

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

Jeremy Holmes¹

¹ University of Exeter

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I found this an excellent, well-written, provocative paper that deserves to be widely read. For a non-Jungian it was informative and clarified the thicket one gets trapped in when trying to comprehend that confusing and mystical writer, locating the gems that lie within the discardable shards of his thought. Two thoughts occur to me stimulated by the paper:

- a) The Eden complex, as does its sister Oedipus, attempts to ascribe human agency to what is in fact a evolution-driven set of systems driven by random forces, not purpose. Expulsion from Eden is not because Adam and Eve transgressed – and therefore accompanied by guilt – but because the mammalian developmental pathway and parental psychosexual imperative drives the infant from the breast willy-nilly into the world of toil, shame and competition. The ultimate transgression is to accept human frailty and marginality, rather than Jung's omnipotent God-phantasies.
- b) The thrust of the paper is compatible with Karl Friston's – the mathematical psychiatrist – neuroscience-based Free Energy Principle. The mind/brain is continuously trying to minimise the free energy with which its senses, external and internal, bombard it. It does this by 'top-down' active inference, predicting the future in a Bayesian fashion, on the basis of incoming information and prior models of the world. 'Transgression' as developed in the paper represents the process entailed in generating new models that better 'bind' the free energy which an ever-changing interpersonal, familial, ecological, & socio-political environment stimulate. Jung's transgressive 'values' are superarching concepts that attempt that task. The role of psychotherapy is to facilitate that process at a micro scale, offering companionship and validation on the lonely transgressive journey.