The Eden Complex: Transgression and Transformation in the Bible, Freud and Jung

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Abstract

It is suggested that a psychological complex symbolized by the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden provides a broader and more useful paradigm for understanding the dynamics of individual development, parent-child conflict, morals and values, and both psychotherapeutic and societal change than the Freudian Oedipal complex. It is argued that the transition in psychoanalysis from an emphasis on Oedipal to pre-Oedipal issues of attachment and autonomy suggests that we should regard the biblical myth of the first humans' exercise of autonomy and their subsequent punishment as archetypal for psychological development. It is further held that an "Eden complex" is implicit in the work of C. G. Jung and can be traced to his reflections on his childhood conflicts around God and religion and his early fantasies about Adam and Eve. Reference is made to several thinkers, including Jacques Lacan and Richard Rorty, whose writings help us to understand the power of transgression in the Eden narrative. The author also discusses the Kabbalistic interpretation of the expulsion from Eden, and Jung's understanding of the Kabbalah as a means of deepening our understanding of the Eden narrative's psychological and axiological significance.

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Freud famously declared that the "superego is…the heir to the Oedipus Complex.[2] By this phrase, he suggested that the imagined transgression through which the son displaces his father—the rival for his mother's love—results in an experience of castration anxiety and guilt, the internalization of the incest prohibition and, more broadly, an obedience to the "law of the father" upon which is founded the entire edifice of civilization. According to Freud, "we are all destined to direct our first sexual impulses toward our mothers and our first hatred and violent wishes toward our fathers…King Oedipus, who has struck his father Laius dead and has married his mother Jocasta, is nothing but the realized wish of our childhood."[3] Freud concludes that this fantasized (incestuous) transgression is repressed, and the child becomes subject to an internalized prohibition and law. Thus, in the Freudian model, if the family, and indeed civilization, is to be sustained, the transgression must not occur, and even the fantasy of its occurrence must be removed from the child's conscious awareness.

Freud's "choice" of the Oedipus myth as the foundation for his understanding of human psychodynamics has important implications. The outcome of this choice is a theory in which *shame* and *guilt* are central to the human condition. This is because the story of Oedipus is an undeniable tragedy, and the transgression it symbolizes is unambiguously and universally condemned. There is nothing nuanced and nothing redeemable about killing one's father and entering into a sexual or marital liaison with one's mother. If, indeed, as Freud claimed, the Oedipus Complex is universal, we all must repress our most basic instinct and effectively surrender to our guilt and shame.

The Oedipus Complex, as we know, has been subject to sustained criticism[4], even within psychoanalysis itself. While there are studies that claim to support its universality[5], the Oedipus Complex has been criticized on the grounds that it lacks empirical support[6] and that, like much in Freudian theory, it fails to make falsifiable predictions.[7] It has also been argued that the prohibition against incest, which anthropologists have found to be universal, is better explained by instinctual aversion as opposed to universal incestuous desire.[8] Others have criticized the Oedipus Complex on the grounds that it is embedded in traditional gender role assignments[9], misogynistic,[10] inadequate to explain female psychology[11], and pathologizes homosexuality and non-traditional family roles.[12] Freud's introduction of the Oedipus Complex has also been criticized for being instrumental to his shift away from the trauma-seduction theory of neurosis and his minimization of child sexual abuse through an attribution of the recollections of such abuse to the (Oedipal) fantasies of the child.[13] In general, by the 1970s and 80s, there had been a decline of interest in the Oedipus Complex, even amongst psychoanalysts.[14]

While there is little doubt that the dynamic of prohibition/transgression is present in parent-child relationships and is a critically important factor in human life, the notion that this dynamic originates exclusively (or even primarily) in the son's incestuous sexual drive for the mother and rivalry with the father fails to account for the wide range of prohibition/transgression conflicts that occur both within the family and in the wider society. It stretches credulity to argue

that even all conflicts within the family, especially those that involve the child's and adolescent's transgressive assertion of autonomy, are sexual (indeed incestuous!) in nature. It is no wonder that many post-Freudian psychoanalysts have effectively ignored the Oedipus Complex and focused upon such "pre-Oedipal" issues as separation-individuation.[15] Freud himself had opened the door to this when, in an article on "Female Sexuality," he conceded that, at least in women, the fear of "object loss" was a source of anxiety that preceded the Oedipal phase.[16] Later investigators, including Rank[17], Bowlby[18], Mahler[19], Fromm[20] and Stoller[21] held that anxiety over separation (for Rank, "birth trauma", and in Fromm's case, separation from the father) was more significant than Oedipal/sexual anxiety, and several, such as Fromm-Reichmann[22] and Horney[23] viewed hostility and conflicts between aggression vs. dependency strivings to be more significant than sexuality in child development. Others turn, for example, to the writings of Balint[24], Fairbairn[25], Winnicott[26], Kernberg[27], and Kohut[28] have held that while Oedipal issues are important in the neuroses, "pre-Oedipal" issues predominate in psychosis and borderline states.

It is important to note that Jung was perhaps the first to hold that the need for separation from the mother and not the desire for her and concomitant fear of the father was the dynamic behind what Freud saw in the Oedipus Complex. Indeed, Jung rejected the sexual understanding of the origin of neuroses and increasingly focused on the importance of separating from the parents and especially the mother[29] and what he later referred to as "individuation", which involves the shedding of the "persona" and the realization of the "self" later in life.[30] In what follows, I argue that, while Jung only hinted at this in his writings, his views on individuation, as well as the psychological dynamic of transgression and prohibition (which the Oedipus myth purports to explain) is better understood in the context of a myth we are all familiar with—the transgression of the first man and woman in the Garden of Eden.

Jung on Eden

It is noteworthy that neither Freud nor Jung placed their sustained psychological gaze on the Eden story, the foundational myth of the Judeo-Christian tradition, a myth that clearly embodies the prohibition/transgression dynamic and which, according to biblical tradition, explains the human predicament.

I am not aware of any place where Freud discusses the Eden story. Jung, to be sure, devotes a long chapter to Adam and Eve in his late work, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, but there he dwells on Adam as a symbol of the "self" and barely touches upon the first humans' transgression and their expulsion from paradise. One needs to turn to several scattered passages in Jung's writings to discern his understanding of Adam and Eve's "original sin."

In "Commentaries," a manuscript Jung wrote in connection with chapters 9-11 of *Liber Primus*, and which is published as "Appendix B" in *The Red Book*, Jung writes:

> *Wherever Logos rules, there is order but too much persistence. The allegory of paradise, where there is no struggle and, therefore, no development, is fitting here. In this condition, the repressed movement degenerates, and its value is lost. …Only disobedience against the ruling principle leads out of this condition of undeveloped*

> *persistence. The story of paradise repeats itself, and hence, the serpent winds its way up the tree because Adam should be led into temptation.*[31]

And in *Symbols of Transformation,* we read:

> *Since the better is always the enemy of the good, every drastic innovation is an infringement of what is traditionally right, and may sometimes even be a crime punishable by death. As we know, this dilemma played an important part in the psychology of early Christianity, at the time when it came into conflict with Jewish law. In the eyes of the Jews, Christ was undoubtedly a law-breaker. Not unjustly is he called Adam Secundus; for just as the first Adam became conscious through sin, through eating of the tree of knowledge, so the second Adam broke through to the necessary relation with a fundamentally different God.*[32]

Here, we should recall that for Jung, the significance of Christ in both*The Red Book* and later writings is that Christ sees fit to go his own way and find his own meaning. We read in *The Red Book* that Christ's life teaches us that individuals must take their lives "into their own hands, faithful to their own essence and their own love."[33] Further, Christ's "work would be completed if men managed to live their own lives without imitation."[34] Years later, in "Is Analytic Psychology a Religion," Jung wrote: "We all must do what Christ did. We must do our experiment. We must make mistakes. We must live out our own vision of life."[35] Christ, as the "second Adam," the "lawbreaker," *transgresses* as a means of pointing the way for all individuals to find their own paths. These passages provide us with a key not only to Jung's understanding of Christ, but, in the current context, his understanding of the transgression of Adam and Eve. For Jung, the first humans' transgression involves a "disobedience against the ruling principle," one that leads to consciousness through sin, the fulfillment of possibilities and a path towards individuation. Later, we will see that Jung had a clear intuition of this as a child when, at age 12, he came to the realization that God willed Adam and Eve's transgression.[36] We will also see that toward the end of his life, when he wrote *Answer to Job*, Jung realized that his own account accorded with a similar kabbalistic interpretation of the Eden narrative.[37]

Understanding the Eden Narrative

From a psychological perspective, the critical narrative elements of the first humans' transgression are that (1) God commanded Adam and Eve in the pain of death not to eat from or even touch the tree in the midst of the garden, (2) the serpent claimed that the motive for this command was that God knew if they were to eat from the tree their eyes would open and like God, they would know good and evil, (3) that Eve succumbed to the temptation posed by the serpent, (4) both Eve and Adam transgressed the divine command and ate from the tree, (5) they were punished for their transgression with the pain of hard work, childbirth, mortality, and expulsion from the idyllic conditions of Eden, and (6) it is only after the expulsion that Adam named his wife Eve who would now "become the mother of all the living."

Thus, even on its face, as a result of the first humans' transgression, there is a transformation of their (and hence all

human) reality such that they become fully conscious, know good and evil (and consequently have the capacity to choose between them), must endure mortality, suffering, and hard labor, and become the progenitors of future generations. In short, the biblical narrative provides us with an anthropology, one in which, as a result of *transgression*, the key elements of the human condition, self-consciousness, ethical choice, work, suffering, work, mortality and reproduction take form. Indeed, it is through their transgression that Adam and Eve become *human*. While shame and guilt are certainly present in the Eden narrative, these are secondary to the transformations in human reality that result from the first human's "sin.".

The Eden Complex

The "complex" delineated by Adam and Eve's transgression and expulsion from the idyllic conditions of Eden has profound psychological implications. Osmond, writing from a Freudian (and, in my view, apologetic) psychoanalytic perspective, attempts to assimilate Oedipal theory to pre-Oedipal conflicts. He views the transgression of Adam and Eve as depicting an "archaic version of the Oedipus complex," in which the "separation and individuation" of Adam and Eve produces a crisis within themselves but also in God, which, for Freud, is a metaphor for the father.[38] Such separation/individuation is, according to Osmond, a necessary phase that transforms the dependent child and places her on the path to becoming a mature and autonomous adult.

While I think that a certain sleight of hand is necessary to assimilate what might be called "the Eden Complex" to the Freudian Oedipus Complex, Osmond is, in my view, on target when he suggests that story of the Garden of Eden reflects the vicissitudes of the separation-individuation of the child. Freud wrote, "psychoanalytic investigation of the individual teaches with especial emphasis that god is in every case modeled after the father …and that god at the bottom is nothing but an exalted father."[39] This perspective leads to the conclusion that the transgression in the Eden narrative represents an act of disobedience against the father (or parents), one which results in the father's wrath and disappointment, punishment and suffering for the child, but also the child's maturation, coming into knowledge and autonomy. However, this is a stark difference from the Oedipus Complex, in that whereas the Oedipal transgression must be *suppressed* (and repressed) in order to ensure the integrity of the family and society, the Eden transgression *must be fully conscious* in order to ensure that the child attains the knowledge, awareness and autonomy required for the transition to adulthood. This is why it is ultimately impossible to assimilate the latter into the former; the Oedipus Complex ends in repression, and the Eden Complex ends in consciousness and liberation. While both complexes produce psychological suffering for the child, the Oedipus Complex results in repression and obedience to the law, while the Eden Complex potentially results in liberation and autonomy in the context of the law. Indeed, a potential outcome of the Eden transgression reflects the view of Nietzsche that as individuals, "we…want to become who we are—human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves!"[40]

We will see that while certain impulses must be suppressed in the service of morality, conscience and the superego, *transgression* is critical to human development, the psychotherapeutic process and the emergence and development of psychotherapy as a field, and that such transgression is far more compatible with Eden than with Oedipus.

The Range of the Eden Complex

As we have seen, the Oedipus Complex has been subject to critique on the grounds that it reduces the prohibition/transgression dynamic to the specific instance of the son's desire for the mother and rivalry with the father. The Eden Complex, I would argue, insofar as it is broader, more thoroughly represents the dialectic between prohibition and transgression, submission and autonomy, control and freedom, tradition and innovation that lies at the heart of intrapsychic as well as interpersonal and societal conflict. It is also far more congenial to the actualization of the self. As per the Oedipus Complex, while there are certainly *some* transgressions that must be *repressed* in favor of an internalization of the moral law, there are others that require *expression* as a means and path toward individuation.

In contrast to the Oedipus Complex, the "Eden Complex" is not only operative in the relationship between parent and child but is present in virtually every human conflict where control vs. autonomy is at stake. It is evident in family and community relations and also in science and art, whenever an innovation meets with disapproval from a sanctioning individual or group. In this sense, it is more universal than the Oedipus Complex, which, at least in its original formulation, is limited to conflicts regarding a single aspect of sexual and libidinal desire. We will later see that the Eden Complex is active in the development and transformation of the field of psychoanalysis itself.

The Eden Complex shows itself explicitly and frequently in psychotherapy. Think of psychotherapy clients who declare a sexual preference that alienates them from their families, leave their church or otherwise abandon their religion, pursue a career that meets with family disapproval, adopt a political position that places them in opposition to their community, or adhere to a scientific or other theory that meets with the scorn of their peers.

Psychotherapy as Transgression

The "fundamental principle" of psychoanalysis that one should state everything that enters one's mind without censorship is, on its face, an invitation to transgress against the "censor," the partly unconscious internal prohibition against speaking certain forbidden thoughts (and, in effect, commit an "Eden" transgression). The process of making the unconscious conscious crosses a boundary that in ordinary life is quite firm and presumably kept in place by the superego, which serves as an agent of conformity to the "law." Dynamic psychotherapy, if it is to succeed, must occur in a setting within which the expression of forbidden thoughts, feelings and impulses is possible. In psychotherapy, one expresses hatred towards those whom one ordinarily loves, entertains aggressive and sexual fantasies that one would not permit oneself to enact, speak about actual transgressions (divorce, leaving one's job, sexual acts) that one might not permit oneself to even imagine outside the therapeutic encounter. In addition, in psychotherapy, transgressions are thought, imagined, verbally expressed, and "enacted" in relation to the therapist.

Psychotherapy aims to create an open economy of experience, thought and discourse, and in doing so, the defenses that in other contexts hold one's thinking, affect, and behavior tightly in place are weakened and may shatter, giving rise to new thoughts, feelings, attitudes (and in some instances ill-advised "acting out"). As Jacques Lacan suggested, the

process of analysis strips analysands of their identifications in such a manner that they are left with their *own desires*. If psychotherapy is to be successful, the commands of the father may continue to hold sway, but not because they are commands that one has simply internalized, but rather because, in the light of one's newly opened eyes, they are right and valid.

In psychoanalysis, the prohibition/transgression dynamic not only permeates the (intrapsychic) content of what analysands speak about in treatment but also characterizes the analysand's relationship to the analyst. The very internalized prohibition that mounts a defense against the analysand's transgressive desire itself becomes transgressive when it manifests as the analysand's resistance to treatment. Analysands avoid facing their transgressive desires by missing sessions, growing silent, and failing to associate or otherwise engage during the analytic hour. These resistances themselves transgress what Freud described as the "fundamental rule" of treatment—which is to (attend the sessions and) relate whatever comes to one's mind. There is a "new commandment" within the analytic frame, for analysands to undo the prohibitions they bring to treatment. However, as a result of the analysand's resistance, there is an inevitable transgression of this commandment that causes a rupture in the therapeutic relationship, which must be worked through and resolved if there is to be therapeutic progress. This rupture and working through does (and should) not result in repression but rather in a deepening of consciousness and freedom.

Transgression and Values

On first hearing, the idea that individuation and psychotherapy are predicated on transgression raises the question of whether this undermines ethics and values. However, far from obliterating values, transgression is often a condition for their full realization. Moses' transgression against the law of Pharoah was necessary before he could receive the Decalogue and Torah; Jesus abrogated the Mosaic law as a prelude to religious reform. Acts of civil disobedience were an essential prelude to the demise of world colonialism and civil rights legislation in the United States. However, such transgressions bring with them an ethical and axiological responsibility.

Jung writes that in analysis, "resistance arises from the demand for individuation, which is *against* all adaptation to others." However, "the breaking of the patient's previous personal conformity" results in "the destruction of an aesthetic and moral ideal," and for this reason, "the first step in individuation is a tragic *guilt*."[41] Jung writes:

> *Individuation cuts one off from personal conformity and, hence, from collectivity. That is the guilt that the individual leaves behind him for the world; that is the guilt he must endeavor to redeem. He must offer a ransom in place of himself; that is, he must bring forth values that are an equivalent substitute for his absence in the collective personal sphere. Without this production of values, final individuation is immoral and, more than that, suicidal. The man who cannot create values should sacrifice himself consciously to the spirit of collective conformity. In so doing, he is free to choose the collectivity to which he will sacrifice himself. Only to the extent that a man creates objective values can he and may he individuate.*[42]

Thus, it is not an act of transgression *per se* that leads to individuation but, according to Jung, transgression in the service of creating new objective values.

Jung and the Kabbalistic Understanding of Eden

Late in his life, Jung took an interest in certain Kabbalistic symbols and ideas relevant to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden and the relationship between transgression and values. In *Answer to Job*, originally published in 1952,[43] Jung observed that God had "banished Adam and Eve, whom he had created as images of his masculine essence and his feminine emanation, to the extra-paradisial world, the limbo of the 'shards.'"[44] Jung wrote that as a result of this banishment, there arose a "new factor that has never occurred before in the history of the world, the unheard-of fact that, without knowing it or wanting it, a mortal man is raised by his moral behavior above the stars in heaven, from which position of advantage he can behold the back of Yahweh, the abysmal world of "shards" (i.e., the broken vessels),[45] which, as he explains, is "an allusion to an idea found in the later cabalistic philosophy."[46] And in 1954, in a letter to Reverend Erastus Evans, Jung wrote: "In a tract of the Lurianic Kabbalah, the remarkable idea is developed that man is destined to become God's helper in the attempt to restore the vessels which were broken when God thought to create a world."[47]

In these passages, Jung makes an obscure reference to the Kabbalah of the school of Isaac Luria (1534-72), which understood the Eden narrative as symbolic of a critical moment in the creation, redemption and perfection of both God and the world. In order to obtain insight into Jung's thought here, it will be instructive to briefly examine Luria's system in the context of our consideration of the Eden Complex.

Luria and his disciples held that the first humans' "sin" produced a cosmic cataclysm, the "breaking of the vessels," which involved the displacement and/or shattering of the *sefirot*, the divine value archetypes of knowledge, wisdom, understanding, kindness, and beauty, etc., that were to serve as the elements of creation in an original Eden world. As a result of their shattering, symbolized in Adam and Eve's transgression, sparks of divine light from the *sefirot* were encased in "shells" produced from the shards of the broken vessels, and fell through the metaphysical void into the dark, evil realm of the "other side" (what Jung refers to as "the back of Yahweh"), which itself comes to penetrate and even dominate our world. However, according to the Lurianists, human spiritual, ethical and intellectual acts have the power to extract these sparks from the shells and, in the process, re-actualize the *sefirot* in a manner *that would have never been possible had they not shattered*, and in Luria's understanding of the biblical narrative, had Adam and Eve not transgressed and remained in Eden. This is because only in a post-Eden "broken" world of death, labor and strife, can the value-elements of creation become fully real. Only in a "post-transgression" world of suffering can kindness, compassion and morality be actualized, and only in a world where truth is obscured can wisdom be attained. Indeed, the Lurianists went so far as to suggest that by "raising the sparks" that fell because of the first human's transgression, human beings become, as Jung notes, partners with God in creation, and, moreover, help to fully actualize God Himself, whose essential "goodness" is only fully realized in the activities of humankind.

The Lurianists thus held that the dynamic of transgression and restoration is written into the very nature not only of the human soul but also as part of the essence of God himself. Shaul Magid suggests that for Luria, the sin of Adam and Eve was a reflection of the deity—as the human is created in the image (*tzelem*) of the divine.[47-bis] And as we have just seen, according to Luria, the deity (*Ein-sof*) only completes itself by virtue of the "breaking of the vessels" and their restoration, which actualizes the fulfillment of the values that were only implicit in *Ein-sof* "prior" to creation.

As such, we might say that the events typically described as "the fall", actually occasioned a transformative *ascent* in which humanity, elevated by its new knowledge of good and evil and the assumption of free will, is able, through freely chosen ethical, spiritual and creative acts, to bring value to the cosmos that without "the fall" would not have been possible. It is for this reason, as Jung observed, as a result of the first humans' transgression and their expulsion from Eden, that "mortal man is raised by his moral behavior above the stars in heaven." It is also fully in accord with Jung's view that the individual who breaks from the values of the collective is in a position to create new "objective values" as a means toward becoming a fully individuated self.

Transgression in Freud and Jung

In developing their respective views of the human psyche, both Freud and Jung contravened various rules and boundaries and, in effect, created their theories by transgressing the mores of their times. Freud transgressed these mores in his claim that children are sexual beings who have sexual desires for their parents. And for a time, brought the disapproval of the scientific establishment upon him by holding that his patients had been sexually abused, often at the hands of their own fathers. Indeed, according to some of his critics, Freud ultimately found this scorn so overwhelming that he withdrew his "seduction hypothesis," and took sexual abuse out of the reality of the family and inserted it into the fantasies of the child. (This, however, involved a new transgression.) Finally, Freud's lifelong atheism and his view that religion is an illusion "comparable to a childhood neurosis,"[48] was, at least for its time, and especially for those in the religious establishment, highly transgressive.

In contrast to Freud, Jung not only entered into various actual and theoretical transgressions but also made transgression one of the cornerstones of his psychology.

The Red Book, which Jung composed over a number of years after his break with Freud in 1913, records active imaginations, fantasies and visions in which Jung transgresses a range of laws, boundaries and limits. Further, each of these transgressions is understood by Jung as an advance on his path toward his own individuation and serves in a general manner as exemplars for our own development. For example, Jung envisions himself participating in the murder of the hero Siegfried, as a means for overcoming the tendency to view his own ego in heroic terms.[49] Other of his *Red Book* transgressions serve as a corrective for the tendency to over-value one pole of a dichotomy, e.g., meaning/nonsense, sanity/madness, reason/magic, order/chaos, male/female. As such, Jung advocates for the importance of nonsense[50], finds himself being declared mentally ill in a psychiatric hospital;[51] goes on a quest to unlearn reason and learn magic[52], disparages the value of science, eats the liver of a dead child[53] (!) and suggests that men

dress themselves in the clothing of women.[54] Jung insults a Christian anchorite by worshipping a scarab and the sun-god Helios[55], and commits the sacrilegious act of having Salome declare him to be "Christ."[56]

While Jung's conflict with Freud has been described as an "Oedipal struggle,"[57] it hardly comports with either the Oedipus myth or Freud's own understanding of the Oedipus complex. Certainly, Jung challenged Freud's authority, and it is even possible that Jung saw Freud as a father figure, but there is no competition for maternal affection. Jung may have had fantasies of "killing" Freud (consider his murder of "Siegfried" in *The Red Book*[58]) but this was in order to go his own way (as he actually did after leaving the psychoanalytic fold), not as a means of gaining the affection of some purported maternal object. In 1912, as Jung was realizing that he could no longer be an adherent of the psychoanalytic movement, he sent Freud a letter in which he quoted Nietzsche's Zarathustra:

> *One repays a teacher badly, if one remains only a pupil…You had not yet sought yourselves when you found me… Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves: And only when you have all denied me will I return to you.*[59]

In his 1912 book, *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*, Jung suggested that not only the Oedipus story, but the full range of world mythology is of deep psychological relevance, a suggestion that, according to Freud, was itself a *transgression* against psychoanalysis, one that would undermine it as a science. Indeed, Jung's break from Freud occurred in large part because Freud was unreceptive to Jung's thesis (the very thesis that opened him to consider the psychological import of the Eden narrative).

Understanding the Transformative Power of Transgression

One way of thinking about "transgression" as it is relevant to depth psychology is to understand it as a shift away from conventional thoughts, feelings, and images and a rejection of the "ruling discourse" (what Jung called the "ruling principle")—the discourse or reinforced by society at large. Here, I would like to explore the possibility that it is the transgression of the ruling principle (and not necessarily the specific new discourse that takes its place) that is key to understanding the power of dynamic psychotherapy. Several considerations can help us to understand why this should be the case: these pertain to the nature of "reality" and "truth," the history of art, paradigm change in science, and the language of poetry.

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan distinguishes between what he calls the registers of the "imaginary," "symbolic" and the "real."[60] He suggests that the "real" has nothing to do with "conventional reality," the "reality" that for psychologists, in particular the "ego psychologists," is the object of "reality testing." According to Lacan, "conventional reality" is within the symbolic register, as it is defined via the symbolic conventions of one's language and culture. This, of course, is the "reality" of the "ruling principle" or "ruling discourse." For Lacan, the "real" is actually opposed to, and is an intrusion upon, reality as it is *conventionally* understood. It is, I believe, much closer to the "jolt of reality" that one receives from a traumatic experience that disrupts one's routine, and where one is at a loss for words to describe and contain one's experience. "Reality," in this sense, disrupts and shatters the symbolic conventions of the ruling discourse. It is the kind of

sudden, traumatic intrusion experienced by the first humans when they were expelled from Eden and, for the first time, had to face the "realities" of mortality, suffering, and evil:

> *Genesis 3:16: To the woman, he said, "I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children." 17, To Adam, he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat from it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. 18, It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. 19, By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."*

It is also the "reality" that children, who, after a long period of enmeshment with and dependence upon parental figures, experience as a series of (internal and external) demands that force autonomy upon them and present them with the realities and responsibilities of adult life.

There is a species of "truth," analogous to the Lacanian "real," that has little if anything to do with "facts," "findings," or even "meanings" understood within a known framework, but which creates a new way of seeing that emerges through a crack or disruption within that framework and stands in stark contrast with what we had hitherto taken for granted. The emergence of such a new "truth" occurs, for example, in science with the shift in "paradigm," e.g., the shift that occurred with the transition from the humoral to the germ theory of disease, or the transition from Newtonian to relativistic physics. Such a shift in perspective also occurs in art when a new style or genre (think of the advances of impressionism, cubism, or abstract expressionism) abolishes old ways of seeing in favor of a new artistic vision. The philosophers Mary Hess and Richard Rorty suggested[61] that a similar "truth" emerges in poetry or poetic prose. This occurs when language is used in a new and unfamiliar manner, and pushes beyond the bounds of normal signification, stretching meaning beyond the "clearing" of conventional discourse into the "forest" of a yet-to-be-articulated unknown.

The traumatic notion of "reality" and the paradigm perspective on "truth" are each useful for understanding both the analytic process and the discipline of psychotherapy. Certainly, in the course of dynamic psychotherapy, individuals experience "breakthroughs" to a new reality and radical changes in perspective that present them with new "realities" and new "truths." We might ask, however, if such breakthroughs are more akin to the paradigm shifts in science, where there are ultimately criteria (e.g., observations and experiments) that have the cumulative effect of verifying (or falsifying) a new perspective, or the changes of "genre" in art and literature, which occur through a shift in the consciousness of artists or writers and their viewers or readers. Unlike the verification of the germ theory of disease or Einstein's theories of relativity, the "proof" for the "truth" in the art of Picasso or the novels of James Joyce is not to be found in experiments or objective data confirming the vision of these artists but rather in the subjective impact on viewers and readers of their works. In art and literature (much like in Eden), it is a new way of experiencing and seeing that yields truth—with less emphasis on the "data" that is seen. This, of course, is one of the lessons from the Garden of Eden: the result of eating the forbidden fruit was not that Adam and Eve saw and experienced something new; no new "facts" were initially revealed to them. Prior to their partaking of the forbidden fruit: "Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25), but

after their transgression: “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves,” (Genesis 3:7).

With regard to theories in psychology, we might ask if the changes in our understanding of the human psyche brought about with the advent of depth psychology have resulted in a single “true” psychological science and modality of psychotherapy or, as appears to be the case, in a proliferation of psychological “styles” or “genres” in a manner reminiscent of how the demise of the canons of academic painting in the late 19th century opened artists to a range of styles: impressionism, expressionism, cubism, realism, conceptualism, etc. This seems to have occurred not only because, in fact, consensus in psychology, and particularly with regards to psychotherapy, is even further out of reach than in the time of Freud and Jung, but more fundamentally because there are no agreed-upon criteria to decide between the schools of psychoanalytic, cognitive, behavioral, systems, humanistic, and biological psychology, and the various interpretations of and divisions within each of them.

Perhaps both the transformation of the individual in the course of psychotherapy, and the changes in psychological theory and technique that are hailed as progress in the field of psychotherapy do not reflect the realization of a single truth, but rather the deconstruction of an old ruling principle or discourse, one that has become calcified and stale, and the resultant opening of new, creative possibilities.[62] It is the transgression of the old, rigidified condition and the transition to a new theory, practice or way of experiencing in its wake that is powerful and significant, and not necessarily the content of the new theory, practice or experience. It is the flowering of new creative possibilities that is of singular importance. As with Adam and Eve, it is the birth of a consciousness resulting from a transgression.

We might say that Freud and Jung, and those who theorize and practice in their wake, are less like natural scientists developing a scientific theory, and more like painters and novelists who are exploring the possibilities and limits of a new genre or style. I believe that it is for this reason that Freud and Jung continue to have currency in literary and artistic circles, and are increasingly excluded from academic psychology, which insists (perhaps to its own detriment) on guarding and maintaining its “scientific” status (i.e., ruling discourse).

While a genre or style cannot be proven “wrong”, it can become stale and limiting, and thus must be superseded by a new “transgression,” resulting in a revolution in artistic or psychological sensibility. For this reason, one who works within an *old genre* risks working in the “manner” and with the “method” of the *old masters*, as opposed to having a fresh and unmediated approach to their subject (or patient). Jung was clear on this:

> *All psychotherapeutic methods are, by and large, useless.*[63]
>
> *Learn the best, know the best—and then forget everything when you face the patient.*[64]
>
> *Therapy is different in every case. When a doctor tells me that he adheres strictly to this or that method, I have my doubts about his therapeutic effect.*[65]

The danger of adhering to the “method” of Freud or Jung (or any “master” for that matter) is that it inevitably must create a

new “ruling discourse” that is as deadening as the pre-analytic discourse that they challenged and transgressed. Wilfred Bion, like Jung, held that our work with and theory about our patients should be created anew in each case. This assures that we respect the individual as the free and creative agent of their own experience and destiny. I believe that it is for this reason that analysts like Jung and Lacan abjured the creation of psychological and psychoanalytic schools and institutions as inimical to the very spirit of their work.

The word “institutionalization” makes reference both to the creation of a structured, well-established and smoothly functioning system, and to the commitment of presumably transgressive or insane individuals to a highly restricted environment with the goal of restoring them to normalcy. In the case of Freud and Jung, this “double meaning” suggests that by creating institutions in their name, we commit their theory and work to an institution, where their transgressions can be normalized, they can be reintegrated into society and their (and our) “sanity” restored!

One way to think about analysis is to view it as a form of *poesis* (from the Greek to produce, form or create), a “talking cure” that “expels one from Eden,” deconstructs one’s normal, routinized discourse, goes beyond the “garden” of cultivated meaning, and as per Hess and Rorty, enters an unknown forest and enables one to discover or create something new.[66] Analysis, in this sense, involves an open and transgressive economy of experience, thought and discourse. The idea that analytic interpretations are new and creative constructions is an alternative to seeing analysis as uncovering a hidden truth that was long repressed.[67] Much of Jung’s *Red Book*, and especially his *Black Books*, which are often impenetrable to the rational reader, are (from the point of view of conventional discourse) *transgressive, creative, poetic non-sense*, which nonetheless led Jung into new personal and theoretical territory. Jung failed to publish these works in his lifetime and shared the content of *The Red Book* with only a few close associates, fearing that it would undermine his scientific standing. Jung’s claim to have given (re) birth to God, his celebration of magic and unreason, his elevation of fantasy over reality, and chaos over disorder, his murder of the hero, his efforts to accept and imagine himself both as various ancient deities and as a party to terrible crimes, and his suggestion that the melting together of sense and absurdity constitute the “supreme meaning,” were all transgressions that Jung deeply reflected upon and which helped lead to innovations in his views on the psyche. Freud’s work was no less transgressive of the cultural and scientific standards of his time. As we have seen, his initial claim (later reversed) that hysterics had been sexually abused in childhood, his views about childhood sexuality, bi-sexuality and the Oedipus Complex, his theory that human behavior is governed by sexual and thanatic/aggressive instincts, and his argument that religion is “comparable to a childhood neurosis”[68] were all highly provocative and transgressive in his time, and yet each was instrumental to the development of psychoanalysis.

On a societal level, psychoanalysis created the space for the acceptance and recognition of drives (sexuality, aggression) that are suppressed by societal laws, and Jungian psychology made psychic room for modes of symbolic and mythological thinking that were ignored or debased within a modern scientific culture. In doing so, depth psychology gave rise to both cultural and individual transgression/liberation.

Some Caveats

All of this must be looked at with some important reservations. Not all psychotherapy begins with a transgression—indeed, we have come to understand that the treatment of a whole host of patients must first involve the shoring up of boundaries, both within the psyche and between self and others. While individuals in psychoanalysis often take actions that transgress boundaries that they or others have set for themselves, it is not clear that actual transgressions (what some analysts like to call "acting out") are always or even typically necessary for personal change. Indeed, it seems that for both Freud and Jung, the transgressions most significant for their own lives and work were fantasized rather than real. Certainly, the majority of moral and ethical transgressions do not lead to new values or cultural or even personal renewal. Finally, not everything from the received tradition, i.e., from the "ruling discourse," is stultifying and repressive—indeed, a tremendous portion of it, what we call "culture," is infinitely ennobling and enriching.

Nevertheless, our discussion of the "sin" of Adam and Eve has prompted us to reflect on the role of transgression in human development, the practice of depth psychology, and its meaning in our own lives. It may indeed be that the "Eden Complex," wherein an individual transgresses convention, becomes conscious, gains moral and axiological knowledge, and assumes freedom of choice, is the archetypal dynamic of human psychology that Freud purported the Oedipus Complex to be, and that its dynamic of prohibition/transgression is destined to be re-enacted not only in each individual analysis but also in the history and development of psychotherapy itself.

Coda: Jung's Childhood Fantasy

In his late life memoir *Memory, Dreams, Reflections*[69] Jung recounted a childhood episode in which he came to believe that God *wanted* Adam and Eve to sin, and that God himself is ultimately transgressive. Jung relates that when he was age 12, he came out of school in Basel and arrived at the cathedral square at noon on a perfectly beautiful blue-sky day. At first, he had the thought that the church and the world are beautiful, and that God is sitting above the blue sky on a golden throne. However, at that moment, he sensed the beginning of a blasphemous thought, a thought that, for three days, he tortured himself, struggling to keep it out of his mind. He then thought of the transgression of Adam and Eve, who "committed the first sin by doing what God did not want them to do", and it suddenly became clear to him that "God in His omniscience had arranged everything so that the first parents would have to sin." [70] It was after this realization that Jung came to the conclusion that God desired that he summon the courage to think his blasphemous thoughts.

Jung then saw God sitting on his golden throne above the cathedral, "and from under the throne an enormous turd falls upon the sparkling cathedral roof, shatters it, and breaks the walls of the cathedral asunder."[71] Jung writes that he experienced indescribable relief at thinking this thought and realized that God stands above the church and that in spite of his goodness, "God could be something terrible." For Jung, this was the "living God, who stands, omnipotent and free, above His Bible and His Church., who calls upon man to partake of His freedom."[72] The shattering of the cathedral, like the kabbalist's "breaking of the vessels", and the adult Jung's pronouncements regarding the break from the collective and the creation of new values, points the way to the potentially transformative, if at times dangerous, power of transgression. This is the very power harnessed by the first humans and which resulted in both their expulsion from paradise and the birth of their humanity.

Footnotes

[1] Several of the ideas and formulations in this paper originally appeared in S. Drob, "Transgression and Transformation: Is Psychoanalysis a Dangerous Method?" in *Talking Cures*, the newsletter of the Alonso Center for Psychodynamic Studies in the School of Psychology at Fielding Graduate University, *Volume 10, Number 1*, May/June 2012.

[2] S. Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, J. Strachey, trans. London: Hogarth Press, 1959, p. 78.

[3] S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Trans. A. A. Milne. New York: MacMillan, 1913, p. 223.

[4] M. L. Wax, "Oedipus as Normative? Freud's Complex, Hook's Query, Malinowski's Trobrianders, Stoller's Anomalies," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis, 28(1)*, 2000, 117. Retrieved from https://fgul.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/oedipus-as-normative-freuds-complex-hooks-query/docview/198187087/se-2.

[5] W. N. Stephens, *The Oedipus Complex: Cross-Cultural Evidence*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press of Glencoe, 1962; L. Luborsky and M. S. Barrett, "The History and Empirical Status of Key Psychoanalytic Concepts," *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, *Vol. 2*, 1-19, 2006.

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[10] P. Pillay & T. Pillay, "Freud's Treatment of the Feminine With Reference to His Theory of the Oedipus Complex and Its Relation to Oedipus Tyrannus and the Sandman," *Gender & Behaviour*, *15(4)*, 2017, 10436-10451. Retrieved from https://fgul.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/freuds-treatment-feminine-with-reference-his/docview/2112657900/se-2

[11] C. Gilligan, *The Birth of Pleasure*. New York: Random House, 2004.

[12] J. Brenkman, Straight Male Modern: A Cultural Critique of Psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge, 1993.

[13] J. M. Masson, The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory. New York: Farrar, Straus and

Giroux, 1984.

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[16] S. Freud, "Female Sexuality," *Standard Edition XXII*, 225-243.

[17] O. Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, New York: Dover, 1994/1929.

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[27] O. Kernberg, "Borderline Personality Organization,"*Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, *15*, 641-685, 1967.

[28] H. Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self*. New York: International University Press, 1971.

[29] C. G. Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*. *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, Wm. McGuire, 20 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953-1979), *Vol. 5*, par. 522.

[30] C. G. Jung, *The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious.Collected Works, Vol. 7*, par. 269. Jung writes, "The aim of individuation is nothing less than to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona, on the one hand, and the suggestive power of primordial images on the other."

[31] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, ed. Sonu Shamdasani, trans. Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009, p. 366.

[32] C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation. Collected Works, Vol. 6, par. 396.

[33] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 356a.

[34] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 356b.

[35] C. G. Jung Speaking, ed. W. McGuire and R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1936/1977, p. 98.

[36] C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, recorded and edited by Aniela Jaffé. New York: Random House, 1961, p. 38.

[37] C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*. New York: Meridian, 1960, pp. 48-53.

[38] M. P. Osmond (2000). The Adam and Eve story is an exemplar of an early-like variant of the Oedipus complex. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, *48(4)*, 1295-1325.

[39] S. Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, Trans. A. A. Brill. London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd. 1919, pp. 242-243.

[40] F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, Ed. B. Williams, Trans. J. Nauckhoff. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, Sec. 335, p. 189.

[41] C. G. Jung, *The Symbolic Life. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, Wm. McGuire. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953-1979, *Vol. 18*, par. 1094.

[42] C. G. Jung, The Symbolic Life. The Collected Works, Vol. 18, par. 1095.

[43] C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, pp. 48, 73.

[44] C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, p. 53.

[45] C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, p. 48.

[46] C. G. Jung, *Answer to Job*, p. 206, note 7. An editor's note in the English edition explains that the "shards" refer to Luria's doctrine of the "breaking of the vessels" through which "the powers of evil assumed a separate and real existence."

[47] C. G. Jung Letters, ed. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé, trans. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973, Vol. 2, 33-34.

[47-bis] Magid, p. 38

[48] S. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (1927). Trans. James Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961, p. 53.

[49] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 241b ff.

[50] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, 229b.

[51] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, 295a.

[52] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, 313b-314a.

[53] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, 209b.

[54] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, 263b-264a.

[55] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, pp. 271-272.

[56] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 252b.

[57] I. E. Alexander (1982). The Freud–Jung relationship—the other side of Oedipus and countertransference.*American Psychologist*, *37(9)*, 1009–1018. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.9.1009

[58] C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, p. 241b ff.

[59] W. McGuire (Ed.). (1974). *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung* Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 492. While Freud responded that he fully agreed with the quotation from Nietzsche, he made a slip and wrote "why" instead of "when," when he wrote: "a third party…would ask me why I had tried to tyrannize you intellectually." See Nietzsche, Zarathustra, Part I. Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*, New York: Penguin Books, 1954, p. 78.

[60] J. Lacan. (1991). The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

[61] See R. Rorty, "Unfamiliar Noises: Hess and Davidson on Metaphor," in his*Philosophical Papers, Vol. 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 162-172.

[62] In this context, it is interesting to note how Aaron Beck's cognitive-behavioral revolution was, for many, a welcome departure from psychoanalysis, but later studies showed a decline in its effectiveness, and it was (like Freudian psychoanalysis) supplemented and in many ways superseded by a "new wave" in cognitive therapy, including schema-focused, dialectical-behavioral and acceptance and commitment therapies.

[63] C. G. Jung, *The Practice of Psychotherapy. The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, ed. H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, Wm. McGuire, 20 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953-1979), *Vol. 16*, par. 179.

[64] C. G. Jung, The Symbolic Life. The Collected Works, Vol. 18, par. 882.

[65] C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 131.

[66] R. Rorty, “Unfamiliar Noises: Hess and Davidson on Metaphor.”

[67] K. Friedan, *Freud’s Dream of Interpretation*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990.

[68] S. Freud, The Future of an Illusion, p. 53.

[69] C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, pp. 36-41.

[70] C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 38.

[71] C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 39.

[72] C. G. Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 40.