

## On Replication

I was trying to nail down more specifically where this idea about replication had come from. It was one of those things I knew had some value worth pursuing, but I couldn't identify the precise words or source to give it voice. Besides, the inspiration to write about it came from God-only-knows-where. Rather than being an obstacle, I took this as an invitation as well as a challenge to engage in unpacking what this word meant to me.

This quandary led to an image I access often. Usually I visualize such things as a block of air about a yard square. It's nearby...actually in any room I enter...and is indistinguishable from the rest of the air or space already present. In retrospect I could say that it follows me. Suddenly, voila. Before it had been part of the air or space around you yet at once becomes a specific form that already has been delineated. To put it more accurately, this form delineates itself, I having nothing to do with it. You either see this form or you don't. No middle ground.

Now for the fun part. To discover what's inside this ethereal block of air you have to cut it out from the surrounding air and place on your desk. Delicately is the watch-word. Once this has been accomplished, the neighboring air fills in. That's it for now. To be sure, at a later time another block will manifest itself, you not having a thing to do with its manifestation. With regard to this block roughly a square yard you pause and check out the details or contours. This examination is an important step. It prevents you from being greedy and rushing to look inside. If you took that approach, the box would vanish, returning to the air from which it had come. The next step is gently removing the top with your magical-mystical knife. Although you haven't seen the contents yet, you have to brace yourself for a surprise. It always turns out to be different from what you had imagined.

After I had visualized the block and once I had cut off the top, I saw the tag inside which read "Replication." That obviously whets your appetite, so now time to carefully undo the wrapping. One thing is clear. This package didn't originate from me. I attribute it as from the gods (and goddesses). The first thought that came to mind was how to go about dealing with this idea of replication. That now was handed off to me. It was something I hadn't expected and took me off guard.

Usually the inside of package contains something more clearly defined. However, this time the opposite was true. Behold, another box was inside which had to be opened instead of what I had expected, instructions as how to go about dealing with the idea of replication. Was the package mislabeled or what I reading it incorrectly? I check it out a number of times and indeed, Replication was the label plain as day.

Now for the second box, this being the first time I've encountered such a situation. The first thought that came to mind was one of those Russian dolls you keep opening and finding smaller images. I sure hope this wouldn't be the case but was prepared for it. Suddenly I saw the label on box number two, *Anamnesis*. This term fundamentally means recollection. At first it seems close to or identical with replication. In essence *anamnesis* is a kind of turning back or turning inside to see where one is coming from in this precise moment and to recognize that once we do, we're home. We've been there all along but haven't realized it you. Such is the meaning of the preposition *ana-* prefaced to the root as applied to memory.

*Anamnesis* represents more than recalling stuff. It's a going upon (*ana-*) one's recollective faculty in order to be above it. From such a position one can look down on where one came from...not sometime in the distant future but right here and now. Thus *anamnesis* a kind of arrival or better, a realization we've been made whole and entire all along. No question. This is The Discovery of Discoveries if there ever was one. I liken it to the pearl of great price and other such Gospel images with regard to that which is most precious and for which we give our all. When you stop to think of it...really give it thought...nothing in the entire universe, even life, could top this. Actually I'd say the life we live now is a reflection of this reality. Want a sure-fire proof? A sentiment of gratitude. Not just being thankful but thankful through the roof, spontaneously. When we are thankful, it isn't to an object or event. Always a person is involved, hence the "you."

In light of this I'd say that our desire to replicate something or some experience is a kind of aggressive take-over or forced application of *anamnesis*. We see something precious and desirable and wish to appropriate it. Almost always it turns out that the object of our desire is unattainable. Even though we know this, we persist because we want it so badly. It's especially pernicious when we apply it

to a person, something like trying to clone an individual. That means we wish to fashion him or her in our own image and likeness, to borrow (rather, to pervert) a well-known verse from Genesis. As for the bell weather of gratitude, it's completely absent when it comes to replication which has a life all its own and is totally self-enclosed.

There's no question that replication demands close attention to details. We observe a person, object or event much like a detective and put all the pieces together as best we can. Because we're entirely focused on the object at hand, we lose ourselves in the details, all of which are important. Miss one and we miss assembling the entire object of our desire. While skill certainly is involved, the process is one that's pretty much automatic once we've settled upon what we want to accomplish. In most cases we don't come off with a perfect replication but something that approximates the original. It's enough to get by. The scary part is that we discard the original for the copy, thinking the latter is better because it's more to our liking.

So what's the big deal with replication? We see something similar to it in the science of robotics. The ultimate goal is to create a human being as closely as possible—and this is the scary part—one better than the original. This process isn't necessarily bad in and by itself but is pretty much indifferent. Perhaps the main difference is that replication (the preface re- suggests 'again') is constant and never moves forward. It's always turning back upon itself for inspiration. As for robotics, it's constantly evolving and learning and for this reason has no direct bearing on the article at hand. Still, it had to be thrown out there for the record.

Part of the reason why we wish to replicate is that we love to tinker, and this provides endless entertainment. While that's an important element, we do this more to create a better self but usually in a haphazard way which is more amateurish. Some of the motivation driving us is based upon not being satisfied with what we are on a deep level. We cannot yet plumb these depths except get a glimpse at them here and there. It's like trying to nab a fish from a bucket. Most of them slip away, slippery as could be, but every so often we manage to nab one and draw conclusions about the others from what's in our hands.

Still there remains the question that bugs us, why? Why are we engaged in replication and why aren't we satisfied with the stuff that's already in our

possession? Try throwing that out to someone...anyone...and you'll get a blank stare. It'd be great if we could get that person to pause and ponder his or her motivation. Good luck. It's like asking one of those prisoners in the cave of Plato's **Republic** why he or she is constantly looking at the projections on the wall. We'd be lucky if we got away with just a blow to the head. Such a response is something we often fail to take into consideration until it's too late.

So if there's any lesson to be learned, it's don't interfere with anyone who is engaged in replicating! It's serious business, and don't forget that else you'll get a whack on the head. The very act of looking at it in action is ambiguous, that is, if you're not an active participant or even interested observer. A replicator can tell which side you're on before even you know it. You're either for or against the activity at hand. No middle ground.

Just above I mentioned that replication is a reflection, albeit imperfect and somewhat contrived, of our faculty of *anamnesis*. Any stratagem of taking over that faculty, if you will, seems to be semi-conscious. On one hand we do it spontaneously and are unaware of our actions simply because it's in our nature to replicate. This is not unlike the natural impulse to procreate while on the other hand we have a certain uneasiness that something is lacking, that it's not quite based in reality. So in the very act of replicating an object, person or even event we feel (for lack of better words) that we could be doing something better or more in line with the nature of things. For sure, this is fuzzy territory rather difficult on which to lay our hands but is ever present lurking in the background.

We could say that the idea of replication has become serious business in the last few decades due to ever more sophisticated computers and, of course, the Internet along with AI. This multiplies to near infinity the means by which to replicate as well as making the urge to overcome it all the more daunting. In fact, it might even seem impossible. Worse, it can leave the need to access our faculty of *anamnesis* as an alternative...the only alternative...in the dust. Why do we need it when we have something of our own making right in front of us? The possibilities are endless or so we think with something from our own resources.

Things always can change and will change. However, there's something ominous in the air when it comes to any attempt to discard *anamnesis* in favor of replication. Furthermore, there's a theological precedence to replication. Take the Lord who

brings into being all creation as recorded in Genesis. If we accept the mythic dimension of this account in the best sense of the word and take a quick survey of the details involved, we see in a nutshell all that the Lord had created. Talk about a manifestation of *techne* run wild. This Greek word is rendered as skill, craft or more to the point here, cunning. We marvel on end and word the Lord who pulled this off and continues to sustain it.

However, what that word represents is secondary because as Genesis continues, the Main Event makes its appearance, the so-called fall. It's something we've been waiting for all along. I've treated this in depth elsewhere on this homepage, so I won't delve into it that much. Suffice it to say that the Lord lines up the man, the woman and the serpent. As for the serpent, let's assume he was standing. After the Lord laid it thick on all three it crawled away on its belly. The Lord did not mince words. He told all three that they were responsible for disobeying him. When reading the text you could feel the divine *techne* in all its power coming to bear down them. Only now *techne* is verbalized. It takes the form of a lecture.

I'm fairly certain everyone agrees that being lectured at is among one the worst experiences in life. It's a one-way street giving the person or persons addressed no chance of response. If a response were given, immediately it'd be squelched. So while the serpent crawled off on its belly for the first time in its life, the man and woman remained standing but pretty much crawled off from the Lord bearing deep resentment. That was it. End of story. This experience would not only stay with them but was destined to be passed down to their children and hence all future generations. All throughout there wasn't the slightest mitigation in the force of this original lecture, that's how powerful was the divine *techne* transformed into words.

This remarkable transition had never been done before, a surprise even to the Lord himself who initiated it. The incident just recounted shows that he finds it impossible to restrain himself, this being the first time ever that he found himself challenged, if you will, by beings he had recently created. "How dare they!" he fumed as the serpent, man and woman walked away thoroughly disgusted. Unfortunately the Lord failed to learn an important lesson. While all-powerful, suddenly for the first time in all eternity he realized a limitation to his divinity. He continues to disguise this in ensuing dealings with humanity by coming down hard on them when they disobey his commands. And laying behind this disobedience is repulsion at being lectured. It seems the more he lectures, the more humans turn a deaf ear which, by the way, is frequent, apt way of describing their response. A

favorite tactic of someone all-powerful yet incredibly immature is the frequent use of “Thus says the Lord.” You either heed these words or be damned.

This transference of divine *techne* into a lecture is a wake-up call for the Lord. He does it completely unaware, almost in his sleep. After all, it’s the first time he has made such a transition and is shocked at the result. To be sure, he’ll put this in his divine arsenal for future use. We can be sure that after having dismissed the serpent, man and woman the Lord continued his evening walks in the garden of Eden but from this moment on, he was pouting all the while and all by himself. The joy of such walks has now evaporated.

In addition to having set all three upon an irrevocable course, on a deeper level he invertedly covered over their image and likeness (let’s say their *anamnesis* and ability to implement it). He did this primarily by preferring the easy way out, to lecture. In its place? The man and woman, including the serpent, were left to their own resources. That means they accessed the only way available to them, to replicate or copy the same thing over and over. The essence of their replication was the lecture echoing the Lord. It’s a way of getting back at him without actually realizing it. So when you run across this phenomenon as happens frequently, you now know the source. This put the man and the woman in a rut that would keep them immature with regard to various forms of religion and hence future ways of relating to the Lord that would come into being.

This issue reminds me of what comes across initially as a bland statement from Carl Jung which runs simply as “the psyche is real.” One day I decided to verify this, and sure enough it is so. From what I gather by this statement, psyche is that which constitutes our very selves, the whole ball of wax consisting of insights into reality from the point of view of both philosophy and theology. They trace their origin in the most primitive way of viewing reality called *phusis* or nature. That’s hitting up against the ultimate wall as far back in human history as we can go. Jumping ahead, the psyche seems to be equivalent to the unconscious and is that-which-guides us, the original *phusis*, if you will, exerting itself in the present in all its undiminished energy. I hope I got this right, grasping the insight but not exactly sure if the terminology is correct.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A book by Frances Conford written shortly after the turn of the twentieth century deals with this and apparently had influence Jung. While it may get technical in places, it’s a fairly straight-forward read. The title is **From Religion to Philosophy**. The transition inferred by the title says a lot as to where we’re going well over a century after the publication of this book.

Taking this insight a bit further and getting down to experience as closely as possible, there seem to be two persons existing in one person. One is physical, the person such as I or anybody else *hic et nunc* and no other object. The other person is the low grade one which knows only how to replicate itself. I call it a person but not sure if this is the right term. External-wise it's the same as the one just described. However, it's a kind of veneer laid over it, one we can see right through and having all the same characteristics but very different. Anyway, for the sake of the argument, I'll let it ride. We could say that it's made in the image of the Lord...albeit in an unflattering manner...and acts in his likeness, the same divinity who had dealt with the serpent, man and woman. In sum, acting in accord with this view of the Lord implies functioning in pretty much the same dictatorial fashion. We have to wait until Jesus Christ comes along not so much to redeem the human race but to redeem his Father, no easy task.

So when we engage in replication we're focused entirely on the job before us. For that reason the digression into how Genesis portrays the Lord as an archetype for replication can be helpful. There the text portrays an almighty being who can do what he wants, when he wants and to whomever he wants. Absolutely no restrictions. Such is the case with us humans when we replicate, obviously on a lesser scale but still in accord with the same pattern. More precisely...and again in accord with the divine archetype...we do so automatically, impulsively and above all else, without reflection. Indeed we get the sense that another "person" is operative within or beside us. For this reason the Greek preposition *para* is helpful. It means beside, in the company with, of being present with someone situated on one's left or right while at the same time not having this person directly in front. In other words, one is a participant in the activity at hand but not taking the lead. That depends on another agent.

This being-beside applies to the act of replicating. While it has an objective reality being copied or reproduced, it's focused that nothing can stand in the way. A concrete example. Recently in a small office building where I sometimes work they had their monthly fire drill. When the alarm rang out, everyone was supposed to vacate the building according to prescribed routes. One person was assigned to a given section of the office floor. A worker in my area noticed the man in charge of a certain part of the floor knocking persistently on the door of an office. Obviously the occupant wasn't there, yet this man kept knocking. His

co-worker approached and tried to tell him that nobody was present, yet he wouldn't stop knocking on the door. Furthermore, this man had ear plugs for some reason or other! Finally he stopped and agreed to leave the building.

This had one other element worth noting. Usually people on that floor vacate to a certain area outdoors. It was raining quite heavily and the people could have vacated to a sheltered area only twenty or thirty feet away. Absolutely not! The fellow in charge had to follow the letter of the law while about ten coworkers were getting soaked in the rain. I offer this as a more precise example of what I'm attempting to clarify by our innate desire to replicate. It's compulsive, organized and won't stop until the job is done. The letter of the law is followed meticulously or perhaps better, mindlessly.

Such is one way of viewing the inheritance from our so-called first parents whom the Lord had expelled from the Garden of Eden. Indeed, they were caught between a rock and a hard place. The rock is the expulsion and the hard place is memory of having been lectured at in a severe way by the Lord. They now have to carry around both. The fruit of this is the first murder or the Cain and Abel saga. From there it snowballs to the flood, restoration and subsequent harsh dealings by the Lord towards our parents' descendants down to today.

By reason of this inheritance stretching back millennia we carry within us a twofold dilemma. We have a vague yet pervasive awareness of its presence and constantly seek to relieve ourselves of this burden. The image of this is Cain as he wanders the earth after having murdered his brother. As he does, constantly he's walking upon the earth soaked with Abel's blood which is constantly reminding him of his deed. However, the Lord marks him so people won't kill him, the word for this in Gn 4.15 being '*oth*, generally a sign. Vague enough, but recognizable by these undefined people who aren't recorded as being listed in the record of descendants of the first man and first woman.

We have here an opportunity to single out Cain as special, a son directly from the first two humans in distinction to others who despite being human, are different. There's a certain ill-defined relationship with them as they go about their business in the background yet ever present. Taking off from here we could say that the '*oth* is something which Cain is aware of, obviously setting him apart from other



persons. The difference? Let's say 'oth represents two facts. First, he's keenly aware of his crime and finds it inescapable by reason of walking upon Abel's blood in the earth. Just as constant is that the 'oth which comes from the Lord—the same one who had lectured his parents and passed on that memory to him—is that which distinguishes him from everyone else. At the same time the 'oth represents awareness of his being made whole and entire without the need to add anything else.

This wholeness and entirety makes Cain a unique hybrid...the first ever...and in a way an advancement with respect to his parents being made in the divine image and likeness. It's as such in that he has inherited the image and likeness of the divine Lecturer while having the 'oth from the Lecture himself. It's the start, albeit small yet important, of an advancement towards being freed from memory of the lecture which the Lord had laid on the serpent, man and woman. Thus we have an answer to the seminal Question of Questions, is there a way out of this mess or are we destined to keep on replicating for good or ill?

Continuing with Cain as this strange hybrid, note what the text says after he had received the divine 'oth. "Then Cain went away (*yatsa'*, also to go forth) from the presence of the Lord" [Gn 4.16]. While in one way this may come across as a further estrangement, it can be taken as leaving behind—still very much in an imperfect manner—the divine Lecturer and milking the 'oth for what it's worth. Cain now set out on his own with a double realization: that he was guilty of having murdered his brother, the first one in history, yet at the same time is made whole and entire. While the divine Lecturer remains a bully, he has enough insight into seeing that Cain has realized something for the first time which he hadn't intended to see. He was able to look at the disagreeable side of Lord who otherwise preferred to keep hidden yet now here we have it, right out in the open. Actually the Lord is the one in need of those garments of skin to cover this embarrassing side of his instead of the first man and first woman (cf. Gn 3.21).

And so for the very first time Cain discovered a way out of a royal mess instead of being doomed to keep on replicating his guilt *ad aeternitatem*. It was a small yet significant step in what will be an ongoing educational process for the Lord right up to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Actually this notion of being whole and

entire can be a threat not just to the Lord who has quite a task ahead of him to get over it but for we humans just as well. This insight can be a real threat to the Judeo-Christian religious tradition as commonly perceived. We relish the thought of being whole and entire but due to a whole slew of circumstances, not have an idea of what it is in reality. Such is the result of centuries of having been lectured at, difficult to shake off but certainly doable.

As for this shaking off, while as just noted it's beyond our capacity to do so, nevertheless there remains that divinely appointed *'oth* which reminds us that we're made whole and entire. It's something not off in la-la land but right here and now to be realized and done so with ease. In brief, this consists in being aware, pure and simple. Such an insight is usually characterized as "coming from the East," the articulation of which certainly is true. However, the reality is just as present elsewhere only not as clear. In other words, it's universal.

So what do we do once we've gotten insight into this dual reality? Nothing really. The question becomes irrelevant. However, we've learned more to rely upon the physicality of our existence...the common, almost despicable stuff we usually ignore in favor of things which are "spiritual." The chief reason is that it has direct contact with the source from which it had come, the blind creative nature or *techne* of God. It remains just as blind, but once we latch onto its significance we now see it as one half of the whole picture, the other half being that awareness just mentioned. Such is what the Lord had lacked or better, had not been aware of until the human race left the Garden of Eden. So instead of thinking that our first parents had rejected Eden, as time went on and despite the difficulties they faced, they viewed it as a significant advancement. In fact, this knowledge was better than that offered by the tree containing the fruit of good and evil.

A summary if you will. As I try to formulate my ideas as best as possible for this article I see that in essence it's pretty much in the same vein as others which have come before it. I hope they aren't a series amounting to a rehash of the same ol' same ol' but form an incremental growth or progression...perhaps as chapters in a book? The first thought that comes to mind is where or when will this come to an end. However, that proves to be a mistaken idea. The process is a unique combination of the same ol' same ol' yet at each go-around something new

(hopefully) is added. The fundamental insight is twofold. That the articles continue yet simultaneously have reached their conclusion. Strange to say but in typical fashion, another box starting manifesting itself in the air. It'll take some time to check it out, but then again, another gift from the heavenly realm. *Deo gratias.*

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