

Magdalen College

Oxford

June 2nd

My dear Hardie - You will remember that in the P[roblem] of Pain I explicitly confess that I am tackling the Fall story on a shallow level. Behind this remark lies my belief that every good myth has layers of significance, or, if you like, that different patterns can be made out of it. Thus one can take Oedipus, as you do, in which case the incest becomes the centre and the asking dangerous questions (and also the sphinx) become marginal. But you can also, with Plutarch, make Oedipus the type of curiosity (which, you know, killed the cat) and the incest can become less important- any other crime wh[ich] can be unwittingly committed w[oul]d have done as well. I sometimes think of these different patterns as radiating from a common centre which itself remains outside all human consciousness and may be strictly metaphysical or metapsychical. And if the events in any myth should also have occurred in 'real life' that w[oul]d not abolish any of the patterns - for of course son-mother incest has happened in 'real life'. So that the historical Fall wh[ich] I believe in need not really come in to the argument. I don't think it conflicts with anthropology or psychology. What you recover in those sciences is, in my view, not the absolute beginnings of man but the first period of prehistoric human life after the Fall. That period would be full of the struggle from ape-like unconscious into consciousness just as you describe. A man struggling out of poverty presents the same phenomenon, or rather he was born in it, or fell into it after an earlier period of riches. So that you need not regard my view as alternative to yours but as a harmless unverifiable addition. On either view the greater part of human history w[oul]d be as you describe. The Archetypes w[oul]d certainly symbolise this struggle. I merely add another layer: they also symbolise more purely metaphysical, not biological, adventures so far away and they are not recoverable by psychology and w[oul]d be completely unknown but for theology (*revelation*). The Fall as you conceive it did occur. What primitive man knew dimly and what I believe was, however, that it had all happened before (*prior*), ages earlier (*at biological level*), on a quite different level. But of course the re-enactment of it was also different because the actor was now a semi animal facing a semi animal problem. The centre of a first story had been simple disobedience: in the re-enacting the centre was knowledge (*no doubt without knowledge*), in the sense of self consciousness. (What is Archetype in relation to our present individual experiences is ectype in relation to something else. You disbelieve that further stage wh[ich] I put in; but it needn't make any difference to our discussion about the stage that both admit). For your statement 'in order to be conscious one must have an unconscious', I w[oul]d substitute - in order to be conscious (simpliciter) it is necessary to be not a mere unity. 'Enjoyed' thinking (in Alexander's terms) 'contemplates' not itself but its object. To become aware of itself it must objectify itself. Hence in absolute Thought the Father begets the Son (His "Objectivity") and the unity is still preserved (as Holy Ghost proceeds). My Paradisal man (*historical?*) was a little working model of that. But consciousness secundum quid (i.e. for a man who was now semi-ape) demands what you say. In that context real disharmony comes in. Instead of the perfectly soluble problem (that thinking is 'enjoyment' not 'contemplation') one now has the problem (a). That the potential amount of attention is inadequate to the creative environment, so that it can only think of one thing by forgetting everything else. Education palliates this disability. (b). The flesh-spirit conflict - the discrepancy of wills between the man's moral and his instinctive self. On those terms (but not simpliciter) the emergence of consciousness does produce 'severance', so that now we lose the tree of life by holding onto the tree of knowledge. (Even to become too explicitly attentive to a physical pleasure now spoils it as pleasure. Eurydice vanishes if Orpheus looks back: but only in the suburbs of Hades! It is only after the Fall (in my sense) that the tree of life is guarded by a flaming sword†). But in the beginning it was not so. At one level I quite agree that God in Genesis is Father isolated from

Son, Law from Grace etc. At the higher level, not. In [?]fine, I hold something you don't, but I am not contradicting anything you say. I dare say all this sounds nonsensical and my own mind is by no means clear. But don't you feel (I do v[ery] strongly) that the great danger is that of stopping too short - of assuming that the sense 'we've been here before' is fully satisfied by any past event we read? Few convictions are deeper in me than that there has always been an even earlier "before". It beckons you back and back and until I had a total knowledge of all reality I sh[oul]d never feel sure I had got to the Archetype of Archetypes. The first really moving memory I possess is (significantly) itself an experience of remembering.

I return the Dream of which (it may surprise you to learn) I can make no-thing. The title you have given to it rather complicates matters than otherwise.

yours

C. S. Lewis

† This again, on two levels, (a). Explicit consciousness and ethical demands cut us off from our instinctive vitality. (b) The necessity of purchasing consciousness and virtue at such a ruinous price results from the original Fall. (Levels C to Z not yet discovered by this genealogist: for it's more like tracing a family tree than solving a detective problem).

Clive Staples Lewis (29 November 1898 – 22 November 1963) was a British writer, literary scholar and Anglican lay theologian. He held academic positions in English literature at both Magdalen College, Oxford (1925–1954), and Magdalene College, Cambridge (1954–1963).

Colin Graham Hardie (16 February 1906 – 17 October 1998) was a British classicist and academic. From 1933 to 1936, he was Director of the British School at Rome. From 1936 to 1973, he was a Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, 1936-41 & 1945-73, and a tutor in classics. In addition, from 1967 to 1973, he was the Public Orator of the University of Oxford. He was a member of the Inklings, an informal literary discussion group which included the likes of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis.

*The Problem of Pain* is a 1940 book on the problem of evil by C. S. Lewis.

Postcard to C. G. Hardie, Magdalen College, Oxford, with Cambridge, 7 May 1963, postmark

vii maii

Caelos translunarios no peinturos in novissima conflagratione sentient

S[aint] Aug[ustine] De Civit[ate] Dei xx, xviii, xxiv

Aquinas IIIa. Supplement. Q LXXIV. art. 4

Dante Par[adiso] VII. 67 sq.

J.

May 7

They will feel that they will not paint the translunar heavens in the last conflagration

S[aint] Aug[ustine] De Civit[ate] Dei xx, xviii, xxiv.

Aquinas IIIa. Supplement. Q 74. art. 4

Dante Par[adiso] VII. 67 sq.

J.

Saint Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XX: The prophecies of the Last Judgment in the Old and New Testaments. Book XVIII: The parallel history of the earthly and heavenly cities from Abraham to the end. Doctrine of Witness, that Jews received prophecy predicting Jesus, and that Jews are dispersed among the nations to provide independent testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures. Book XXIV [?? The final Book is XXII]

Supplement to the third part of the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas. Question 74: Of the fire of the final conflagration. Article 4: Whether that fire will cleanse also the higher heavens?

Paradiso 7.64-78: On a backdrop of creation theology — verses 64-66 are a medieval description of the Big Bang — Beatrice explains that God created humans directly, without mediation (“*sanza mezzo*”). Our im-mediate or un-mediated creation by God (similarly, God directly breathes life and soul into the human embryo in Purgatorio 25) is a joyous interlude in the tragic story of the fall that Beatrice is recounting, for that which is created “im-mediate” by God receives from Him the gifts of eternity, liberty, and conformity:

Ciò che da lei sanza mezzo distilla / non ha poi fine, perché non si move / la sua impronta quand'ella sigilla. / Ciò che da essa sanza mezzo piove / libero è tutto, perché non soggiace / a la virtute de le cose nove. (Par. 7.67-72)

(All that derives directly from this Goodness / is everlasting, since the seal of Goodness / impresses an imprint that never alters. / Whatever rains from It immediately / is fully free, for it is not constrained / by any influence of other things.)

These exceptionally beautiful lines affirm in solemn cadences that what is made directly by God is immortal — “*non ha poi fine*” (it has no end [Par. 7.68]) — and free: “*libero è tutto*” (is fully free [Par. 7.71]). Our immortality is the result of being created directly by God, as is our liberty. We are free because we are not subject to the power of the heavens: the “*new things*” of Paradiso 7.72.