



BRILL

*Archive for the psychology of Religion 29 (2007) 87-125*



www.brill.nl/arp

## A Psycho-ontological Analysis of Genesis 2-6.

**Jordan B. Peterson**

Department of Psychology  
University of Toronto

---

### Abstract

Individuals operating within the scientific paradigm presume that the world is made of matter. Although the perspective engendered by this presupposition is very powerful, it excludes value and subjective experience from its fundamental ontology. In addition, it provides very little guidance with regards to the fundamentals of ethical action. Individuals within the religious paradigm, by contrast, presume that the world is made out of what matters. From such a perspective, the phenomenon of meaning is the primary reality. This meaning is revealed both subjectively and objectively, and serves—under the appropriate conditions—as an unerring guide to ethical action.

The ancient stories of Genesis cannot be properly understood without viewing them from within the religious paradigm. Genesis describes the primary categories of the world of meaning, as well as the eternal interactions of those categories. Order arises out of Chaos, through the creative intermediation of Logos, and man is manifested, in turn. Man, a constrained Logos, exists within a bounded state of being, Eden. Eden is a place where order and chaos, nature and culture, find their optimal state of balance. Because Eden is a walled garden, however—a bounded state of being—something is inevitably excluded. Unfortunately, what is excluded does not simply cease to exist. Every bounded paradise thus contains something forbidden and unknown. Man's curiosity inevitably drives him to investigate what has been excluded. The knowledge thus generated perpetually destroys the presuppositions and boundaries that allow his temporary Edens to exist. Thus, man is eternally fallen. The existential pain generated by this endlessly fallen state can undermine man's belief in the moral justifiability of being—and may turn him, like Cain, against brother and God.

### Keywords

Evil, Genesis, Cain, Abel, atrocity, Logos, chaos, order, adversary, exploration, serpent, Paradise, sacrifice, resentment, frustration, fear

### Perception and Conception are Axiomatic by Necessity

In 1962, the philosopher Thomas Kuhn brought into public consciousness an idea that has since proved very influential. He claimed that scientific data could only be interpreted within a particular, bounded framework, which he termed a paradigm. He also believed that such paradigms were sometimes

© Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2007

DOI: 10.1163/008467207X188649

incommensurate (which meant that a person operating within one could not necessarily understand or evaluate the claims of a person operating within another). In recent years, we have come to understand more clearly both why paradigms are necessary and why they can be incommensurate. It also seems possible, now, to explain more fully why knowledge can genuinely progress, despite its paradigmatic limitations. The philosopher Daniel Dennett (1984) has taken pains over the last decade to focus scholarly knowledge on a phenomenon originating in the domain of artificial intelligence, whose nature must be understood before the ideas of paradigmatic necessity, incommensurability and progress can be explored more deeply. This phenomenon has become known as the “frame problem” (Lormand, 1999; Peterson & Flanders, 2002). The frame problem emerged unexpectedly in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics as the biggest obstacle to the development of machines capable of acting independently in real-world environments. Dennett believes that the frame problem is among the most significant and profound of those issues facing modern philosophers.

The self-evidence of the external world and its objects appears axiomatically obvious to the casual human perceiver, and was held as axiomatically true by scientists working within the behavioral paradigm for much of the late twentieth century. Artificial intelligence pioneers working on the development of independent machines, adapted to the real-world, originally took this self-evidence for granted, and presumed that the problem of intelligent behavior was one of planning and action, not of perceiving the world. Unfortunately, it turns out to be very difficult to perceive “objects” (or “stimuli”—the behaviorists’ equivalent), and their apparent self-evidence is a consequence of exceedingly complex unconscious neural activity operating invisibly behind the scenes of conscious perception. Thus, creating a machine that could perceive objects in any reliable general manner (a precondition, in theory, to acting upon them) proved impossibly difficult.

It turns out to be difficult to divide the chaos of the world into the ordered, discrete and predictable parts that make up object perception. Medin and Aguilar (1999) pointed out that even a small set of objects can be categorized in a near-infinite number of ways, and perception is an act of categorization, implicit though it may be. Consider, for a moment, the potential number of “relevant groupings of chessmen on a chessboard” during a game. Then realize that a game of chess is a very small and bounded world, compared to the real world of experience. The complexity of the world of experience exceeds the categorization capacity of artificial intelligence systems. Thus, we have no real-world general-purpose robots, and are unlikely to have them in the foreseeable future. Animals and human beings, by contrast, can exist in the real world, for a time, in their

specific niches. How? The idea of “paradigm” provides the beginning of an answer. Let us presume that the rather general term “paradigm” might be replaced by something more specific: that of the “axiomatic system”.

The mathematician Kurt Gödel generated a theorem (Gödel’s Theorem, 1931/1992), predicated on the idea that any axiomatic mathematical system depends for its integrity on the existence of axioms that cannot be proved or disproved within the axioms of that system. Understanding of this theorem—which essentially states that some “truths” have to be accepted on faith (or at least as pragmatic preconditions for application of the system)—allows for some useful insight into how a world too complex for full apprehension might still be categorized and perceived. Gödel’s observation that something must still remain outside the system in question means, in principle, that it might be the complexity of the world, theoretically irrelevant to the present purposes of the perceptual act, that can be folded up invisibly outside that system, at least temporarily (and in a particular locale), “inside the axioms”. What this means is that although all the features of the world of experience are actually variables (in that their full nature can never be so well revealed that they have been rendered permanently and absolutely predictable) some things can be taken for granted or treated as constants for some defined purposes in some particular situations for some limited time.

This means that a system can produce representations or other outputs that are “good enough” for some particular purpose and that may therefore be accepted and acted upon. If a photograph provides as much (purpose-specific) visual information about a given domain of experience as a brief glance at the actual domain provides then the photograph may be substituted and be implicitly accepted as a valid representation of that domain. (However it is always valid “for something” because the purpose provides part of the paradigm or axiomatic system that enables the image or representation to be “good enough”).

### **Stability and Anomaly: The Garden and the Snake**

In the second edition of his book (1970), Kuhn began to formalize two additional ideas, extending his earlier work. First, he posited that paradigms or axiomatic systems could be rank-ordered with regards to their general applicability. Second, he posited that a more general paradigm was “better” than a less general paradigm. This is an idea that was developed in somewhat different circumstances, and much earlier, by Jean Piaget (1985), who believed that children shifted through equilibrated stages of paradigm development that were both successive and progressive. An equilibrated cognitive developmental stage, in

Piaget's view, was one that produced no anomalies when used to act upon the world. Developmental stages became disequibrated when a phenomenon emerged in the experience of the child that could not be accounted for or predicted by the theory typifying that stage. Such anomaly-induced disequibration produces a state of "cognitive conflict" and motivates exploration, forcing "the subject to go beyond his current state and strike out in new directions" (Piaget, 1985, p. 10). Equilibration re-emerges when information generated by exploration alters the axioms of the previous state sufficiently so that the disequilibrating anomaly is now rendered predictable and controllable. This is a successful paradigm shift, in Kuhn's terminology.

Under such circumstances, Piaget had a simple rule for judging progression: a subsequent stage or paradigm was "better" than its predecessor if it allowed for the representation or pragmatic utilization of everything the predecessor allowed for, and additionally accounted for the anomaly that brought that predecessor to its knees. This is essentially identical to the stance that Kuhn adopted in 1970. Piaget and Kuhn thus came to believe that high-quality axiomatic systems or paradigms were increasingly less likely to be brought down by the emergence of anomaly. So we know, for example, that there are aspects of experience that Newtonian physics (and Euclidean geometry) can neither represent nor control that Einsteinian physics (and Riemannian geometry) can encompass and account for. Thus it is reasonable to presuppose 1) that Einsteinian physics is "better" than its Newtonian counterpart, 2) that the latter may be regarded as a special case of the former (or a nested axiomatic system within the former) and 3) that the reverse is in no way true.

The world cannot be perceived without simplification, because it is too complex. The application of a system of axioms to this complexity allows for its simplification and, thus, its perception, by reducing some of the complexity to axiomatic truth. Thus, it appears reasonable to presume that the act of perception, which provides deceptively self-evident results, emerges as a consequence of the action of (multiple) implicit or unconscious axiomatic systems. Furthermore, it seems clear that some axioms are more fundamental than others. I have argued elsewhere (Peterson, 1999) that there is a tight relationship between the hierarchical position of an axiom and the emotional and motivational consequences of its violation, such that the violation of deeper and more generalizable axioms releases not only more once-categorized and stabilized information, but more profound and disturbing emotion and motivation (primarily fear and incentive reward or motivation for exploration, released from theory-dependent tonic inhibition).

All systems of perception and conception are necessarily paradigmatic and incomplete. All necessarily incomplete paradigmatic systems employ axiomatic truths to protect their users from excess complexity, presuming stability where variability actually reigns. The axiomatic grounding of paradigmatic systems renders them prone to sudden and emotionally painful disruption. Despite this, some paradigmatic systems are more disruptible than others.

### **The Relationship between the Axioms of Religion and the Axioms of Science**

Systems that are incommensurate or in conflict differ in what they regard as axiomatic. This means that their mutual adherents disagree about the facts, not merely about what the facts imply. The apparent discrepancy that obtains between scientific and religious belief systems is arguably the most profound extant example of such axiomatic incommensurability. The existence of that incommensurability, its longstanding history, and its potential philosophical significance makes its analysis and clarification particularly necessary and desirable.

Modern science has provided us with some very profound axioms. The idea that everything is made up of matter is perhaps one of those, as is the notion that all matter is made up of atoms. Residual complexity remains: we don't understand the relationship between subjective experience and matter; atoms themselves are made up of complex sub-entities. Nonetheless, both axiomatic concepts have been exposed to many situations over a broad expanse of time and have not encountered any paradigmatically-incommensurate anomalies. They have generated many acceptable representations and opened up a broad variety of unforeseen domains of pragmatic utility. We can do many things with them, in many situations, over very long spans of time, and they all work (although the longest term consequences of our ability to manipulate atoms, for example, remain profoundly in doubt). Thus, we regard them as fundamentally true. What does that claim of truth imply for our understanding of the relationship between science and religion?

One possibility is that the axiomatic system of science accounts for representation and prediction so much more effectively than any axiomatic system attributable to the religious instinct that the former has merely supplanted the latter. This appears to be the position taken by radically anti-religious scientists such as Freud (1928/1991), Dawkins (1986) and Dennett (2006). Religious fundamentalists and traditionalists would take the opposite approach, arguing that

religious beliefs (at least those of a certain form, typically) are in fact axiomatically correct and the deep beliefs of science are in some, as of yet unrevealed, manner incommensurate with those beliefs and, consequently, erroneous.

Another possibility is that the axiomatic system of religion might yet be or prove to be commensurate with that of science, in some as of yet undetermined manner, and might therefore be regarded as a subset of a broader scientific view. The hypothesis that the principles of religion are fictional or mythological (in a non-pejorative sense) appears to be in keeping with this formalization. From such a perspective, the broadest world is indeed scientifically apprehensible. Nonetheless, subsets of that world can be adequately or even profoundly explained using religious formalizations, particularly in the absence of detailed scientific knowledge. This hypothesis of subordinate relationship allows the practices and ideas of religion to maintain at least a local value. Another possibility is that a third, superordinate axiomatic system may yet emerge, posit some deeper unity, and explain how the incommensurability of the two domains is only apparent.

Finally—and what seems least likely, on the surface of it—the axiomatic presuppositions of religious belief may in fact be profoundly different from those of science, but remain valid—and valid in a manner that would allow scientific thought to occupy a limited space of paradigmatic accuracy, within a broader and more fundamental religious view. It is for this most unlikely of propositions that I would like to argue, and have argued before (Peterson, 1999).

### **Science excludes Ethics from its Purview—but Ethics is not Necessarily Epiphenomenal**

A very pragmatically powerful and apparently internally consistent argument can be made that the fundamental building blocks of the world of experience, as represented religiously, are more complete and inclusive than those represented by science. However, this case can only be made at the very deepest of axiomatic levels. In this case, the incommensurability of religious and scientific thought must be considered at least as profound as the incommensurability of Einsteinian and Newtonian physics (and perhaps a good deal more so). It is worth restating the fact that this still may allow one paradigm (that of science) to remain appropriately nested, at some level, within the other (that of religion), because I am not interested in quibbling about the validity of scientific thought itself. It is self-evidently valid for many—but not all—purposes.

The religious domain, unlike the scientific, includes both representation and ethics. Religious beliefs are therefore about what things are *and* about what should be done with them. It is worth pointing out in this regard 1) that religious practice is a human universal and thus apparently evolved and 2) that representation and ethical action derived from the evolved religious instinct has been sufficiently accurate to ensure the survival and reproduction of the human form since religious thought arose (at least 50,000 years ago and, in its more implicit forms, far further back into the past (Peterson, 1999)). This means that religious truth has been pragmatically verified by Darwinian processes, at least in part (and this is a very important point, from the scientific and philosophical perspectives). Is there any other way of determining whether or not a claim is true, in the face of the frame problem? Life generates embodied, partial solutions to the frame problem. Insufficient solutions die before they reproduce. Religious belief is a solution, and all human beings carry that within them. Thus, religious belief is true enough. Are objective materialists right, or Darwinians right? All biological scientists—at minimum—are forced to presume the latter.

Is the scientific solution true enough? Truth derived from the scientific enterprise could easily destroy us, in its many potential applications (birth control pills, hydrogen bombs, computer technology, biological warfare, atmospheric destruction), and probably will. Progress in one area, according to one limited definition, does not mean progress in all, and accuracy and power developed in a narrow domain may reduce accuracy and power overall. We have no long-term Darwinian proof for the truth of science—and very little short-term proof. It may be objected: it depends on what you mean by ‘truth’—but that is precisely the point.

Although the religious domain includes both representation and ethics, the latter finds itself shut out of the domain of scientific thought (except for strictures on the generation and reporting of data)—formally so, and self-admittedly so, by the practitioners of science themselves. An *ought* cannot be derived from an *is*, as Hume pointed out long ago. Part of the reason this is so is a consequence of a phenomenon closely related to the frame problem, known as “combinatorial explosion”. Because the world of experience is so complex, the end results of any action cannot be computed with certainty, particularly with regards to increasingly distant times and more spatially separated locations. Complex systems are very sensitive to initial conditions, or small perturbations. Thus, the manner in which they will unfold cannot easily be predicted. An *ought* cannot be derived from an *is* in a complex situation at least in part because the *is* is always incomplete, and the incomplete *is* cannot be used to predict the outcome. Under some

limited conditions, this does not matter, but in any complex situation, it is a genuine problem. Additionally, determination of whether one outcome is “better” than another, in the first place, also presents an insolubly complex frame problem (should we fund AIDs research, or cancer research, or education or highway construction?). Thus it is not possible to say, scientifically, if you *should* cross the street. If this is not enough, there is also the problem of the unavoidable reliance of perception on intention and goal. Thus, what you see is always dependent, to some unspecified degree, on what you want (and this remains true even when a group is seeing). Nonetheless, the fact that a myriad of such decisions must be made and implemented every day means that ethics (how to act) presents an existential and perhaps an ontological problem as deep as that of representation. Thus, science is incomplete (and has been noted as such) in a markedly fundamental manner, and we remain forced to rely on some other unknown decision-making processes to determine how we should act.

Scientists have dealt with this problem in part, axiomatically: they adopt the working assumption that behavior is deterministic, so that the issue of *ought* never has to enter into it. However, if behavior is deterministic, it is certainly not so in any simple and modelable manner, and its mere definition as such does not necessarily invalidate the idea that the problem of ethics is important and complex (even as important and complex as the problem of representation). Furthermore, even scientists act as though ethical decisions might be genuinely real in their day-to-day behavior. It is clearly useful to make a deterministic simplification with regards to behavior, as the axioms of behaviorism led at the very least to neuroscience and an advanced psychopharmacology. All this means, however, is that the system that the axiom of determinism engenders is a powerful tool, for some purposes. However, the fact of such utility does not prove that ethics is epiphenomenal, in any broader sense. It could easily be just as useful, albeit for other purposes, to presume that behavior is not deterministic, and that the issue of how to act is a real problem, with genuine ontological significance.

The explicitly areligious scientific community (if such a broad generalization is allowed) presumes that the methods of science will provide a picture of the world that is at present reasonably complete and in the future may become more so. I believe that it is worthwhile to posit that such a claim only stands as reasonable because certain untenable claims are embedded invisibly in the axioms of the claim. These are claims about what experiential phenomena are allowed to be real, *a priori*. This is not a simple problem, and the proper solution to it is far from self-evident.

In addition to the problem of ethics, for example—which remains formally outside the domain of science—there exist other phenomena which could in

principle be granted the same *a priori* ontological status as the atoms of the material world. Phenomena that might be real include all of those within the broad domain of subjective experience, such as emotion and motivation, the apparent fact of individual awareness, and self-consciousness itself. It is possible that the existence of such things may be reducible to materialist first principles, but it is also possible that they may not. It is not precisely obvious, therefore, what phenomena should be considered primary—and the manner in which representation should be formulated and action undertaken depends implicitly on that decision. Thus, it seems reasonable 1) not to leap to any premature conclusions and 2) to risk experimentation with conceptual systems that presume alternative ultimate realities. I believe that there is a fundamental, even instinctual, similarity between different schools of religious thought, much as there is between different languages, and that in that similarity one such alternative conceptual system exists.

Such a conceptual experiment must begin with the preliminary acceptance of a deeply incommensurate set of axioms. Material entities and their somewhat metaphysical counterparts, forces, provide the building blocks of the objective world. The world of experience, however, is not the objective world. The world of experience includes what is subjective, from the objective perspective, as well as what is objective. It is this world that religion is about (or that is my assumption)—but not only religion. Existential and phenomenological philosophers and psychologists continually rediscover this world, under different guises (it is Heidegger's *Dasein*, for example). I would even say that this is the world of Freud, who remains for that reason so peculiarly difficult to dismiss, and that it was Jung's shocking discovery of this fact that ended the Freud-Jung friendship and collaboration.

The world of experience, like the objective world, has its constituent entities. For Heidegger (1927/1962) and the phenomenological psychotherapists who relied on his thought (Binswanger, 1963; Boss, 1963) these were, roughly speaking, the *Umwelt* (the environment as such, or the fact of the superordinate natural world), the *Mitwelt* (the world with others, or the fact of social existence) and the *Eigenwelt* (the fact of subjective being). Freud also posited what were essentially domains of experience, with substantive overlap: the id, or *it* (nature within), the superego (the cultural domain of ancestral spirits), and the ego (which Freud viewed as the rather powerless domain of individual being, trapped between the lower and upper titans). Thus, Freud was a phenomenologist, implicitly, and perhaps even an existentialist, although he thought of himself as a strict natural scientist (and was also that). For Jung and Erich Neumann, Jung's most brilliant student, these domains (*Umwelt, Mitwelt, Eigenwelt; Id, Superego,*

Ego) were the domains of the Great Mother, the Great Father, and the hero, the Son (Jung, 1967; Neumann, 1954, 1955).

I have previously suggested that these domains are fundamental to instinctual religious thought, for a variety of reasons, and that they might most simply and comprehensively be conceptualized as chaos, order and Logos—the process that mediates between chaos and order (Peterson, 1999; 2006). As fundamental domains, these categories of experience are not derived from anything more fundamental. Instead, they are the axiomatic entities from which everything else is, in turn, derived. There is evidence that they exist—even neuropsychological evidence (Peterson, 1999; Peterson & Flanders, 2002)—but the act of accepting their existence, at least for the purposes of conceptual experimentation, is essentially an *a priori* act of faith.

### **The Fundamental Axioms of Instinctual Religious Thought**

The world of experience is the totality of being, as experienced. This totality includes experiences that are public and communicable, experiences that are private, and those (like the experience of beauty) that occupy the grey area in between.

**Chaos** is the manner in which anomaly or the complexity of the world manifests itself before it can or has been perceived or conceptualized. It is *what there is* when *what there is* is as of yet unknown. It makes itself known in the absence of an expected outcome (a situation that is registered by a system of dedicated nervous system components). It signals the unspecified inadequacy of one or more currently explicit or implicit axioms (generally the latter). Finally, it is processed sequentially by unconscious motor, affective and motivational systems (reviewed in Peterson, 1999). By the time an anomaly is perceived, or partially perceived—let alone conceptualized, which implies a more abstracted level of processing—it has already been transformed in large part into order. Traumatic experiences, which are neither perceived nor conceptualized, remain chaotic—remain unnameable.

Chaos is neither being, nor nonbeing. It might be regarded as the simultaneous manifestation, in potential, of all entities and all of their relationships—in which case it might be conceptualized as something like *the future*, which is pure potential, but also nonetheless arguably extant. It might also be considered something similar to the complex unpredictability of music, which has its primary effect sub-conceptually. These analogies aid understanding, but still constitute an oversimplification of chaos, like all perceptions and categories.

Direct encounter with chaos can produce the experiential phenomena best described by Rudolf Otto (1917) as *numinous*. A *numinous* experience is a complex amalgam of terror and awe. It may be of some interest for the more biologically predisposed to note that such responses may be reasonably attributed to the amygdala, in the former case and to the caudal segment of the hypothalamus, in the latter (Swanson, 2000; LeDoux, 1996; Davis & Whalen, 2001). I point this out to show that the experience of such emotions or motivations is a consequence of activation in brain systems that are subperceptual and subconceptual: they are activated **prior** to conscious perceptual and conceptual experience, at least under unpredictable (chaotic) conditions.

**Order**, as contrasted to chaos, is the current domain of axiomatic systems, hierarchically ordered. It is the explicit and implicit superposition of this domain onto the underlying chaotic substrate that allows for perception, conception and action. Being itself is a consequence of this superposition. Thus, Being is an emergent property of the interaction between chaos and order. If order is well-established, then the substrate it represents (chaos) can vary across broad parameters without producing dangerously high levels of anomaly, within the experience of the perceiver (of the *being*).

**Logos**, whose nature has been most extensively defined by classical Greek and Christian thought, is a process, rather than an entity—the process that mediates between chaos and order—although it is embodied (incarnate). Logos can and normally does generate order from chaos, but can also serve to return order to chaos, when catastrophic axiomatic failure otherwise looms. It is an exploratory process, curious, voluntary, active and communicative, and is primarily regulated by pain and anxiety. The fact of its voluntarism (which has a very archaic neurological substrate) means that Logos can return order to chaos or produce order from chaos *creatively*, pre-emptively—as well as reactively (under those situations already defined by axiomatic failure). The archetype of the hero, the positive aspect of the individual, is the embodiment in drama of the active quality of Logos.

In two previous publications (Peterson, 1999; 2006) I attempted to demonstrate 1) how the first chapter of Genesis offers a dramatic description of the emergence of order from chaos as a consequence of the action of Logos and 2) how the idea of individual sovereignty and right is necessarily and irreducibly grounded in identification of the individual with Logos. My attention turns this time to the stories in the second through sixth chapters of Genesis. I am assuming, as I did for Chapter 1, that these stories cannot be interpreted properly without noting the nature of the broad context in which they occur (that of the already established fundamental interplay of chaos, order and Logos).

Genesis 1 broadly defines man's eternal domain, the essentials of his environment. Genesis 2-6 describes the eternal pattern of his actions and reactions within that domain. These stories are in no way bad science. They are, instead, profound phenomenology, clothed in drama.

### **Adam and Eve: Partners in Enmity**

*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*

The second creation story in Genesis is a much earlier work than the first, at least in its explicitly authored form, although its origins are also buried in the deep reaches of prehistory. I believe it has nonetheless been placed by tradition in its proper narrative position. It is as if the stage setting (the nature of being) is laid out before the action (the story of Adam and Eve) begins. There are still contradictions in the sequence of events in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, but these are details, in a sense. The overarching order is entirely appropriate. Perhaps the unknown compilers and editors of Genesis recognized this, implicitly, prior to sequencing the stories. Perhaps their incontestable verbal genius enabled them to see the better story (although not necessarily to know why it was better).

*The man and the woman*

*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

It is of course contrary to the entire scheme of nature that woman be derived from man, and it is very tempting to read a simple patriarchal prejudice into that derivation. I think it is more appropriate to give these ancient and incomprehensible stories the benefit of the doubt and to search for something more profound. Logos is symbolically masculine. There are diverse reasons for this (see Neumann, 1954) that have little to do with simple ideological prejudice, or with gender, *per se*. The profound implicit idea put forth in this creation sequence (woman from man) is that the individual woman, rather than the mere female, is a product of Logos,<sup>1</sup> and not simply a daughter of matter (*mater*, mother) or

<sup>1</sup> A similar idea is put forth in *The Gospel of Thomas* (114), in more thoroughly elaborated form: Simon Peter said to them, "Make Mary leave us, for females do not deserve [everlasting?] life." Jesus said, "Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of Heaven."

nature. Thus the story does not denigrate the female, as is now commonly postulated, but elevates human being itself, man and woman, above its simply material and symbolically feminine substrate.

*The man and the garden*

*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*

In Genesis 2:7 man, made earlier in the image of the Logos, is provided with a defined and limited habitat, Eden. This means at least in part that the powerful potentiality of Logos as such is restricted in the very beginning in the same manner that the individual Logos finds itself restricted, here and now: it is an axiomatic truth that *man* always has a *place*. It is for this reason that the Logos even as incarnated in Christ had to undergo *kenosis* or emptying. Everything cannot fit in one place.

It is true at the deepest levels of meaning that place is composed of order and chaos, but it is also true, proximally, that each place is a defined and limited locale in time and space. This means that the world of experience is under “earthly” or mundane conditions an experience of historical particulars (but also that this experience can be transcended and the more fundamental reality beneath, *mysterium* and *fascinans*, may be unexpectedly revealed).

What is the nature of Eden, the place of man? The name itself offers hints. “... Eden signifies in Hebrew ‘delight, a place of delight’ ... our own English word Paradise, which is from the Persian, *pairi*—‘around,’ *daeza*—‘a wall,’ means properly a walled enclosure. Apparently, then, Eden is a walled garden of delight...” (Campbell, 1973, p. 25). There are also intimations that the word may be related to the Ugaritic base ‘*dn*’, meaning “a place well-watered throughout”. Thus, if we continue with our new ontological assumptions, we might make the following observations:

A walled garden is a productive natural place, given order by structure. Thus, it is a localized replication of the interplay of chaos and order. The man, a kenotic Logos, is placed there to inhabit and keep it. The fact that the garden may also be a well-watered place intimates the same. Water, the primal element, commonly represents fertility and generative chaos. However, the garden itself is tended, structured and ordered. Thus, a garden is both productive and sheltered—particularly if it is walled, and well-watered throughout. The garden, a microcosm of being, is in turn the place of man, female and male, who are microcosms of Logos.

*The garden and the tree*

*And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*

A walled garden is also a place that is separated from other places (the places outside the wall) by structure, so that it may be productive and safe. The ancient representation of Ygdrasil, the Scandinavian world tree, is instructive in this regard. The roots of Ygdrasil extend down into the primal water of the world, which nourish and replenish it, while it is simultaneously devoured by the snakes or serpents of chaos. Ygdrasil grows up through the center of the world, just as the tree of knowledge grows up through Paradise (Peterson, 1999).

The microcosm of Eden is an abstracted place, the environment of man, which is part of nature and chaotic in some sense, yet part of culture and orderly. It is the combination of these two that makes the garden productive. Man inhabits a microcosm, in an embodied, practical sense. However, the domain of his abstracted conceptual and perceptual forms—the world of his thoughts—also has a microcosmic nature, abstracted once more even from the already restricted garden. Otherwise, his ideas could never be useful, once re-embodied, for maneuvering in Eden. Our field of experience is pragmatically limited by the physical structures we inhabit and create, which regulate our temperature and shelter us so that variability in climate and social environment can be safely transformed into an ignorable constant: an axiom. Such limitation allows us to benefit from the productivity of that environment. The ideological structures we inhabit perform precisely the same purpose. In a practically simplified world, we can ignore complexity, while still gaining what is necessary. In a conceptually or perceptually simplified world, however—as in a garden—much remains both outside and underneath.

It might also be pointed out that the proper balance between chaos and order, unpredictability and certainty, potential and actuality also produces a “spiritual” reincarnation of Eden, so to speak, at any experiential point in time and place. This spiritual reincarnation is a sense of involvement and awareness that manifests itself both as genuine meaning and as existential justification for the vulnerabilities of being. The individual who has discovered meaning and follows it can come to more or less permanently inhabit this state.

The simplified Logos inhabits a simplified environment—but the outside and the underneath can never be completely eradicated. What is simplified and

ignored is still there, even if it has been rendered temporarily constant and invisible. The simple biological fact of curiosity is evidence of that. Even a rat, satiated in motivation and emotion, will explore spontaneously (Rolls, 1999). His nervous system defaults to a mildly interested state, as a consequence of the resting activation of neurons in the subsystems of his brain devoted to exploration, and he is driven to search for what he still does not know in his temporarily productive and stable environment.

The human being is likewise curious, characterized by “original sin”; characterized by the primary fault of Pandora. There is always something unknowable in every situation of putative absolute knowledge. Curiosity drives the exploratory system inexorably towards the unknowable, even when (and sometimes because) it has been justly forbidden (*justly* because some boxes, once opened, can never be closed again). Thus, the stability of Eden is dependent on a certain level of ignorance, or unconsciousness. What is ignored still lurks, however, and curiosity drives itself precisely there, despite fear and tradition. Unfortunately, the revelation attendant upon its discovery could well mean that nothing can ever be the same again.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the classic world-tree of mythology, a structure which extends from one domain (that of the earthly or even the hellish) to another (that of the heavenly). A tree can be climbed. The individual who inhabits a tree can move himself from one level to another, voluntarily. We are not so far from our primarily arboreal ancestors that the image of the tree as central to being has become fundamentally incomprehensible. Imagine that bounded conceptual systems are hung in hierarchical fashion, upon an axis, symbolically, one above the other, each amenable to construction, analysis and reconstruction by consciousness, by Logos. Imagine furthermore that such consciousness or Logos is shaped by the conceptual systems it inherits and produces but that it also moves freely up and down that axis, the *axis mundi*, the transformative rod of Asclepius, the cross, the Bodhi tree, stretching from the lowest depths of the hierarchy of being to the very highest reaches.

Imagine that each level of the hierarchy, productive and functional, nonetheless remains incomplete because of its exclusion of much of the world—and that such incompleteness beckons and demands further exploration. The domesticated and habituated animal is familiar with its cage—or familiar enough so that it is not longer as afraid, *a priori*, as it was when it was first introduced there. The cage is never so familiar, however, that it has excluded all novelty. It is this remaining novelty that attracts an animal’s attention when it is satiated and calm but not sleeping. It is certainly possible that a rat too exploratory may poke its

nose into trouble, and reveal in its interactions with the “understood” environment some aspect that is dangerous or even fatal. It even may be that such a rat will endanger its entire social group (assuming the existence of such) by bringing home a poisoned food source or a parasite or by revealing its lair unwittingly to an alert predator, such as a snake.

Human beings are foragers, par excellence—and it is an interesting consequence of our evolutionary history that the systems that less large-brained mammals use for the discovery of food and other necessary resources are precisely those systems that our higher-order cognitive systems hijack, so to speak, when they are foraging not for sustenance but for information. Human beings are information foragers. They are thus drawn inevitably both to what they do not know, and to what is forbidden. Thus, original sin is indeed heritable, as the Christians have always claimed. Is this inherited curiosity and disobedience a sin? The classic Christian answer is, of course, yes—and no. It is a sin, in that it involves the defiance of God and the demolition of Eden. It is also the precondition for self-conscious being and history—and the potential manifestation in that history of the fully incarnated redemptive hero, the Logos.

#### *The serpent*

*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.*

Human beings, like chimpanzees, appear innately wary of and attentive to reptilian features, if not outright fearful (Ohman & Mineka, 2003). Thus the reptile appears to implicitly manifest key features of divinity, *mysterium tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans*—particularly if it is *subtil* (OED: Chiefly of fluids: not dense, thin, rarefied; penetrating, et. by reason of tenuity). Why? Snakes are indeed dangerous. They strike suddenly, rapidly, and often without warning. The sight of a snake activates the same systems as anomaly, unpredictability, frustration, disappointment and threat (Ohman & Mineka, 2003; LeDoux, 1996; Peterson, 1999). Reptiles, more generally, have been dangerous to mammals for some sixty to two hundred million years. The reptile can thus easily come to stand for (or is *a priori* indistinguishable from, a more accurate notion) the chaotic unknown lurking underneath and outside the current Eden or Paradise. Snakes and reptiles are also deeply fascinating. Children frequently become obsessed with dinosaurs (Google accesses almost one and a half million webpages devoted to the juxtaposition of the two). Chimpanzees encountering a python will utter a specific call, a “snake wraa.” The group will then come near, to stare at the snake. “Typical facial expressions are those of fear and curiosity.

Physical reassurance contact is often made (especially mutual embracing), and eye contact among individuals is frequent. After tens of minutes, members finally begin to disperse. Some individuals, however, show exaggerated and prolonged interest" (Wallauer, 2002). In addition to its ability to frighten and fascinate, the reptile also sheds its skins and transforms, like chaos, which manifests itself chiefly in transformation. Structure is static (hence "the state"), but it is in change that the chaotic makes itself known. The combination of these three attributes makes the reptilian form a powerful tool for representation.

The lurking serpent is Tiamat, the original dragon of chaos, revealing herself in initially reduced or microcosmic form within the confines of Eden. In the Mesopotamian myth, Tiamat reappears only when her consort, Apsu, is destroyed, through the ignorant and destructive acts of the elder gods (Peterson, 1999; 2006). Chaos re-emerges when order is destroyed, even if it is destroyed unconsciously. Tiamat, explicitly feminine, lurks subtly in the chaotic waters of the beginnings. Eve, the first woman, partakes in the capacity of the feminine Tiamat to produce existential chaos and to bring about both self-consciousness and change.

#### *The woman and the serpent*

*And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

Why is the woman originally allied with the serpent? First, her physical form makes her the involuntary embodiment of chaos, in addition to her role as the daughter of Logos. Like chaos, the feminine eternally gives birth to new forms. Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, the feminine makes man eternally self-conscious. Her very existence illuminates his most egregious faults. This makes her man's most necessary companion, his biggest challenge, and his mortal enemy, simultaneously. Woman is allied with nature, mythologically. What is nature? From the Darwinian perspective, nature is the force of natural selection. Women are selective maters, in contradistinction to their closest relatives, female chimpanzees. It is even possible that this selectivity was the primary driving force behind the rapid differentiation of human beings—but not chimpanzees (Wade, 2006)—from their mutual ancestor. This means that the terrible force of natural selection is mediated in the case of humanity (and most particularly in the case of human males) through the individual and highly judgmental selective female. Thus, the woman judges each man she encounters as fit or unfit for reproduction. Most frequently, she finds him lacking. A more complete judgment can hardly be imagined. The reflection of this found lack is a definite aid to the

development of enhanced self-consciousness among men (as can be observed at any social situation involving single men and women). Is this a good thing? Perhaps self-consciousness motivates necessary change. Regardless, as an emotional phenomenon self-consciousness loads with anxiety, pain and anger in factor analysis of fundamental trait personality features (McCrae & Costa, 1997). If self-consciousness is a good, then—an aid to transformation and development—it is nonetheless rooted firmly within the domain of the negative emotions and produces information painfully through that root.

The female is also the producer of self-consciousness within her own soul—as the ideal female body, youthful and fecund, appears innately attractive to both genders (Chivers, Rieger, Latty & Bailey, 2004). It is thus the archetypal standard of comparison against which all proximal females are driven to compare themselves (much to their specific and eternal self-conscious pleasure (Joshe, Herman & Polivy, 2004) and dissatisfaction (Bessenoff, 2006; Strahan, Wilson, Cressman, Buote, 2006)).

#### *The serpent and wisdom*

*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

Every hypothetically closed and stable system still remains open to the outside. Something is always intrinsically “not in the plan”, because the plan excludes—but what is excluded still exists. Thus, it is not possible for God to make Eden without a serpent lurking within it. The limited Logos can only exist within a simplified and productive place, but what is simplified is still present and will produce unexpected events. The Father can forbid, out of concern for his children’s safety, but what is still present but hidden inevitably beckons to curiosity, even if it is forbidden and feared. This is because what is still present but hidden also promises. The discovery of what is not yet understood is what produces an expansion of personality, as the information generated by exploration is assimilated and accommodated to. Such expansion is necessary to further mastery and understanding. However, what is still present and hidden and promises and transforms also destroys. New information demolishes old knowledge structures, old paradigms. Failure undermines naïve self-confidence, but may produce a more resilient personality, if the reasons for failure are revealed and mastered. Rejection produces pain, but may also inspire the eradication of weakness and insufficiency and teach more careful seeking.

The snake offers the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This is no ordinary snake and no ordinary tree, as we have seen, but it is also no ordinary fruit. It has the capacity to entirely transform moral understanding, of the world, of the relationship between the absolute and man, and of the self. It is in the investigation of the unknown, or in the encounter with the unknown, that moral transformation finds its genesis. The fateful fruit of the Garden of Eden is necessarily derived from—offered by—the lurking serpent.

*Nakedness and the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil*

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

Evidently the fruit, incorporated, produces a phenomenological transformation of sufficient magnitude to forever change the nature of experience—to make it self-conscious experience. This is the fruit whose ingestion is motivated by curiosity (and more particularly, by curiosity about what was forbidden). The fruit is offered, paradoxically, by the snake. This means that the terrifying and forbidden is also eternally nourishing. This is why the roots of Ygdrasil are gnawed by serpents and replenished by water. This is why the healing staff of Aesclepius is intertwined by snakes. Contact with the eternally upsetting domain of the unknown provides the information whose ingestion produces transformation.

The transformation produces immediate enlightenment. Adam and Eve can finally *see*. Their now-transcendent vision, produced by incorporation of what was forbidden, produces within them a vastly heightened self-consciousness—a terrible catastrophe, for a limited being, but a precondition for genuine individual existence. Adam and Eve instantly realize their individual naked vulnerability (a realization that emerges during cognitive development at a very young age; a fact that only human beings seem cognizant of, in any complex sense). What does knowledge of naked vulnerability mean? It means that human beings are painfully conscious of their limitations. We know that we are flawed in relationship to our ideals. We understand that our being is limited in place and in time. We know we are vulnerable to death, disease, and insanity. We know that we can be betrayed by our embodied being, and undermined, socially, by our peers and even by our friends. All of this makes us ashamed, fearful, and self-conscious.

Why is this specifically *moral* knowledge?—or, why is specifically moral knowledge apparently attendant on this? Perhaps knowledge of limitation and vulnerability is a genuine precondition for the capacity to differentiate good from evil. Animal aggression and predation is mere territoriality and survival, and there is no clear animal ethic. Non-human creatures are beyond or, more accurately, before good and evil. Evil, however, is not mere aggression or anger. It involves the self-conscious exposure and exploitation and enhancement of vulnerability. The predators of the animal kingdom are dangerous and deadly but they are not evil. They are not resentful of their own limitations and do not seek revenge. Neither are they good—because goodness is not mere peacefulness and cooperation, and it is not merely the absence of aggression. An action that is good involves the conscious rejection of evil and, in some important manner, the simultaneous acceptance of and transcendence over vulnerability. Good and evil are traits that are specific to human beings and it makes sense that they are dependent on or intertwined with self-consciousness, another specifically human trait.

*Nakedness, fear and voluntary alienation from God*

*And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

It is the nature of man to embody Logos, to a lesser or greater degree (from the instinctively religious perspective). Thus, we believe, intrinsically, that illumination and enlightenment are possible, and that such states are to be both intensely and validly desired and worked diligently towards. We can climb the *axis mundi*, and enter the domain of the gods. Why, then, is illumination so rare?

Adam and Eve immediately clothe themselves after they wake up, and become able to see their own vulnerability. They interpose the most basic implements of culture between themselves and a world whose essential danger to vulnerable self-conscious being has been suddenly and terribly revealed. Consequently, they hide from God, who is accustomed to walking with Adam in Eden. The God who created man is Logos, and that Logos is reflected in his created being, with whom he consorts. Thus, to hide from God is to refuse to continue the relation-

ship with Logos, which is the process by which order and chaos are continually differentiated—the process by which being itself is generated.

Self-conscious knowledge of vulnerability makes the individual too afraid to “walk with God”. This is avoidance of meaning, responsibility and destiny. Such avoidance has catastrophic consequences. Existence, properly undertaken, produces a condition of being that makes knowledge of finitude tolerable. That properly undertaken existence means embodiment of Logos, in spite of vulnerability. To hide from God, as a consequence of revealed nakedness, is to destroy the incarnation of Logos and to immediately become subject to the privations of merely human existence.

Adam’s sin, which is partly his curiosity-inspired rebellion, is also more than that—and what is *more* may also be *more significant*. Adam refuses to continue his relationship with Logos, because he is awake and afraid, and he blames the archetype of femininity, Eve, for his enlightened cowardice. After all, she made him self-conscious. His immediate abandonment of courage and responsibility endears him neither to God nor to woman. Perhaps this is the real sin of Adam. Had he not compromised himself further, after eating the apple, God might have relented, and allowed him to stay in Paradise.

*Pain, work and the dawn of history*

*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Eve’s essential self-conscious tragedy is the necessary reliance on Adam, and on the social order that the dependence of her children forces upon her—accompanied or perhaps foreshadowed by the pain of childbirth. This “punishment” has nothing to do with any spiritual inadequacy, intrinsically characteristic of females. Even among chimpanzees (although not among bonobos) the essential social hierarchy is patriarchal, and the females live somewhat outside and apart from that.

The large brain of the human being—a precondition for his emergent self-consciousness—brings with it dramatic and lasting consequences for the human

mother. A baby's skull is too big for the birth canal, even though female hips are almost too wide to allow for easy running. The skull is compressible—incompletely formed—to partially compensate for this. Furthermore, the baby is born much earlier, much less developed, than are the babies of smaller brained but equally sized mammals. The “proper” gestation period for a human baby is in the order of one and a half years, not nine months (Passingham, 1975). Thus, the human infant is stunningly dependent, to his own detriment (given his dependence on the self-conscious benevolence of the mother and the social surround), but also to the lasting disadvantage of the woman, who gives birth in pain and is then primarily responsible for sheltering and protecting her externalized fetus. Given this burden, she is inevitably vulnerable, dependent on her mate for protection and resources, and alienated from the “patriarchal” power structure. Thus, the description in Genesis 3:16 is not so much proscriptive, as self-interested but threatened Judeo-Christian (and Islamic?) patriarchs might have it, as it is tragically descriptive.

Adam's essential self-conscious tragedy is the necessity of work. Animals have biology and they have social structures, if they are social. Sometimes their social structures have rituals and traditions that are somewhat specific to that structure. However, these structures are not remembered. They are merely embodied. Furthermore, their construction is not conscious. It is emergent. Human beings, cursed with the knowledge of their own finitude and vulnerability, painfully aware not only of the present but of the past and the future, must make plans and act to defend that vulnerability. They must continually discount the pleasures of the present in favor of the security of the future. This is particularly true of men, at least historically—and not only to reduce uncertainty. Women's child-induced dependence makes the productivity or potential productivity of a mate a critical factor in female selection. Furthermore, male productivity and utility is key to male status, which provides additional access to the resources of other males. Thus, as women are doomed to subservience, men are doomed to toil. Perhaps the difference is not that great.

*The irreversibility of the loss of Paradise*

*Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

Once the cat is out of the bag, it can never be put back in. The bag shrinks—or the cat grows. This means not only that a particular form of novel information or

knowledge may demolish a previously stable and Edenic state of being and conception, but that the capacity for such curiosity-inspired knowledge acquisition is permanent, once acquired. Thus, any stable state, any walled garden, will be a temporary abode at best for those who inhabit it. Even if anomaly does not emerge, of its own accord, utopia will be pulled down by the instincts and desires of its inhabitants. It was Dostoevsky's revelation that no Utopian state was possible, even in principle, that demolished his socialist beliefs (and simultaneously propelled him to the literary heights). Is the situation therefore hopeless? Is man cursed by his very nature? Pandora retained hope in her box as a comfort to mankind when she released evil and uncertainty upon the world. Is there an analog in Genesis? Perhaps not. However, it was the Christian revelation that such hope was Christ.

### **Cain and Abel: Adversary and Logos**

*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel.*

#### *Prototypes of self-conscious being*

According to the tradition crystallized in Genesis, Cain and Abel are the first two human beings born in the normal manner—born of a woman, rather than created by God. Furthermore, they are the first inhabitants of the fallen world, rather than Eden. In a very important sense, therefore, they are the first real human beings. This, and their privileged placement at the very dawn of history, mythologically speaking, makes them prototypes. Cain and Abel represent two attitudes, two patterns of behavior, two modes of being, one set against the other, generated in response to the new conditions of self-conscious being. They are the forerunners of all other men, and their respective and opposed modes of being are played out now in diverse and particularized form by every living individual.

Cain is the eldest brother. In many cultures, including that of ancient Israel, the eldest brother occupied a position of high status, by birthright alone. The first-born male typically inherited his father's land and property. This made him the accidental beneficiary of tradition. Although such a division seems arbitrary to the modern sensibility, the practice existed for important reasons, and was likely an emergent ethic, rather than one that was planned. Land divided up too "fairly"—equally among all the brothers of a given family, for example—would

over the course of only a few generations be parsed into plots too small to support anyone. A society that handled the intergenerational transmission of property in this manner would soon be characterized by permanent scarcity and conflict. Old, stable societies settled, by a quasi-evolutionary process, into configurations that did not allow for such rapid dissolution. It was arguably better for the second and later born sons to know from the start that they were going to have to make their own way in the world. In addition, the fact that this fate was arbitrarily bestowed upon them meant it could not be attributed to some intrinsic flaw in their own makeup, by themselves or others, but flowed naturally from the mysterious workings of divine law and tradition.

Surprisingly, this law of primogeniture is broken very frequently in the Old Testament, which is a very radical book. The preference of God is frequently granted to the interloper, the younger brother, rather than to the individual whom tradition typically blesses. Many of the Old Testament's most revolutionary heroes—Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and David—are younger sons. In some manner this appears indicative of narrative insistence on the free will of God, of His ability to transcend both human tradition and His own rules. However, something deeper is also at work.

The older son, an arbitrarily chosen beneficiary of tradition, is for that reason also prone to two cardinal temptations. First, he can identify self-servingly with tradition, because of the favoritism it has shown him, and become unthinkingly conservative. Second, he can fall victim to pride, because of his high and privileged status. The blindness and arrogance of the older brother is for those reasons a very common theme in fairy tales and folk stories. Frequently, for example, the privileged elder is the first to set off on a special quest (for the water of life, for the hidden kingdom, for the fortune in far lands). His most common mistake is contempt. Over-confident, he does not deign to take advice from the trees and the rocks and the animals and the gypsy women and the dwarves, and he ends up entrapped or entombed or devoured by some monster. The younger brother, by contrast, less rewarded by nature and society, is also less likely to presume that he has all the answers. He is often a bit of a fool, at least by reputation, but he also knows that everything that needs knowing is not already in his hands. This makes him more likely to pay attention and to listen. He is ignorant and humble, and because of this, he can learn. The gypsies and the dwarves give him advice and magic tools. The small and useless animals he befriends, without hope of reward, later come to his rescue. This means that the younger brother, although generally less, can sometimes be much more. It is when he adopts the latter role that he is a revolutionary, and highly favored by God.

*Multiple valid modes of being are simultaneously possible*

*And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

There are commentators who regard the fact that Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a tiller of the ground a reflection of an underlying conflict in history between pastoralists and farmers. Perhaps this is true. Furthermore, the fact that Christ has also been regarded as a shepherd and as a younger brother (to Satan, for example, by Milton) is by no means irrelevant. The density of content in such stories, and in the interrelationship between them, makes their archaeological excavation and textual analysis endlessly fruitful. For the present purposes, however, the particulars of the brothers' occupations are not as important as the fact of their existence. Abel has a profession, and so does Cain. Professions, which can be considered mere jobs, mere means to an end, can also be regarded more broadly as substantive modes of being or paradigms, determining in large part the manner in which an individual confronts the world. Such broader modes of being can differ from one another dramatically in both means and ends, function successfully despite this difference, and yet not necessarily exist in opposition. The world is complex in form and content, and complexly productive. This means that people with very different views and behaviors can all confront the world, in their different manners, and still thrive.

A plumber and a lawyer can both live, despite the fact that they inhabit different conceptual and behavioral worlds. This is an essentially pragmatic view of human existence. Perhaps the world would be a more peaceful place if we came to realize that Christians and Jews or Jews and Muslims are more like lawyers and plumbers than they are like philosophers of being. This all means that Cain and Abel could both function in the world in the protective and narrowed cocoons of their professions. The brothers are not destined by God for conflict. Nonetheless, conflict emerges.

*Rejection of necessary sacrifice*

*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof.*

This description of sacrifice is the pivotal point of the whole narrative. Unfortunately, this is just where understanding the story of Cain and Abel becomes difficult for the modern individual, because of its archaic nature. We do not understand, anymore, what it means to make an "offering unto the Lord". In fact, the whole notion of sacrificing to the Lord seems not only incomprehensible but

also downright unseemly, given the frequent involvement of death and suffering and the deep background echoes of human sacrifice that surround the ancient idea. However, there is more to the story than meets the modern eye.

Ideas come from the bottom up even more often than they come from the top down. The revelatory force of an idea is frequently a consequence of the secondary recoding in language of some deep, pre-existing pattern of behaviour and presumption, rather than the generation of that pattern in language, *ex nihilo*. That is why Plato believed that all knowledge was remembering, and why Nietzsche knew that rationality was inextricably grounded in morality. Children play games before they know what they are playing. Societies are much more complex than games. This means that societies of people act out patterns that are so complex it might take centuries or even millennia of observation before the nature of the pattern can become implicitly coded in stories, let alone coded more explicitly in philosophy or law.

Rituals of sacrifice are extremely common among archaic people. Perhaps they have their ultimate origin in the behavioral practice of human sacrifice. In pre-Columbian meso-America, for example, up to twenty-five thousand human beings a year were sacrificed to keep the sun on its eternal course. In India, right up to the end of the nineteenth century, the sacrificial rituals performed to propitiate Kali, the Goddess of Destruction, involved the daily bloody death of hundreds of animals (Neumann, 1955). Kali demanded the sacrifice of these animals, to appease her terrible side, so that she could then manifest her benevolent aspect, and shower blessings on the world. The identification of psychological traits with the sacrificed animals (the goat with lust, for example, and the bull with pride) was not uncommon among the participants in such rituals. Thus, when a goat was sacrificed, so was lust—and this appeased the terrible aspect of the unknown. This trait attribution is an indication of the increasing psychologization or abstraction of the sacrificial practice.

Among the people of the Old Testament, the idea of human sacrifice was still so real that the story of God asking Abraham to offer up his son, Isaac, remained easily comprehensible. The idea expressed in this story is that a truly faithful man will let nothing stand between himself and his moral obligation to the transcendent (even, and most particularly, that which he loves most). God, of course, takes mercy on Abraham, because of his faith and devotion, and allows him to sacrifice a ram, in Isaac's stead. This story presents a narrative condensation of part of the process whereby the ritual act became the psychological transformation. First it is a human, then a valued animal, substituting for the human, then the value itself. The idea underlying all of these variants is that God, when angered, requires the sacrifice of what is most loved before he will manifest his

benevolence. This is all acted out—and very seriously. The most dramatic (and, to the modern mind, most horrific) enactment is that of the ritual killing of a human being. The next most visceral dramatization is the sacrifice of an animal. Then it is the painful psychological act of offering up of a close connection or value or dream or wish. This was not first an idea, and then something clothed in dramatic form. The idea—even the capacity for the psychological transformation—is derived from the drama, and not the reverse.

Why would God be pleased by the voluntary offering of what is currently most loved? Why would such a sacrifice have to involve blood—as certain Christian fundamentalist sects insist, even today? The answers to these difficult questions are right in front of us (see also Mark 10:17-25, where the idea is more abstractly re-presented). We already know. We just do not see the equivalence between our now abstract ideas and actions, and their behavioral and dramatic precursors. The Japanese of World War II, for example, commonly held that a leader who had failed in battle or whose ideas were wrong (the two concepts were not really distinguishable) was morally obligated to kill himself. The error of the ideas and the error of the embodiment of those ideas in the particular man had not yet been clearly differentiated, even in such a complex society, even so recently. The Japanese did not understand Popper's (1985) dictum: a man's ideas can die (like Christ<sup>2</sup>—although Popper did not say that) in his stead. Perhaps the idea of the dying and resurrecting savior has to become universal before such a conception can be clearly formulated and grasped.

Survival demands that leaders who are not successful no longer be followed. If a failed leader is put to death, then his mode of being will no longer be imitated, and his path no longer trodden. However, it is not beyond reason to presume that a person might learn from his failures, and change his ideas, regardless of his pride and his sentimental attachment. This means he has to sacrifice what he previously held as ideal, as sacrosanct.

Even in a more general sense it is obvious that success requires the capacity to make the right sacrifices. We will say, without reflection, that “all our sacrifices paid off” in the case of our success. By this we mean that our willingness to give up ideas or actions or possibilities that truly mattered (or it was no sacrifice at all) served as a precursor to our eventual triumph. The successful modern entrepreneur is successful because he invests blood, sweat and tears. The successful mother sacrifices her individual interests and comfort to the care of her children.

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Whitefield, G. (ca 1750). Sermon 16: The Observation of the Birth of Christ. Retrieved from The Anglican Library, October 16, 2006, at <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/whitefield/index.htm>.

Conversely, it is often the hopeless clinging to a previous ideal—however dysfunctional that has now become—that holds back progress now, and in the future. Thus, what is and what was loved can easily become an impediment to walking with God.

Something analogous is necessary, on an even more fundamental level. The human infant is born with more neural connections than he or she ever has again. These connections are ruthlessly pruned between the ages of two and four, when the particular tracts that are utilized, practiced and rewarded survive and the remainder degenerate. The well adapted four-year old child has already sacrificed an immense amount of potential to become what he actually is. A similar process occurs during late adolescence, when adult identity is catalyzed. Another round of drastic pruning takes place, as the personality dies into what is in many ways its final form. Sacrifice is necessary to the development of a complex, particularly adapted individual, even at the neuronal level.

Stories such as Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904/2006) warn us about the consequences of refusing this process of continual specialization and actualization. Pan refuses to abandon the pluripotentiality of childhood. He remains leader of his magic kingdom, in consequence—but the kingdom is Neverland, a place that does not really exist. Neverland is inhabited only by other lost boys and tyrants—and even its putative ruler can never get the girl, Wendy. As a child, Wendy is very much attracted by Pan's ability to fly, his apparent freedom, but she grows up, accepts her particularized and limiting responsibilities, and leaves him far behind. Peter Pan is the archetype of the individual who has fallen prey to the Oedipal process, first outlined by Freud. In an odd way, his sin is the reverse of Adam's. He refuses to eat the fatal apple, and never allows himself to be cast out of the privileged but ultimately unreal Eden of childhood. Adam lives in hope and suffering—but Pan never lives at all.

It is absolutely impossible to overestimate what pain the development of the capacity for sacrifice has cost the race of man. Human beings are the only creatures who must voluntarily give up the paradisaal state of absolute immersion in the present to concentrate on an eternally distal goal. The capacity to discipline ourselves in this terrible manner—the capacity to enslave ourselves and give up fleeting but very real pleasures—was bought at a terrible price. We had to practice sacrifice in ritual long before it became an internalized and psychological capacity. Modern people have by no means stopped making sacrifices to God, regardless of what they think. Our very belief that hard work and discipline will bring success is a precise but abstracted and refined restatement of the idea that God will shower his grace on the individual who makes the right offering. This is

the Protestant work ethic. Furthermore, our belief that we are justified in enjoying the success that disciplined hard work brings (despite the suffering of less fortunate others) is derived from the idea that such success is a function of divine, and therefore moral, will. Otherwise, property is merely theft, as Marx claimed with no little success.

What do Cain and Abel sacrifice? In the Biblical version cited here, the nature of Cain's sacrifice is left unclear, except that it is "of the ground", vegetative—and, therefore, bloodless. Every canonical tale, however, carries with it a surrounding cloud of similar stories—some derivative, some the product of a different developmental path and tradition, some intermingled with other stories. In many such variants, Cain's sacrifice is not only of the ground but also of low quality. Cain is unwilling to offer up the finest fruits of his labors to God. Thus, he does not really sacrifice anything. He wants to keep everything to himself—so he is selfish, as well as faithless. Abel, by contrast, continually offers up the best of what he has. What does this mean? Once again, we already know. We say to our children, "do your best." Do not hide your light under a bushel (Matthew 5:15). We do not say, "Conserve your best, or hide your best." We mean, "Offer the best you have. Do it in good faith. You will not be absolutely assured of success, but your chances will be increased to the degree that such increase is possible." Certainly, it is no overstatement to say that if you do not believe this, you at least wish with all your heart that it was true. This is hope. To not believe this is to risk descent into the deepest chasms of cynicism.

So what happens? God accepts Abel's sacrifice, offers him respect, and renders his life acceptable, despite its terrible limitations. Cain's sacrifice, however, He rejects. This drives Cain into a murderous rage.

### *Revenge against God*

*And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect.*

The sacrificial worker offers up to the unknown the fruits of his diligent and committed actions, in the hope that doing such will obtain favor. The whole point of working is to transform the transcendent into something benevolent. It is certainly true that many people work, and things still do not go that well for them. They make sacrifices, and do what they claim they have to do, and their lives nonetheless appear as catastrophe followed by catastrophe. Business fails. The economy collapses. Illness rears its ugly head. All of this, painfully contrasted with success, can easily appear arbitrary, unreasonable, and completely

out of individual control. It is also dangerous for the external judge to attribute such catastrophe to the moral failings of the person who experiences them (although the temptation do so is very much evident), as all the relevant facts are never in the possession of the observer. However, the human capacity for transformation makes the idea of the individual as a simple victim of circumstance essentially untenable. Every situation allows for a multitude of valid interpretations. The idea of the self as victim is always coherent and plausible, but also ultimately unproductive. This is a standard theme in the Old Testament, and in many ways constitutes the spiritual strength of the early Jews: no matter what punishment Yahweh dealt out, the proper response was “We have strayed from the path of righteousness and it is our responsibility.” Everything else makes man a victim—and victims rapidly become resentful, spiteful and murderous.

Abel is a diligent and faithful worker, and he makes the correct sacrifices. In consequence, fortune smiles on him. He is a favored son of Yahweh. To make matters worse, he appears to deserve this favor. He has the right attitude. His social peers like and admire him (if they are not jealous and resentful). He gets everything he needs, and it is easy to construe his success as easy and undeserved.

*The existence of the leader who is wise  
is barely known to those he leads.  
He acts without unnecessary speech,  
so that the people say,  
“It happened of its own accord.”<sup>3</sup>*

Cain, by contrast, is constantly working at cross-purposes to himself. His sacrifices are grudging, because he has no faith in himself or in the divine. He does not believe that genuine effort on his part will be rewarded—or, more deeply, does not believe that such effort should be forthcoming regardless of apparent reward or punishment. Thus he always holds something in reserve, so that no failure is a genuine failure. But life is too difficult to be mastered if anything is held in reserve. Thus his caution (which will not protect him in the long run anyway) inevitably leads to failure.

<sup>3</sup> Lao-Tse. *Leadership by Exception*. Translated on-line by Seth Rosenthal. Tao teh Ching (Verse 17).

*Victimization and resentment*

*And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.*

If an individual works diligently, according to his own opinion, and thus feels deserving, failure and obstacle become painful and anxiety-provoking. Constant pain and anxiety conspire to produce anger and depression. This all contributes to resentment and an enhanced sense of victimization, and then to violence, viewed as righteous and necessary. Furthermore, an individual who turns away from his own ideal in frustration and fear thus becomes judged harshly by that ideal (at least by comparison) and will therefore become very hostile to it (and all who genuinely embody it). Each personal act of rebellion against that ideal is tantamount to the murder of Abel by Cain, from a mythological perspective, and foreshadows Satan's conspiracy against Christ.

This painful, anxiety-provoking and angry psychological state is made all the more unbearable by the absolute implacability of Yahweh, who is entirely capable of laying entire nations, men, women and children, to absolute waste. Such a God seems inappropriate to the modern rational consciousness, and it is no wonder. However, reality truly is a wall seven miles thick. The individual and the state dash themselves against it, at their own risk. God is absolutely merciless to the individual who voluntarily refuses to learn from his own mistakes.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps this is the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:30-32). Such refusal, after all, removes all hope of redemption.

*Arrogance*

*And the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry and downcast? Surely, if you do right, you ought to hold your head high. Sin crouches at the door, lusting for you, yet you can master it.*<sup>5</sup>

It is this realization on the part of Cain, forced by God, which turns his resentment from unbearable psychological burden to homicidal intent. Cain, who holds something in reserve, who is arrogant and inflexible, who challenges God without humility, learns to his own deep chagrin that all his suffering is not a consequence of the arbitrary and essentially unjust structure of reality. It is instead first, something of his own making; second, something he could change,

<sup>4</sup> The Epistle to the Hebrews (6:49) contains a variant of the same theme: *If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*

<sup>5</sup> Translation of these six lines from Miles, J. (1995), p. 39.

if he wanted to; and third, something he knows he could change, but refuses to. It is also for these reasons that Cain is a precursor to Milton's Satan (just as Abel is a literary precursor to Christ):

*Farewell happy Fields  
Where Joy for ever dwells: Hail horrors, hail  
Infernal world, and thou profoundest Hell  
Receive thy new possessor—one who brings  
A mind not to be changed by place or time.*<sup>6</sup>

The Lord, never one to mince words—even towards those who are suffering dreadfully—says to Cain: It is very convenient for you to blame the structure of reality for your problems, but reality is not to blame. So do not cast aspersions at the divine. Instead, go and change, as you know you can change.

In T.S. Eliot's (1949/1969) play *The Cocktail Party* a troubled woman says to her psychiatrist: *I am having a terrible time. I therefore deeply hope that there is something wrong with me, because if I am behaving properly and life is still so unbearable then there is truly no hope.* This is a very deep motif, and one stunningly characteristic of ancient Hebrew thinking. The ancient Israelites are continually thwarted by God in their attempts to build a stable state. Sometimes they get resentful (and appear arguably justified in doing so). Then they deny their faith and turn to other gods, or rebel against their true and just leaders, and everything gets even worse. Most of the time, however, under the guidance of their prophets, who chronically serve a restorative and redemptive role, they stop and think: *Things are not going well. Yahweh is not happy and that is not good at all. Maybe we wandered off the path. Maybe we are doing something wrong. Maybe we should pay more attention and be more careful.* When the rich and powerful kings of Israel fall prey to the twin temptations of arrogance and resentment and forget that they better be careful or suffer the wrath of Yahweh a prophet inevitably emerges (as the hero is born at the time of maximum crisis). The prophet reminds the people: *Remember the widows and orphans, and make some sacrifices to protect them.* When the arrogant Princes do not listen because they already know everything, then Yahweh becomes enraged and absolutely lays them to waste.

Cain and his followers take the same arrogant stance. Cain thinks that his primogeniture and privileged position make him deserving of God's favor, and

<sup>6</sup> Milton, J. (1961). 1:249-253, p. 44.

he feels deeply betrayed by that fact that such favor is not forthcoming. This makes Cain contemptuous of the transcendent, because that is the only stance possible when an individual refuses to look at his own errors and shortcomings. Either the individual is wrong, or reality is wrong (and reality is never wrong). Yahweh justifies himself: *I am that I am*. Thus, He always says: *If you keep making sacrifices, and the same terrible thing keeps happening, then you are not sacrificing the right things. If you would pay attention to your mistakes, and give up some of your erroneous and self-serving preconceptions, your perceptions and behaviors would adjust accordingly, and fortune would smile on you*. Of course, there is absolutely nothing more annoying than having to admit to inadequacy of concept and action—except the constant presence of someone whose very example highlights your inadequacies. Thus, Cain will not change, and kills Abel. He slaughters his own ideal and, in destroying a favored son of God, extracts revenge upon the Divine.

#### *Death of the favored son*

*And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

It is precisely a measure of the absolute depravity of man, modern and ancient, that this little twist in the plot does not come as a surprise. Even the modern reader, who has trouble with the whole idea of sacrifice, has no trouble understanding this. Of course Cain slays Abel.

Cain is faced with a very stark choice. His pride, his belief in his own omniscience, compels him to repeat actions that do not produce their desired outcome, despite their self-defined failure. This breeds a deep resentment. Once his pride and resentment grow past a certain threshold, he starts to fantasize about revenge—and then about murder. The gap between fantasy and action grows ever smaller, as resentment builds—and one day the opportunity manifests itself. Abel says something optimistic, deserving and promising, and that straw breaks the camel's back.

Perhaps at first it is just resentment of the successful, deep resentment, but it does not have to end there. There is no real end. With enough resentment, you can kill once. If you can kill one, why not ten? If ten, why not a hundred? If a hundred, why not ten thousand? Why not a million? Stalin was just getting warmed up when he killed six million Ukrainians in the 1930s. There is evidence from the KGB archives that Stalin was preparing for the Third World War when he was killed by his own people in the 1950s (Radzinsky, 1996)—and who is to say that Hitler really lost the war? It depends entirely on what he was aiming at.

Maybe he got just what he aimed for when he blew his brains out all over his bunker deep underneath Berlin while Europe burned to ashes around him. Why do we insist upon believing that every tyrant fights a war to win?

Cain believed that the world was a terrible and unreasonable place, bent on his suffering and destruction. He thought that hard work and sacrifice was for babies and fools.

*Oh why should wrath be mute and fury dumb?  
I am no baby, I, that with base prayers  
I should repent the evils I have done.  
Ten thousand worse that ever yet I did  
Would I perform if I might have my will.  
If one good deed in all my life I did,  
I do repent it from my very soul.<sup>7</sup>*

What is the logical response of a victim to a terrible and unreasonable world, bent on his suffering and destruction? Hatred, contempt and violence—and not because the manifestation of these motivations is going to do *him* any good. The fully resentful victim is perfectly willing to destroy himself, while exacting revenge. The vengeful response to the injustice of existence is even more fitting, more aesthetically pleasing, if it is just as damaging to the perpetrator as it is to the victim. That way the revenge on God is more complete. Why do you think the teenage murderers at Columbine killed themselves? It was not for fear of prison. It was part of their statement. Their own deaths merely demonstrated how contemptuous of life they truly were. Eric Harris, the more literate of the two killers, said it clearly: “*I hate the fucking world. Kill mankind. No one should survive.*” Most investigators of the Columbine killings claim they cannot understand the boys’ motivations. They could understand them. They just do not want to. “*I will sooner die than betray my own thoughts, but before I leave this worthless place, I will kill whoever I deem unfit...*” Harris transformed himself into an archetypal embodiment of Cain, whose ultimate prototype is motivated, according to Goethe, by the following principle:

*The spirit I, that endlessly denies.  
And rightly, too; for all that comes to birth  
Is fit for overthrow, as nothing worth;  
Wherefore the world were better sterilized;*

<sup>7</sup> Shakespeare, W. *Titus Andronicus*, Act V, Scene III.

*Thus all that's here as Evil recognized  
Is gain to me, and downfall, ruin, sin  
The very element I prosper in.*<sup>8</sup>

If this seems too extreme, and not sufficiently sociological, then try to make sense of the following diary entry, made by Harris, the day before his mass murder and suicide: *About 26.5 hours from now the judgment will begin. Difficult but not impossible, necessary, nerve-wracking and fun. What fun is life without a little death? It's interesting, when I'm in my human form, knowing I'm going to die. Everything has a touch of triviality to it.*

#### *Revenge and the Flood*

*When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.*

God certainly realizes that what Cain has done is evil. Nonetheless, He deigns to protect him, and marks him so that he will remain untouched. He does this, stating that anyone who kills Cain will be made the subject of seven-fold vengeance. Does God bring Cain under his protection to help prevent the escalation of violence that Cain's sin might eventually precipitate? It is interesting in this regard to notice that modern Western societies extend the protection of the law even to known murderers.

The tremendous social danger of Cain's act certainly appears to be the subject of the next brief section of Chapter 4 (17-24).<sup>9</sup> After Cain is marked by God, he marries, establishes a city, and establishes a family. Later, one of Cain's descendants, Lamech, kills two men when he is wounded and hurt.

*And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a*

<sup>8</sup> Goethe, W. (1808/1979), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> It seems to me that this story has been greatly collapsed, and has become very subtle and attenuated. Thus, there is always the possibility of having it fall prey to over-interpolation. I think that the benefit is worth the risk, in this case, but I am also less certain that the interpretation is correct.

*young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*

This ancient story appears to be laying out the manner in which individual evil, and the desire for revenge it inevitably produces, may escalate rapidly into apocalyptic retribution and slaughter. In favor of this argument (meaning, at least, that a similar case has been previously made) is the fact that the Mormon scripture *Book of Moses* claims that Lamech has made a secret pact with Satan, just as Cain had. From this perspective, Lamech is a virtual re-incarnation of Cain. In addition, Lamech's son, Tubal-Cain ("an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron") has also been identified by tradition as the inventor of the sword. Thus, Lamech is provided by his own son with the instruments to ever more efficiently carry out his deadly revenge.

Chapter 6, which details the flood, is separated from Chapter 4 by a lengthy genealogy, which interrupts the narrative flow of the text. However, in this genealogy, we are informed that Adam has a later son, Seth, "in his likeness," (5:2) and that Noah is one of Seth's late descendants, and that he "walked with God" (6:9). Thus, Noah is in many ways a second Adam, but perfected, just as Lamech is a second Cain, but even more corrupt.

The sons of Cain, contaminated by their father's murderous attitudes, continue and expand upon his sins, until society itself degenerates into uncontrolled chaos. Yahweh rebels, manifesting the Tiamat-like side of his personality, and determines to eradicate all of humanity, irredeemably possessed by pride and resentment. Thus, he re-establishes the initial chaotic conditions, reducing the world to its *prima materia*, in an attempt to eradicate human evil. He spares Noah, the second Abel, protecting him from the flood, and attempts to re-establish a race of men, free from Cain's mark. Thus, the wholesale desire for revenge, spiraling out of control, dooms the world to the apocalyptic re-emergence of Chaos, the primal water.

### Conclusion

The world described in the first six chapters of Genesis is not the familiar world of objects and things. It is a much more dramatic place, and its essential features seem even more abstract than the standard atoms of familiar matter. Chaos and order define *what matters*, however, instead of defining matter, and it is an axiom of the paradigm of Genesis that the world is made out of what matters. Chaos and order provide the eternal background. Logos mediates between the two fundamentals, and is centrally characteristic of the nature of man. Man thus differs

from God not qualitatively, but quantitatively: man, unlike God, is limited and vulnerable. He is Logos, but in low-resolution form.

The diminished Logos finds itself established in a locale, in a specified time and place. This locale can in principle be typified by the proper balance of order (the walls) and chaos (water and nature), and existence within it can therefore be Edenic. However, the construction of Eden, and the fact of its necessary limitation, requires exclusion. What is excluded cannot be permanently eradicated, because it truly exists. It will thus inevitably rear its head. The heritable sin of Adam, curiosity, then manifests itself, and naïve delight gives way to self-consciousness: knowledge of vulnerability, and existential pain. Cain and Abel emerge as the hostile brothers—archetypal responses to this new and self-conscious existence. One brother, Abel, provides an early model for the redemptive savior, as a genuine and voluntary incarnation of Logos. The other, Cain, refuses his responsibility, justifies that refusal with his existential pain and fear, and turns savage, destructive, corrupt and murderous. Thus, two pathways of morality are laid out as primary modes of ethical being, in a world composed of the interplay between chaos and order.

Are these modes real? It depends on what you mean by *real*. That, in turn, is a matter of axiomatic preference—faith, if you will (as has always been claimed). From a strictly scientific perspective, the question itself may not even be real. After all, a paradigm presumes the evidence that sustains it. If the world of experience is made of chaos and order, then the choice between the path of Cain and the path of Abel is the most important choice that anyone can ever make. If everything is merely material, by contrast, the choice does not even exist.

It might be worth closing with this thought, however. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn believed that the Nuremberg judgments, flawed by the sentiments of the victors as they might have been, were still the most important ethical precedents established in the twentieth century. The idea that such a thing as crime against humanity existed, independently of the value scheme of the criminal, was tantamount to an admission, painfully necessitated by the horrors of the Holocaust, that evil actually existed. Is it reasonable to contemplate the starved and charred bodies of the Holocaust victims and to ask, rationally, if the actions that produced them were or were not evil? Is it not more appropriate merely to observe the deep repulsion that those images evoke in the soul, and to note that in totality (regardless of mere thought) the judgment of evil—the path of Cain—appears as an accurate and necessary summary. Is it not a travesty—an inappropriate glorification of rationality—merely to allow such a question to be asked, when all of being strives to provide the answer? And what then does that say about the nature of reality?

## References

- Barrie, J.M. (1904/2006). *Peter Pan*. Ann Arbor Media.
- Bessenoff, G.R. (2006). Can the media affect us? Social comparison, self-discrepancy, and the thin ideal. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30, 239-251.
- Binswanger, L. (1963). *Being in the world*. New York: Basic Books.
- Boss, M. (1963). *Psychoanalysis and daseinsanalysis*. New York: Basic Books.
- Campbell, J. (1973). *Myths to live by*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Chivers, M.L., Rieger, G., Latty, E. & Bailey, J.M. (2004). A sex difference in the specificity of sexual arousal. *Psychological Science*, 15, 736-744.
- Davis, M. & Whalen, P.J. (1001). The amygdala: vigilance and emotion. *Molecular Psychiatry*, 6, 13-34, 2001.
- Dawkins, R. (1986). *The blind watchmaker: why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design*. New York: Norton.
- Dennett, D.C. (2006). *Breaking the spell: Religion as a natural phenomenon*. New York: Viking.
- Dennett, D.C. (1984). Cognitive wheels: the frame problem in AI in C. Hookway (Ed.), *Minds, Machines and Evolution* (pp. 129-151), Cambridge University.
- Eliot, T.S. (1949/1969). *The cocktail party*. New York: Faber & Faber.
- Freud, S. (1928/1991). The future of an illusion. In Author, *Civilization, society and religion* (pp. 181-241). New York: Penguin.
- Gödel, K. (1992). *On formally undecidable propositions of Principia Mathematica and related systems*. London: Dover publications. (Original work published 1931).
- Goethe, W. (1979). *Faust*. (P. Wayne, Trans.). London: Penguin. (Original published in 1808).
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time*. (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (Original work published 1927).
- Joshi, R., Herman, P. & Polivy, J. (2004). Self-enhancing effects of exposure to thin body images. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 35, 333-341.
- Jung, C.G. (1967). *Symbols of Transformation: an Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*. The Collected Works of C.G. Jung (Vol. 5). (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.). Bollingen Series XX. Princeton University Press.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. 2nd Ed. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- LeDoux, J. (1996). *The emotional brain: The mysterious underpinnings of emotional life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lormand, E. (1999). The frame problem. In R.A. Wilson & F. Keil (Eds.) *MIT Encyclopedia of cognitive sciences* (pp. 326-327). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- McCrae, R.R., & Costa, P.T., Jr. (1997). Personality trait structure as a human universal. *American Psychologist*, 52, 509-516.
- Medin, D.L. & Aguilar, C.M. (1999). Categorization. In R.A. Wilson & F. Keil (Eds.) *MIT Encyclopedia of cognitive sciences* (pp. 104-105). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Miles, J. (1995). *God: A Biography*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Milton, J. (1667/1961). *Paradise lost and other poems*. Annotated by E. LeComte. New York: New American Library.
- Neumann, E. (1954). *The origins and history of consciousness* (R.F.C. Hull, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Neumann, E. (1955). *The great mother: An analysis of the archetype* (R. Manheim, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ohman, A. & Mineka, S. (2003). The malicious serpent: snakes as a prototypical stimulus for an evolved module of fear. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 5-9.
- Otto, R. (1917/1958). *The idea of the holy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Passingham, R.E. (1975). Changes in the size and organization of the brain in man and his ancestors. *Brain, Behavior and Evolution*, 11, 73-90.
- Peterson, J.B. & Flanders, J.L. (2002). Complexity management theory: Motivation for ideological rigidity and social conflict. *Cortex*, 38, 429-458.
- Peterson, J.B. (1999). *Maps of meaning: The architecture of belief*. New York: Routledge.
- Peterson, J.B. (2006). Religion, sovereignty, natural rights, and the constituent elements of experience. *Archives of the Psychology of Religion*, 28, 135-180.
- Piaget, J. (1985). *The Equilibration of Cognitive Structures: The Central Problem of Intellectual Development*, pp. 36-64. T. Brown & K.J. Thampy, Trans.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Original published in 1975).
- Popper, K.R. (1985). Evolutionary epistemology. In D. Miller, (Ed.). *Popper Selections* (pp. 78-86). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Radzinsky, E. (1996). *Stalin: The first in-depth biography based on explosive new documents from Russia's secret archives*. (H.T. Willets, Trans.). London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Rolls, E. (1999). *The brain and emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Strahan, E.J., Wilson, A.E., Cressman, K.E., Buote, V.M. (2006). Comparing to perfection: How cultural norms for appearance affect social comparisons and self-image. *Body Image*, 3, 211-227.
- Swanson, L.W. (2000). Cerebral hemisphere regulation of motivated behavior. *Brain Research*, 886, 113-164.
- Wade, N. (2006). *Before the dawn: recovering the lost history of our ancestors*. New York: Penguin.
- Wallauer, B. (2002). Do chimpanzees feel reverence for nature? Retrieved October 16, 2006 from The Jane Goodall Institute's *Chimpanzee Central*: [http://www.janegoodall.org/chimp\\_central/chimpanzees/behavior/rain\\_dance.asp](http://www.janegoodall.org/chimp_central/chimpanzees/behavior/rain_dance.asp)