human beings. The creation of Eve represents a break up of the original wholeness of male and female that ideally is still reflected in individual human personality. The serpent is not a dangerous character tempting humans with sin, but rather a symbol of wisdom and the renewal of life. From this perspective, the eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil represents a growth of consciousness that brings an awareness of all polarities and opposites. The couple's self consciousness about their nakedness describes the inevitable dawning of ethical consciousness and a more mature awareness of gender differences.

The Fall Story and Psychological Development

In this context, the story of Adam and Eve is not about a tragic mistake that condemns humanity, as traditional Christian theologians have contended, but rather about a difficult but necessary step in the psychic growth of all human beings. Adam and Eve achieve a new level of consciousness, but it comes at the cost of feeling alienated, separated and expelled from their childhood paradise. While the story is typically viewed as an endorsement of what Erich Fromm has called "authoritarian religion," in which obedience to divine authority is the cardinal human virtue, it also implies something quite different. Fromm points out that the authoritarian model of religion leaves humans alienated, infantilized, and impoverished by projecting all of their human powers for love, knowledge, and freedom onto an external deity. He insists that such a position contradicts the more humanistic perspectives within the Biblical tradition. At a deeper, more subversive level, the message of the story is to emphasize the painful necessity of breaking free from the security of a childhood that is governed by parental authorities and to assume the knowledge and responsibility necessary to create new relationships, build new families, and determine one's own path in life. And this, many argue, is not really disobedience to divine command as much as a fulfillment of human beings' mature spiritual capacity.

In some ways, the Adam and Eve story is therefore a developmental story, describing the struggle of

adolescence to separate and individuate from one's parents. Paradoxically, the process of becoming an adult, i.e., being like God, only can happen through an act of disobedience which challenges the absoluteness of parental authority. And it is a story that emphasizes the centrality of human relationship to realize this process, for it is not good for man to live alone, physically or psychologically.

The story offers no lament that Adam and Eve might have done otherwise and perpetually remained in paradise. Rather, the loss of paradise is inevitable and inescapable, and it enables man to become a partner with God in the redemption of the broken and alienated dimensions of the world.

Patriarchal or Feminist Approaches to Eve

It is hard to talk about the Adam and Eve story without considering its complicity in persistent misogynistic elements within Biblical tradition. Such interpretations have constructed women as spiritually inferior, psychologically weak beings who need to submit to their husbands in particular and male authority in general for the good of all. The story traditionally been used to reinforce images of women as temptresses and to justify the religious, social, and political subordination of women. In the original cultural context of this story we can also find evidence of patriarchal religious leaders' efforts to delegitimate religious symbols and ideas associated with sacred images of female power from surrounding cultures. Wisdom bearing serpents and trees with life giving knowledge about fertility were likely references to elements of older religious traditions emphasizing connection with the life giving power of the earth, often symbolized by goddess figures. The Biblical version transforms these elements into manifestations of rebellion and disobedience, and implies greater culpability to the female character who first gives in to temptation.

Some recent feminist re interpretations of this story offer more sympathetic readings of Eve. If the underlying psychological message of the story involves the difficult yet necessary process of growing up, the dawning of conscience, intellect, desire and sexuality, then it makes little sense to demonize the character who initiates this process. In this reading, Eve is not gullible and weak but rather a strong, decisive, and courageous woman who actively seeks new knowledge and experience. As with other important religious myths, the central characters of this story have been rediscovered and reinvented by modern readers in response to the concerns and issues of our time.

See also: ❯ Biblical Psychology ❯ Creation ❯ Freud, Sigmund, and Religion ❯ Genesis ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav ❯ Original Sin

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Adler, Alfred

Melissa K. Smothers

Background

Alfred Adler (1870 1937) was an Austrian psychiatrist and recognized as one of the fathers of modern psychotherapy. He was born in Vienna in 1870 and decided at an early age that he wanted to be a doctor in order to "fight death." He was the second child in a large family and suffered from numerous illnesses as a child. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna and preferred not to treat a client's symptoms in isolation, but rather considered the whole person, including their social setting.

In 1902, Adler was asked to join a weekly psychoanalytic discussion circle and became an active member in the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society; other notable members included Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. However, after nine years, he and about a dozen other members split from the society over theoretical differences. He went on to form the Society of Individual Psychology, which emphasized the role of goals and motivation in people's behaviors. Adler developed his theory of *Individual Psychology*, using the word individual to emphasize the uniqueness of the personality. In the year after leaving the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, he published The *Neurotic Constitution*, which outlined his theory.

During World War I, Adler served in the army as a physician and became increasingly aware of the necessity for humans to live peacefully and develop social interest, in which one feels as they belong with others. After the war, Adler's concept of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* or social interest/social feeling became a central aspect of his Individual Psychology theory. He went on to develop child guidance clinics throughout Vienna and was the first psychiatrist to apply mental health concepts to the school environment.

By the mid 1920s, the *International Journal of Individual Psychology* had been founded and published until 1937; it resumed publication after World War II. Between 1914 and 1933, Adler published more than a dozen books, including, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology, What Life Should Mean To You, Religion and Individual Psychology, Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind, and Cooperation Between the Sexes.* Due to the rise of Nazism in Austria and similar to other Jewish people of his generation, Adler left Europe, and settled in the United States in 1935. While on a European lecturing trip, Adler died suddenly of heart attack at the age of 67.

Individual Psychology

Individual Psychology suggests that people are responsible for their own choices and the way they deal with consequences. In this theory, humans are self determining, creative, and goal directed. When individuals are able to understand their goal in life, they can see the purpose of their own behavior. Adler sees each individual as a unity and viewed all problems as social problems. Adler viewed the answer to life's difficulties as social interest, or the feeling of connectedness with the whole of humanity and that each person must fully contribute to society. According to Adler, the true meaning of life is to make a contribution to the community.

In Adler's view, religion was an expression of social interest. His theory of Individual Psychology has religious undertones in that his definition of social interest is similar to those religions that stress people's responsibility for one another. While Adler did not believe in God or in the Bible, he did collaborate with clergyman. His book, *Religion and Individual Psychology,* was coauthored with Revered Ernst Jahn. Adler believed that if clergy had training in Individual Psychology, he would be able to make greater accomplishments in the arena of mental health and hygiene. Adler believed that there are many religious initiatives that try to increase cooperation, and he stated that there are many paths that lead toward the ultimate goal of cooperation.

As compared to other systems of psychology, Individual Psychology and Adlerian psychotherapy have been more open to spiritual and religious issues. The Adlerian position toward religion is most commonly positive, viewing God as the concept of complete perfection. Adler defined God as the human understanding of greatness and complete perfection. As opposed to Freud, Adler viewed God as the conceptual idea of perfection, not as an internalized parental image.

One of Adler's most prominent ideas is that humans try to compensate for inferiorities that we perceive in ourselves. He developed the idea of inferiority complex, as well as the goal of superiority. A lack of power is often at the source of the feelings of inferiority. One way in which religion enters into this is through beliefs in God, which are characteristic of one's attempts at perfection and superiority. In many religions, God is often considered to be perfect and omnipotent, and instructs people to also strive for perfection. The person, who is always striving, is aware that he or she cannot experience such perfection, but that having a goal defines life. By attempting to identify with God in this way, people compensate for their imperfections and feelings of inferiority. Adler believed that the idea of God inspires people to act, and that those actions have real consequences. One's perspective on God is important because it embodies one's goals and guides social interactions.

Numerous authors have compared Adler's Individual Psychology to Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Native American religions. In the literature, Christianity appears most frequently cited as having similar tenets with Individual Psychology. For example, there are considerable commonalities between the basic assumptions of Christianity and Individual Psychology regarding the view of humans. Both view individuals as creative, holistic, social oriented and goal directed and emphasize equality, value and dignity of humans. A focus within the Christian Bible is on human relationships, with God, oneself and others and provides guidelines for relationships for living with others. Humans are responsible for caring for one another, emphasized both in the Old Testament and in the teachings of Jesus. Both the Bible and Adlerian psychotherapy emphasize the relationship between spiritual mental health and social interest. The Bible's decree of love one's neighbor is synonymous with the Adlerian concept of social interest.

Individual Psychology and Buddhism are both based on holism in their understanding of the human mind

because they believe there are no conflicts between ele ments of the mind. Yet, while Buddhism applies holism to understanding the structure of the universe, Individual Psychology recognizes conflicts between the indivi dual and the world. Individual psychology denies the idea of the self as separate from the rest of the individual; no self exists apart from the whole. Similarly, Buddhism denies the existence of the self as such.

The view of human distress, can be viewed in corre sponding terms from a Buddhist and Adlerian perspective. In Adler's Individual Psychology, an individual strives towards his or her life goal while inevitably facing specific difficulties in his or her life, referred to by Adler as life tasks. When facing difficulties, the person feels inferior; therefore striving towards one's goals leads to feelings of inferiority or suffering. Likewise, in Buddhism, three thirsts cause suffering: the thirst for pleasure, the thirst to live and the thirst to die. In addition, in Buddhism and Individual Psychology, all conflicts are interpersonal and occur between the individual and life events; they both deny intrapsychic conflicts. Life unavoidably pro duces interpersonal conflicts and these conflicts make an individual suffer. In contrast to Individual Psychology, Buddhism asserts that the awakened or enlightened do not deal with conflict in the world. Through three ways of studying, a person can understand that the conflicts he or she has in life are only illusions.

See also: ❯ Buddhism ❯ Christianity ❯ Freud, Sigmund ❯ Jung, Carl Gustav ❯ Psychoanalysis

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Adoption

Ronald Katz

The Bible doesn't "speak" to us in words about adoption but conveys great insight through its stories. It teaches us by example. Adoption consists of two parts: the re linquishment of the child by the parent(s) and the adop tion of the child by a new parent(s). In the Bible, the relinquishment of the child is always associated with the threat of death to the child. In the first instance, Abraham relinquishes his son Israel to G d while expect ing that it will result in his son's death. In the next story of adoption, the mother of Moses is forced to relinquish him by placing him in the Nile River in order to save him from certain death. In the story of Esther, not part of the actual Bible itself, relinquishment comes about as a result of the death of Esther's parents. In a related example of relin quishment in the Bible, two women appear before King Solomon claiming to be a baby's mother and when the King threatens to kill the baby by cutting it in half, the real mother relinquishes the baby to the other woman in order to save the child's life. In ancient classical literature this association between relinquishment of the child and death manifests itself in Sophocles' trilogy about Oedipus. Here the relinquishment of the child Oedipus takes place with the expectation of death to the child as a con sequence. The thread running through these stories is that the bond between parent and child is of such primal significance that it can be broken only as a matter of life or death. The Bible does speak to us in words about the attitude toward relinquished orphan children and so does the Qur'an. In the world of Islam, the orphaned child is treated with great love and care. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) once said that a person who cares for an orphaned child will be in Paradise with him. The Qur'an gives specific rules about the legal rela tionship between a child and his adoptive family. The child's biological family is never hidden; their ties to the child are never severed. The adopted parents are like

loving trustees and caretakers of someone else's child. In the Bible there are references to orphans: the repeated attitude is that they should be treated with special consideration and that it is a blessing to those who care for them. This attitude is manifested in the stories depicting relinquished children who are delivered into loving hands. When Abraham relinquishes his son Israel, G d immediately sends an Angel to protect Abraham's relinquished son Israel from death and then promises such a wonderful future that all of his family (descendants) will inherit the surrounding lands which were (eventually) named Israel after him. After Moses was relinquished, he was rescued from the Nile River by Pharaoh's loving daughter who protected him from the Pharaoh's death decree, arranged for his biological mother to nurse him and raised him to be adopted into the Pharaoh's family. Esther who was relinquished as a result of her parent's death was adopted by her loving uncle Mordecai who protected her from the wrath of the Persian ruler by hiding her Jewish origins. And in the related story about the mother who relinquished her baby to King Solomon's judgment in order to save the child's life, King Solomon gives the baby back to his loving mother. In the Classical Greek story about Oedipus who is bound and abandoned in the wild by his parents, he is found and delivered into the loving hands of King Merope and his Queen and raised as a noble. And what is the outcome one can expect from this loving care of the adopted child   nothing less than a loving, faithful and loyal offspring.

These scriptural and classical literature stories teach us that our love and support of the adopted child will be rewarded with the love and loyalty of the child in return. In today's times there is controversy over whether the adopted child should be aware of his adopted status. What insight is shed on this subject by these religious and classical sources? The Qur'an quite clearly spells out in words the view that the child's awareness of his adoptive status is very necessary. The adopted child must retain his/her own biological family name (surname) and not change it to match that of his adoptive family. There can be no doubt or mystery about the adoptive status of the child. The Bible conveys the importance of this awareness again in its stories. Abraham is accepted and his son adopted into the religion of one G D, Judaism, and this "adoption" is proclaimed to the world and fought for.

Esther is knowingly adopted by her Uncle and raised in accord with her racial and religious roots. She is loyal to her adoptive parent to the point of risking death to please him by confronting the Persian King. And later when the relinquishment of the Jews by genocide from their adoptive home in Persia is sought by the Prime Minister Haman, Esther again risks her life in loyalty to her adoptive father by proclaiming to the King her secret, that she is a Jew.

These stories also illustrate the contrasting effect on the adopted child of adoption unawareness. Moses' adoption was trans racial, a Hebrew child in an Egyptian family. His adopted family was the ruling class of the country while his biological roots were with the enslaved class. We are given the impression that he had no knowledge of his adoptive status growing up until he is regarded as "brethren" by the Hebrew slaves he was supervising. We can surmise that he may have had unspoken conflicts and identity confusion that couldn't be revealed and acknowledged. Moses is portrayed as a poor communicator who struggled with rage in the Bible. At one point he explodes and kills an Egyptian overseer who was brutalizing some Hebrew slaves. The mixture of anger, fear and guilt often underlies the many reports of the high incidence of anger in adoptees. The strength of Moses' loyalty to his adoptive family was made evident by his self imposed exile from Egypt which lasted for as long as the Pharaoh lived.

Not knowing one's biological roots puts one in danger of violating a fundamental human taboo against incest which the adoptee who lacks specific knowledge of his biological roots is subject to. Islam specifically addresses the issue by insisting on clear demarcation between blood relationships and non blood relationships. The Bible's solution is exemplified in the story of Moses. In his years of self imposed exile Moses marries a non Hebrew, thus avoiding the possibility of incest when he establishes a family of his own.

What do we learn about the road from identity confusion to identity resolution? Moses' identity crisis is resolved and solidified by a the recognition of and reunion with and the support of his birth family. This reunion helps him accept himself as a Hebrew and as G ds' spokesman. In his mission to gain the relinquishment of the Hebrews from their adoptive home in Egypt, Moses repeatedly confronts the new Pharaoh of Egypt. Here too the relinquishment of the Hebrews from Egypt is only brought about after their children were threatened with death by the Pharaoh. In this story, the Pharaoh acts on his murderous feelings toward the Hebrews as he tries to prevent their separation from Egypt by ordering the death of the first born Hebrew children and later by trying to kill the Hebrews after allowing them to leave Egypt. The Pharaoh's murderous decree against the Hebrews results in the death of his own child and the destruction of his

army. We see that the suppression of the adoptees true identity results in conflict and ultimately destruction to the suppressor.

In the story of Oedipus we see the consequences of not knowing the true biological identity played out in dramatic fashion. In the story of Oedipus, his adoptive roots are not consciously known to him. He is an un known puzzle to himself as exemplified by the problem posed to him by the sphinx: Who is man? We know that his biological parents had arranged for his relinquish ment by death through abandonment. We know that out of loving loyalty to his adoptive parents he had fled them rather than risk their destruction after hearing the Oracle's prophesy that he would kill his father. The inevitable outcome is that he kills his biological father and had an incestuous relationship with children by his biological mother. The incestuous dangers of the adoptee's ignorance of his true biological roots is brought "to life" in this play. The play too adds to the insight that loving care of the orphan by the adop tive parents results in a loving and devoted child whereas murderous action towards the child brings about a murderous reaction. The lack of conscious knowledge of one's adoptive and biological origins is portrayed here as causing turmoil and conflict in the life of the adoptee.

These ancient insights have also been reflected in the writings of psychoanalyst and adoption specialist Florence Clothier (1943) in "The Psychology of the Adopted Child" who wrote "... the severing of the individual from his racial antecedents lie at the core of what is peculiar to the psychology of the adopted child." "... the ego of the adopted child ... is called upon to compensate for the wound left by the loss of the biological mother. Later on this appears as an unknown void, separating the adopted child from his fellows whose blood ties bind them to the past as well as to the future."

What are the common threads that run through these writings:

1. Adoptive parents who raise their children in a loving way will have loving children who will not destroy them with their aggression.
2. Acting out of primal hostile impulses by parents to ward their children begets the acting out of primal hostile impulses towards themselves.
3. Acknowledgement of adoption can help prevent incest.
4. Knowledge of one's true "core" is essential for mental well being.

See also: ❯ God ❯ Oedipus Myth ❯ Qur´an

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Affect

Jo Nash

Definition

Affect is a term used in psychology to denote the broad field of emotional and mood based experience of the human subject, and is a concept deployed in the post structural theory of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and related fields of social and cultural theory, to describe the means of visceral communication which invests the expe rience of relationship between an organism and its envi ronment with meaning, in the broadest possible sense. Protevi writes, "An affect is that which a body is capable of, and so the affectivity of conceptual personae becomes materially grounded in what Alliez will later not hesitate to call a 'biology of intellectual action'" (Protevi, 2005).

When we consider that affect involves embodied, vis ceral perception that is intuitively apprehended (Bion), is object relational, and may be both generative of cognition, or a product of cognition, or even pre cognitive (instinc tual), or trans cognitive (integrative), we can understand that affect mediates all experience at both conscious and unconscious levels of awareness, and is an important mediator of all religious and spiritual experience. In *Affect, Religion and Unconscious Processes* Hill and Hood write,

"Insofar as religious experience involves representa tional worlds, or object relations, affect is hypothesised to play a central role as a mediator (that often is not asso ciated with awareness) of such processes that underlie various behaviours" (Hill and Hood, 1999: 1018).

Affect Theory and Integration

For the psychoanalytic psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1962, 1963, 1991, 1992), who developed what has

become known as "affect theory," affect can also be un derstood as an important factor in motivation, in that it is generative of stimuli and also mediates the complex human biofeedback system in an attempt to sustain homeostasis. The adoption of a religious or spiritual prac tice can be understood to be motivated by the human need to optimise positive affect and ameliorate negative affect to achieve harmonious bio psycho social functioning. The need to identify with a positive "Image" for Tomkins, is rooted in a need to identify with the beloved parent, who resonates with positive affects such as love, joy, patience, acceptance and so on. This process of identification en hances optimal development and facilitates highly com plex forms of psychological integration dependent on the mediation of ever more subtle affective processes or states. As McGroarty writes: "This also allows for a finer imagination . . . In addition to expanding categories of imagination and perception, this process also may be somewhat therapeutic, in cases where the event under analysis has instigated trauma . . . The feedback system is ultimately geared toward reporting on the progress toward this state [homeostasis], humans are freer than other ani mals because of the complexity of the Images they hold, and variety of strategies with which they may pursue these images" (McGroarty, 2006: 60 61).

It follows that identification with the positive Images associated with spiritually developed or integrated others, whether they are ministers, teachers, gurus or saints, will be a source of motivation for adopting religious or spiri tual practices or values, because the processes involved enhance the ability of the human affective system to sustain homeostasis when under stress from negative sti muli, and thereby regulate itself harmoniously.

In short, identification with highly integrated persons and aspiring to become like them, by adopting practices that enable affective self regulation, enhances happiness and well being. A sense of freedom is also enjoyed by those with a highly developed ability to regulate their own affective states. Spiritual and religious practices are one set of tools available to enhance the development of affective self regulation, and forms of psychotherapy that deploy elements of contemplative practices in particular, have been demonstrated to be very effective in achieving this objective.

Affect Regulation and Contemplative Practice

Mindfulness based stress reduction or MBSR (Kabat Zinn, 1990) and mindfulness based cognitive therapy or MBCT,

(Segal et al., 2002) are two forms of therapeutic affective self regulation which deploy Buddhist meditation techniques and yoga exercises to enhance affective self management. They have been demonstrated to be partic ularly effective interventions in mood disorders such as recurring depression and substance abuse problems, which are often rooted in misguided attempts to use alcohol, drugs and/or food to regulate emotions and mood.

More recently, a new type of intervention designed to regulate affect called "analytic meditative therapy" has been described by Harrison (2006) as a non dual psy chotherapy rooted in the Tibetan Buddhist practices of Dzogchen and Mahamudra, which enables "relaxed con tact with absolute reality and [. . .] mental healing to occur spontaneously" (Harrison, 2006: 73) through "con templative resting in non dual mental space" (Harrison, 2006: 73). Such an intervention embraces the tendency of human affect to achieve equilibrium when given the "mental space" to do so. Certain skills in contemplative discipline are required to create the mental space that enables this to occur.

The above descriptions of the role of affect in the generation and mediation of psychological states, includ ing spiritual and religious experience, is made more interesting by research that demonstrates the converse relationship also exists. Ancient contemplative practices generate and mediate affect in predictable and repeatable ways, with meditation and breathing techniques now being used to enhance psychological well being as highly effective therapeutic interventions in the field of emo tional health.

See also: ❯ Analytical Psychology ❯ Esoteric Buddhism ❯ Instinct ❯ Mindfulness ❯ Nonduality

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African-American Spirituality

Kathy Coffman · Jamie D. Aten · Ryan M. Denney · Tiffani Futch

Spirituality has played a paramount role in shaping the identity of African Americans, permeating many aspects of life. African American spirituality has its roots in African religious traditions and culture (Boyd Franklin, 1989), according to which, people are born spiritual beings, and thus, religion and spirituality are an integrated part identity. African religion and spirituality have also influenced African culture, education, social life, politics, and economics (Idowu, 1992). Overall, African spirituality is very communal in nature as noted by John Mbiti, who said, "I am because we are; and because we are, therefore, I am" (1969: 108). Reflected in this quote is the idea that consciousness of oneself stems from duties, responsibilities, and privileges experienced with others.

Role of Faith

African spirituality helped those affected by slavery to nurture and promote a sense of community while under the influence of the white slave owners' European religion (Battle, 2006). African spirituality also helped those forced into slavery redefine themselves, find unity, and express inner strength, despite their experiences of oppression. Further, African spirituality buffered white slave owners' attempts to destroy African cultural identity. Strength would be drawn from one another in secret meetings as well as through music and dance; the presence of the sacred would be celebrated through songs, beating drums, prayers, and stories (Cook and Wiley, 2000). Traditional African concepts of spirituality and religion are interwoven into African American spirituality and are reflected in contemporary African American culture (Wiggins and Williams, 1996). For example, a fundamental African spiritual concept that was retained by African Americans is the idea that people live in a religious universe and therefore the whole of a person's life is deeply religious. This idea includes the belief that one is connected to past, present, future humankind, nature, and God. African spirituality is the legacy of African Americans and is present in African American spirituality and culture today. Likewise, as in African worship, African American worship involves verbal and physical expression that includes the whole body and is expressed in the form of song and dance. Music and spirituality are linked in the African American culture and elements of "spirituals," reveal cultural patterns that have been sustained through the years (Wiggins and Williams, 1996). These elements include the use of metaphor, symbolism, and imagery which appear in the form of blues, rap, and jazz (Wiggins and Williams, 1996).

Role of the Church

Still, communalism continues to play a central role in African American spirituality that promotes a collective identity involving psychological and spiritual integration with others and the sacred. African American spirituality also continues to be an integral part of the struggle for liberation from injustices that followed slavery and has become part of the survival system of African Americans in contemporary times (Boyd Franklin, 1989; Wiggins and Williams, 1996). This can be seen in the emergence of the Black church in America for example, which has been integral to the development of African American religion, politics, and social justice issues. Being one of the first institutions that belonged solely to African Americans, it became multifunctional and was considered a place of refuge in a hostile world (Boyd Franklin, 1989). With time, the Black church, empowered by the communal nature of African American spirituality, would be shepherded by Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., who together with the Black church, helped give rise to the Civil Rights movement which was focused on eliminating the racial discrimination of African Americans.

Currently, the African American churches continue to have a communal foundation that serves as an extended family where social attitudes, values, and codes of conduct of the church and the family are interwoven (Cook

and Wiley, 2000; Boyd Franklin, 1989). Most African American churches continue to be representative the African American spiritual lifestyle by reinforcing the con cept that the sacred exists in all things animate and inani mate (Cook and Wiley, 2000). This is exemplified in the way that African American churches provide resources such as food, shelter, financial aid, child care, recreation, health care, political action, cultural expression, and mental health services to meet the basic needs of the community (Cook and Wiley, 2000). On the whole, African American spirituality continues to be a significant source of strength, hope, meaning, identity, liberation, and forgiveness. It is also continues to play a central role in affirming ethnic, cultural, and historic pride (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990).

Role of Clergy

Within the African American church, the pastor is viewed as the leader and spokesperson for the congregations. The modern day pastor is representative of the tribal leaders and/or shamans of African tribes. The African chieftain was responsible for the welfare of his people acting as protector, provider, and counselor. The shaman offered spiritual guidance and was a liaison to the metaphysical realm. African American pastors have similar duties, serving as providers of spiritual knowledge and motivation, offering guidance to the troubled, and protecting the peo ple. The role of pastor in the African American church is one of reverence whose influence encompasses the church and the family, and extends out to the larger community (Cook and Wiley, 2000). As in African cultures, religious leaders are perceived as being knowledgeable profes sionals who are intermediaries between church members and the sacred (Idowu, 1990). The pastor sets the moral foundation of the church, and members often look to pastors for help with their problems and needs (Cook and Wiley, 2000). It is viewed as a pastor's duty to go to God with prayers on behalf of the individual, family, or community (Idowu, 1992).

See also: ❯ Communitas ❯ Religious Identity ❯ Shamans and Shamanism

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Ahimsa

Trish O'Sullivan

Ahimsa is a Sanskrit term meaning non harming. It is the supreme virtue in the three great religions of India Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is the first Yama or discipline in Yoga, the first precept in Buddhism and the first great vow in the Jain moral code. If this discipline or vow is kept than the others will automatically be attained. For example, the Buddhist precepts of truthful ness, non stealing, control of sexual activity, and avoid ance of intoxicating substances are forms of non harm of both self and other. This non harming ethic is said to benefit others not only through their ensured personal safety but also by the creation of a peaceful atmosphere wherein others are moved to give up their own hostility. Ashoka (268 233 BC) was an Indian emperor that used rapacious violence to conquer and enforce his rule killing thousands. He converted to Buddhism and adopted the practice of Ahimsa. The peaceful change that followed forever linked his name with Ahimsa.

The fulfillment of ethical demands removes existing karmic impurities that create suffering and prevents the accumulation of new impurities. Just as non harming is the root virtue leading to freedom from suffering, violence is the root cause of all suffering. Practitioners are expected to consciously minimize violence as much as is practicable so as to get rid of the violent attitudes of mind which are not suitable for meditation and will make bad karma.

While all three traditions focus on non harming in daily life, the Jains go to relatively extreme lengths to avoid harming any creature. Some sweep the ground as they walk so as to avoid stepping on any insects and/or

wear facemasks to prevent small insects from injury while breathing. The widespread custom of vegetarianism in India is related to the practice of Ahimsa.

The Indian Mahatma Gandhi utilized Ahimsa as a political tool, through which the Indian Colony achieved freedom from Britain. Other freedom fighters such as Mar tin Luther King, Jr. in the U.S. successfully applied these principles in the African American struggle for civil rights. While Gandhi was certainly a role model for MLK there is a pacifist tradition within Christianity also. Christian peace churches such as the Religious Society of Friends or Quakers closely adhere to Jesus's teaching of nonviolence.

The animal rights and environmental movements, are modern examples of a growing non harming conscious ness with a positive regard toward life including both individual life forms and the natural world as a whole.

Ahimsa and Psychology

All three traditions teach that nonharming must be practiced in thought, word and deed. Nonviolent com munication involves speaking truthfully with regard for the other person and listening deeply with compassion.

Thich Nath Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist Master teaches that psychological violence against the self occurs when feelings are held back and pain ignored. Nonvio lence involves being present and recognizing one's own pain or despair, otherwise pain builds and can push one to become caught in one's views or to lash out in anger.

Psychotherapy involves the examination and reduc tion of violent and other self harming thoughts and deeds. It involves the generation of compassion towards others who suffer or who have harmed one through the realization that all harm comes from others pain.

The conscious therapist is the embodiment of nonvi olence by maintaining a position of presence, listening and unconditional positive regard for the patient. It is this therapeutic stance that allows for healing to progress, eventually leading to a lessening of harming activities either internal or external in the patient's life.

See also: ❯ Buddhism ❯ Hinduism ❯ Psychotherapy

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Akedah

Lynn Somerstein

The Bible Story called the "*Akedah*," in Hebrew tells of the ending of ritual child sacrifice. It is frequently translated as the "Sacrifice of Isaac," but the correct translation is the "Binding of Isaac." Although the word "akedah," in Hebrew, denotes the bound limbs of an animal prepared for ritual sacrifice, Isaac is not sacrificed.

The events of the Akedah are well known. God ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac and Abraham climbed Mount Moriah together and approached the killing place. Abraham carried the knife, really a cleaver used for butchering animals, and the sacrificial fire. Isaac carried the wood to be used later to burn his body in an offering to God. Although Isaac asked Abraham where the sacrificial animal was, he knew that he was doomed; he did not resist when his father bound his hands with ropes, placed him on the funeral pyre, and reached out to slit his throat. Isaac's feet were not bound he could have run away.

Isaac submitted to his father's desire to kill him but he was saved when an angel appeared and stopped Abraham's hand. The Lord blessed Abraham and prom ised to multiply his seed "as the stars in the heavens and as the sand on the shore of the sea" (Genesis, 22:17 18).

A traditional understanding of the Akedah is that God did not want Abraham to kill Isaac because murder is wrong even if God commands it, and God will never again ask for anyone to submit to such a test of faith.

An alternative understanding of the Akedah is that it expresses perfect love. Abraham showed God that he loved Him perfectly when he agreed to sacrifice Isaac, and Isaac loved Abraham perfectly when he agreed to