

Re-reading Sophocles's Oedipus Plays: Reconceiving Vengeance as Cultural Complex

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Written nearly 2,500 years ago, Sophocles's Oedipus plays continue to offer riddles for understanding psyche. The plots of the plays are well known. Oedipus Tyrannus¹ presents a powerful ruler faced with grappling with the ego-shocking discoveries that he unawares killed his father, married his mother, fathered children by her, and thus became a pollution to his city. In his final dramatic creation, Oedipus at Colonus, Sophocles renders his vision of how Oedipus has psychologically dealt with these discoveries and how his efforts are viewed by the gods. In this play, Oedipus has abjured responsibility for his parricide and incest and subsequently retaliates against his sons who did not help him when he was ostracized by cursing them with fratricide. He then exercises a hero's power to bless and is taken up with the goddesses of vengeance, long known as the Furies.

This divine rewarding of Oedipus's repetition of his father's filicide illustrates the acceptance in the dominant Greek culture of the right of retaliation, the talio. Mary Whitlock Blundell explains that the Greek "twin principles 'Help Friends and Harm Enemies' are fundamental to the structure of Oedipus at Colonus" (62). She points out that Oedipus justifies both his killing of Laius and his cursing his sons with death in terms of the concept of "the right of retaliation within the family" (64). The value of retaliation was not, however, without its counter in Greek culture.² Plato's early dialogues Crito and Protagoras contain the idea of not retaliating as virtuous. As in other realms of ideological conflict raised by the skepticism of the Sophists, Sophocles's plot in Oedipus at Colonus affirms traditional, conservative views. In Oedipus at Colonus he uses the Greek divinization of vengeance through the goddesses, the Furies, to divinize the avenging human, Oedipus.

And therein lies the riddle of the Oedipus plays for readers who live in an era when unconscious psyche is grasped as real and when the challenge of integrating unconscious materials is understood as a human task of development, both personal and collective. Since knowing what has previously been unconscious is not the same as integrating that material, Oedipus is tasked with dealing responsibly with his self-discoveries, and Oedipus at Colonus consists of Sophocles's vision of what Oedipus psychologically has come to. Sophocles's divinizing vision of Oedipus has

primarily been read as a resolution of Oedipus's previously troubled relations with the gods.³ In contrast, I read this divinization in terms of what it suggests about psychic integration of material horrendous to the ego, with a particular focus on the meaning of responsibility for guilt acquired unconsciously. This exploration leads to the argument that Sophocles divinized a cultural complex, a divinization that still imbues value systems today, including certain interpretations of the concept of archetype.

The version of archetype I wish to challenge is given classical definition by Edward Edinger in his series of lectures "A Psychological Approach to Greek Mythology." Edinger says that myths are "the self-revelations of the transpersonal or archetypal psyche" (Lecture 1A). In response, I wish to insist that the myths differ among themselves, offering contradictory "self-revelations." Edinger deals with their differences by claiming that "only the archetypally relevant survives" (Lecture 1A). This criterion privileges dominant-culture selections among—and interpretations of—myths as timeless, a familiar Jungian bias that David Tacey critiques in *Remaking Men*. Tacey argues that "because of the illusory 'stability' and purported 'timelessness' of the archetypes, Jung has proved attractive to the conservative opponents of change, and the revolutionary possibilities of Jungian theory have been denied" (3). The revolutionary possibilities of Jungian theory, I submit, are, as Susan Rowland has frequently articulated,⁴ contained primarily in the creative powers of the unconscious psyche. In Jung's words, "the unconscious . . . is the very source of the creative impulse" (CW 8, par. 339).

My readings depend upon the premise that imaginative literature is an expression of those creative powers, an expression that is not limited by the intentions of the artist, the cultural context of the writing of the work, or the perspectives of any particular culture and era of those reading it. That is why works such as Sophocles's *Oedipus* plays have the power to continue to unfold understanding of psyche. As psyche takes shape in differing cultures, eras, and individual readers, the latent meanings of imaginative works can continue to yield new understanding.

Jung postulates the role of the unconscious in the creation of what he terms "visionary literature" (CW 15, par. 139). He speaks of art as a "creative autonomous complex" whose expression is an "image . . . from the deepest unconsciousness" serving in a "process of self-regulation in the life of epochs and nations" (CW 15, par. 122 and 130-31). Consequently, art makes possible realization of psychic realities of which audiences have been unconscious. Jung claims that through these images art presents "countless typical experiences of our ancestors" (CW 15, par. 127). He writes: "In each of these images there is a little piece of human psychology and human fate, a remnant of the joys and sorrows that have been repeated countless times in our ancestral history, and on the average follow ever the same course" (CW 15, par. 127). Jung's emphasis on repetition and

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similitude has led to assigning characteristics to archetypes, a practice that tends to naturalize cultural moments and values, that is, to view dominant cultural values as if they represent human nature and thus possess an unassailable legitimacy.⁵ This development is in contradiction to Jung's oft repeated insistence that archetypes are psychic forces that cannot be known except through manifested images which are always partial and, as post-Jungians have highlighted, are so culturally inflected as to invite investigation of differences in image manifestation.⁶ My reading of the father-son relations in the Oedipus plays, instead of ascribing timelessness to the characteristics displayed, emphasizes their cultural inflection. This angle of vision leads to the interpretation that these relations may be better understood as symptoms of a cultural complex than as fixed characteristics of an archetype. A promising consequence of identifying the specific evidence of failures in Oedipus's integration of his discoveries about himself is the opening to imagining what might be required for a more successful integration.

My approaching literature for what I might glean about psyche has led me to discard two outlived precepts of literary criticism. The classicist E. R. Dodds tells us that the only legitimate critical exploration of a play is of the intention of the artist. This dogma has been sufficiently critiqued not only by scholars who have argued that authorial intention cannot even be pinned down by the authors themselves, but also by postmodern arguments against the authority of authors, culminating in the celebration by Roland Barthes that the author is dead. Nevertheless, much Sophoclean literary criticism has limited itself to interpretations based on Sophocles's values, experiences, and intentions; and this history has had the admirable advantage of acknowledging the reality of the culture, times, and what we know of the biography of Sophocles in understanding the plays. For example, in Athens in the fifth century B.C.E., the century of Sophocles's life and art, the rise of skepticism in Sophism posed a challenge to the beliefs in the gods, helping account for Sophocles's insistence on divine powers (Knox 75-76); the ravages of the plague that decimated large numbers of Athenians created a palpable context for the confronting of Oedipus with a dying city in Oedipus Tyrannus (Knox 77); and the Spartan threat to Athens being lived through daily provided context for the emotional comfort in the idea, dramatized in Oedipus at Colonus, that Oedipus confers a permanent blessing on Athens in war. Such information about the culture within which Sophocles's plays were composed helps us in particular to imagine a bit of what the experience of the plays may have felt like to the ancient Greeks viewing them. Such imaginings relativize our experience of our own culture and times and help bridge us to the experiences of human beings living long ago in times with social structures and beliefs in many ways quite different from our own. Still, I suggest that just as the life of psyche requires that

dreams be dreamed on, the fertility of art's rendering of psyche calls for the visions presented in art being read anew and imagined on.

This idea violates yet another hoary precept of literary criticism, a precept again conveniently articulated by Dodds. He proclaims: "what is not mentioned in the play does not exist" (20). But this perspective does not allow for the imagination of the reader to respond through the frameworks of cultures that have developed since a work was composed. Jonathan Lear, for example, illuminates what Sophocles is doing in *Oedipus Tyrannus* through comparisons with both Descartes's perspective on being and Kant's consideration of reason. He says, "If Descartes ushers in the modern world with the dictum, 'I think, therefore I am,' Oedipus offers this anticipation: 'I am abandoned, therefore I think'" (195). He adds, "Sophocles is offering a critique of impure reason" (195). When art works are so profound as to pose readers with questions that can have only evolving answers, should we not resist the repression of readers' introduction of frameworks not existent in the texts or in the cultures in which they were produced?

If one agrees with Jung that because "the creative act [is] rooted in the immensity of the unconscious" (CW 15, par. 135) visionary literature offers readers access to aspects of psyche to which one's culture is largely blind, then one cannot refrain from using frameworks that were not part of the consciousness of the author or the times in which she or he wrote. Obviously, one should know as much about those times as one can, not only imaginatively to approach what experiencing the work could have been like, but precisely because what was consciously valued provides clues as to what was missing from a culture's attitude. Most relevant for consideration of Sophocles's *Oedipus* plays is the fact that ancient Greek belief in the righteousness of retaliating was conscious (Blundell 226-29), thus alerting readers approaching this literature to gain understanding about psyche to be sensitive to unarticulated implications about vengeance.

Traditionally, criticism of Sophocles's *Oedipus* plays has focused on the issue of guilt versus innocence. Because *Oedipus* did not intend to kill his father or marry his mother, many critics use of him the word "innocent."⁷ Because *Oedipus* indeed did kill his father and marry his mother, other critics use of him the word "guilty." If one treasures the idea that intention determines the goodness or evil of an act, then one reads *Oedipus* as innocent. If one treasures the idea that there is an objective order in the world manifested in behavior, then one reads *Oedipus* as guilty. The question of *Oedipus*'s innocence or guilt affects any evaluation of his coping with his discoveries of his having committed parricide and incest.

Oedipus directly confronts the question of his responsibility in both plays but quite differently in each. In *Oedipus Tyrannus*, he accepts that he is the man who killed the king, and he discovers that he is also the man who killed his father and married and had children by his mother. He reacts to this latter discovery with immediate and somatic resistance—dramatic affect. He repeatedly plunges the

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brooch that had decorated his wife/mother's garment into his eyes. He claims that he did so to avoid seeing "horror everywhere" (Exodus, p. 70), his father or mother in the "house of death," his children, Thebes, images of the gods, his fellow citizens. And yet, he cannot escape "the flooding pain of memory, never to be gouged out" (Exodus, p. 69). He is stricken with new self-awareness and a passion to avoid confronting how others will see him. Dodds points out that what was valued in Homeric Greece was fame and that what was added in the Archaic period was internal guilt.⁸ Oedipus is racked in terms of both cultural attitudes—becoming the icon of infamy and permeated with a sense of guilt. Aware that he is the man who has performed what were believed to be the most horrendous of deeds, he takes responsibility as if he is evil. When Creon delays fulfilling the curse Oedipus has unwittingly placed upon himself, Oedipus argues that Apollo has already made clear that "the parricide must be destroyed" and declares, "I am that evil man" (Exodus, p. 74). With those words, Oedipus assumes responsibility in the sense of ego-inflated guilt, that is, claiming evil-as-identity for what, because of ignorance, he could not avoid. This stance prevents his imagining that seeking a creative approach to the consequences of his actions could be possible.

His attitude is completely reversed in *Oedipus at Colonus*, the last play Sophocles wrote. There Oedipus assures the citizens that it was not he but the gods who were responsible for the parricide and incest. He says, "The bloody death, the incest, the calamities . . . / I suffered them,

/ By fate, against my will! It was God's pleasure" (Scene IV, p. 133). These lines reveal that Oedipus at this point perceives himself as a victim of the gods, an unwitting sufferer. Having lacked intention or purpose, Oedipus no longer identifies as "that evil man." He assigns knowledge and intention to the gods, divine forces separate from his will, and thus abjures personal responsibility.

He now knows, however, the power of the gods and relies on a prophecy that he would have a resting place with some divinities and a blessing to bestow on those who accepted him. Classicist Ruth Scodel explains that the meaning of being a hero in ancient Greece partially consisted of a dead man's "power to help or harm the living, particularly in the area of his grave" (21). Sophocles, drawing on this belief, constructs *Oedipus at Colonus* as the fulfillment of a prophecy that Oedipus would become such a hero. Oedipus tells as much to the citizens who discover him polluting the sacred grove of goddesses whom the citizens name as "Gentle / All-seeing Ones" (Scene I, p. 84). The citizens do acknowledge that these goddesses have been called otherwise. These deities in fact are the ancient Furies, goddesses of vengeance, subordinated but not extinguished by the rise of Greek rationalism as dramatized in Aeschylus's play, *The Eumenides*.

The nature of these goddesses influences the reading of vengeance in the play. Aeschylus wrote and presented the third play of his *Oresteia*, *The Eumenides*, before Sophocles wrote *Oedipus at Colonus*. Aeschylus was, I submit, “imagining a myth on” in the direction of giving patriarchy a foundation in reason and in law. In *The Eumenides*, he has Orestes, son of Agamemnon and Clytaemestra, be put on trial for killing his mother who had killed his father. The goddesses in question had been pursuing Orestes and driving him mad in punishment for his matricide. They were then called Furies, and it was their task to avenge certain crimes, particularly murder of kin. In the trial, the citizens split their verdict, and it is left to Athene, goddess reimagined in Greek myths from having been a creatrix⁹ to being born of the head of the father, Zeus, (an illustration of the malleability of mythic material) to cast the final vote. She claims herself as daughter of the father as she votes against the Furies. She says:

There is no mother anywhere who gave me birth,
and, but for marriage, I am always for the male
with all my heart, and strongly on my father’s side.
So, in a case where the wife has killed her husband, lord
of the house, her death shall not mean most to me. And if
the other votes are even then Orestes wins. (lines 736-41, p. 161)

The Furies are devastated and threaten vengeance. They promise to

. . . let loose on the land
the vindictive poison
dripping deadly out of my heart upon the ground;
this from itself shall breed
cancer, the leafless, the barren (lines 781-85, p. 163)

Athene then resorts to persuasion to seek from the Furies blessings rather than curses. She offers them a home:

I promise you a place
of your own, deep hidden under ground that is yours by right
where you shall sit on shining chairs beside the hearth
to accept devotions offered by your citizens. (lines 804-07, p. 163)

The Furies are not easily persuaded and continue to threaten great devastation, so that Athene makes veiled threats about using Zeus’s thunderbolts and then promises them “first fruits / in offerings for children and the marriage rite” (lines 834-35, p. 164). Finally, the Furies begin to reconsider their intent to take vengeance on Athens and ask for a description of the place near Athens that she is offering, a place that Sophocles names *Colonus*. Once Athene tells the Furies that they will also have power, saying, “No household shall be prosperous without your will” (line 895, p. 166), they agree to accept her bargain, and they offer prayers of blessing for the prosperity of Athens. Vengeance itself is thereby integrated into civic culture, not repressed, by being directed only to enemies of the city, never

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among the citizens themselves. The Furies become the Eumenides, the Benevolent Ones, through the following blessing:

This my prayer: Civil War
fattening on men's ruin shall
not thunder in our city. Let
not the dry dust that drinks
the black blood of citizens
through passion for revenge
and bloodshed for bloodshed
be given our state to prey upon.
Let love be their common will;
let them hate with single heart. (lines 976-86, p. 169)

Through the decision to subordinate the killing of the mother to the killing of the husband and father, Aeschylus articulates the primacy of the Greek patriarchy. Through transforming the Furies from avengers of kin into allies of Athenian citizenry, he shifts the focus and parameters of divine vengeance.

As Luigi Zoja in his study of the father remarks about Greece and Athens, "that culture, country, city . . . were unsurpassed in their commitment to patriarchy" (65). The origin of the Furies themselves attests to the father-son struggles for power inherent in the Greek version of patriarchy. The ruling god Ouranos was attacked by his son, Kronos, who castrated him. Ouranos's blood falling upon the earth gave rise to the three Furies, the goddesses of vengeance. That is, the rising of vengeance is mythologized as the direct result of son attacking father and seeking to usurp his power. Aeschylus's play imagines transforming the Furies from avengers of crimes against kin into forces willing to be ruled by the law privileging the father, law claiming the virtuous name of reason in persuading the Furies to shift from avenging family murders to uniting the loves and hates of the citizens of Athens. This transformation challenges the traditional conception of vengeance for family murders as inescapable (another illustration of the malleability of mythic material). Such a shift is the contemporary context for understanding the perspectives on vengeance within which Sophocles introduces Oedipus's straying into the Furies' sacred grove and realizing that he has arrived at the place where it has been prophesied that he will meet death and leave a blessing for the city accepting him.

The theme of vengeance is taken up climactically in *Oedipus at Colonus* as Oedipus is confronted with whether or not to retaliate against his sons. Oedipus feels wronged by them because, after his first explosion of self-accusatory discovery, he relents against himself and no longer wishes to be sent from Thebes. At that point, the city expels him, and his sons do not intervene or help him. After

wandering without sight or homeland, dependent upon his daughter, Antigone, until he is an old man, he reaches Colonus and seeks protection as a suppliant.

Scodel explains that seeking protection as a suppliant was the one resource of the helpless in ancient Greece. She says, “A suppliant places himself under divine auspices so as to demand protection from other human beings” (107). Oedipus first appears in Colonus as one violating the sacred. He ignorantly enters the grove of the Furies. When the citizens of Colonus discover him there, they insist that he leave the protection of that sacred space. At the counsel of Antigone, he eventually complies. When the citizens discover that he is the infamous Oedipus, his being accepted as a suppliant is endangered. That is the moment when he defends himself and abrogates responsibility for his deeds by blaming the gods. The citizens are moved by his tale of suffering, and when he agrees to send his younger daughter, Ismene, to perform the purifying ritual for his having violated the sacred grove, they are willing to await the decision of their ruler, Theseus. When Theseus arrives, he accepts Oedipus as a suppliant because, as he explains, he, too, has been an exile and is subject to mortality. He says, “I know I am only a man. I have not more / To hope for in the end than you have” (Scene III, p. 112).¹⁰ He undertakes to protect Oedipus and his daughters. As the plot unfolds, Oedipus needs protection from Creon who tries to force him to return to Thebes where he will be buried outside the city in order to obtain for Thebes the power of Oedipus’s blessing as a dead hero. Creon has Oedipus’s daughters kidnapped, and, true to his word, Theseus rescues them. Theseus’s behavior toward the suppliant, Oedipus, perfectly fulfills the culture’s understanding of how suppliants should be received and protected. In that way, Theseus has avoided risking “the anger of the gods” (Scodel 107).

This exemplary handling of a suppliant’s claim provides the background for the turn the plot takes, a background that throws into question Oedipus’s behavior. Without warning, Oedipus’s son, Polyneices, arrives as a suppliant seeking Oedipus’s protection. Oedipus is faced with the crucial choice of whether to extend it or whether to enact vengeance. At first Oedipus refuses even to see Polyneices. Theseus admonishes Oedipus in terms of the religious duty to hear suppliants. He says:

But now consider if you are not obliged
To do so by his supplication here:
Perhaps you have a duty to the god. (Scene V, p. 143)

Oedipus continues to resist, but Antigone intervenes. Her speech is an unexpected source of conflict concerning the righteousness of vengeance. She articulates an alternative to *talio*, retaliating, as she attempts to persuade Oedipus not to act out his fury. She pleads:

Father: listen to me, even if I am young
.....

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even though [Polyneices] wronged you, father,
And wronged you impiously, still you can not
Rightfully wrong him in return!

She asks him to reflect on his past experiences of acting out his anger:

Reflect, not on the present, but on the past;
Think of your mother's and your father's fate
And what you suffered through them! If you do,
I think you'll see how terrible an end
Terrible wrath may have.
You have, I think, a permanent reminder
In your lost, irrecoverable eyes. (Scene V, p. 144)

Sophocles's inclusion of this explicit negation of retaliation counters the thematic thrust of his play apotheosizing vengeance. It represents the contradictory supplement that any position leaves, to use the language of Derrida in his explanation of deconstructive readings. Its existence is the first whisper of resistance emerging through the artist's willy-nilly serving as a medium for values repugnant to collective consciousness, making available to the collective a view compensatory to that embraced by the dominant culture. Antigone's speech calls across the centuries for viewers/readers to reflect critically on what continues to be affirmation of retaliation by the dominant powers in cultures.

In response to Antigone's appeal, Oedipus agrees to hear Polyneices, but listens with an impregnable heart as is made terrifyingly clear by the torrent of fury and curses he lays upon him. He says:

When it was you who held
Throne and authority . . .
You drove me into exile:
Me, your own father: made me a homeless man,
.....
But I regard you as a murderer!
For you reduced me to this misery
.....
Wretched scum! Go with the malediction
I here pronounce for you:
.....
you shall die
By your own brother's hand, and you shall kill
The brother who banished you. (Scene VI, pp. 150-51).

Polyneices understands Oedipus's response as paternal and divine vengeance. He says of himself that he is "doomed by my father and his avenging Furies" (Scene VI, p. 153).¹¹

The play's presentation of connections moves from Oedipus's placing responsibility for his parricide and incest on the gods to his reenacting father-son murderousness. If imaginative plots were subject to laws of logic, such as seeing fallacy in the "after this, therefore because of this" (*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*) structure, readers could ignore the order of events. Imagined plots, however, depend on irrational connections, such as the order of events, for meaning. An event following another in plots implies a causal connection, a major means used by narrative works of art to portray consequences inherent in particular human acts. This pattern provides much of the psychological insight latent in plots. Oedipus's abnegation of responsibility is the psychological condition of lack of freedom to respond to his son in a way other than his father responded to him.

Oedipus's repeating his father's murderousness is a result of his failure to find a personality-developing way to take responsibility for his living out of unconscious parricide and incest. In the first play, he responds with inflation, stabbing his eyes to try to take some control of what has already occurred, directing Creon to send him away where he fantasizes a wild life on Mt. Kithaeron.¹² He is taking responsibility as an ego seeking control. In the second play, he disclaims responsibility because of his lack of intention and of knowledge. His shifting responsibility to the gods fixes him in the victim position from which he strikes out in "righteous" anger. He is full of vengefulness, but cannot act out against those he believes have victimized him—the gods.¹³ Instead he turns his fury on his sons and repeats the murderous father-son catastrophe.

In order to substantiate my claim that Oedipus's vengeful curses demonstrate his failure to integrate his discoveries of his having committed parricide and incest, I want to address the meaning of integration. Although I subscribe to Jung's model of integration as an ego taking into consciousness previously unconscious behaviors and their unconscious source, I want to acknowledge the existence of other frameworks. To do so, I share parts of a discussion concerning the meaning of integration that occurred on the discussion list of the International Association of Jungian Studies during the summer of 2011. Susanna Ruebsaat asked the list about whether integration is possible, citing her memory of a talk by David Miller in which she understood him to say that there is no such thing. Her question elicited extended discussion by many eminent Jungian scholars. I here cite extracts from the reply offered by Daniel Anderson.

Miller was once influenced by Hillman, but now he leans Giegerich's way. Giegerich's notion is that a dynamic, evolving, dialectical . . . unity/difference is a quality of soul itself. Giegerich so defines soul and grounds his entire psychology in and on soul. We are in, and (psychologically speaking) we are living soul. "Integrate" presupposes an "Integrator." So, who would this integrator be? The empirical person, the ego? This seems to be the unspoken assumption of much psychology, Jungian included. The

person then “integrates” shadow qualities, . . . add[ing] back in the missing bits and becomes more whole.

Giegerich doesn’t like this model. For him, soul presupposes “wholeness,” and the idea that we are living in and as soul means that we are living its unity/difference (=Jung’s wholeness, more or less) at all times. Now, this does not mean that we are living soul in the best possible way. For example, when one’s truth (=soul=psychology) is not consciously thought it is performed—acting out!—as living thought sunken into deed. Take a mundane example. A man has a long marriage with a woman he loves but experiences the normal series of disappointments and frustrations. He does not think these disappointments and frustrations, but passes over them. But they *must* be thought; they *are* thought; if the disappointments do not come home to consciousness in thought they will be “thought” anyway through action, acting out—and viola!—a destructive affair with the office secretary.

Jung might say the man had failed to integrate his shadow or work on his anima. Freud might call this the return of the repressed. Giegerich would call this a case of un-thought thought, a thought performed as action rather than thinking.

So assuming that Miller is following Giegerich now, the Jungian term “integration” is disfavored, as would be the Freudian term, “return of the repressed.” Giegerich wouldn’t like the term integration because it seems to assume a fixed integrator—which he feels does not accord with a psychology grounded in soul as he conceives it. Giegerich would formulate things in terms of un-thought thought, and the goal is not integration but rather allowing the thought of the soul, which is always occurring anyway, to come home as actual thinking and realization rather than acting out. *But Jung, Freud and Giegerich would all be in agreement that acting out is generally undesirable.* (my emphasis)¹⁴

Anderson’s explication of how conceiving of “integration” involves entire frameworks of constructing psyche could render evaluating Oedipus’s integration of his discoveries or lack of it extremely difficult were it not that a telltale sign of failed integration, no matter how one is conceiving of psyche, is *acting out*. There is no question that Oedipus acts out his sense of having been victimized, his anger, and his desire to inflict punishment and wreak vengeance. In the same IAJS discussion, Stephen Diamond refers specifically to Oedipus’s “acting out” and connects it to lack of integration. He writes: “[Oedipus’s] ‘acting out’ was a manifestation of his unconsciousness. Acting out is a defense mechanism against becoming more conscious of one’s self. Against becoming one’s true self. Acting out is one way we avoid psychological integration . . .” Diamond seems to be referring to Oedipus’s behavior in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but Oedipus’s cursing of his

sons in *Oedipus at Colonus* is equally an acting out of unthought-through experiences. Jung specifically notes the necessity of self-recollection in the process of integration (CW 11, par. 400). Antigone's plea counsels Oedipus specifically to reflect on his experiences and to be guided by the undesirable results of his previous acting out. Instead of acceding to her request, he spews curses of death upon his sons.

Another telltale sign of not having integrated material is repetition of destructive behavior. As Laius sought the death of Oedipus, so Oedipus seeks the death of his sons. This irrational repetition of father-son murderousness is seen again in the play, *Antigone*, in which Haemon chooses death in response to his father's assertion of power.¹⁵ The failure of Laius and then of Oedipus to find an alternative to acting out murder of their sons is part of an ongoing pattern. Is this dynamic an archetypal pattern or a cultural complex? Freud's generalizing father-son struggles as universal is similar to seeing them as archetypal. Even James Hillman calls the Laius-Oedipus dynamic inherent not only for inheritors of the Oedipus myth but analogously for inheritors of the Christian myth. In "Oedipus Revisited" he writes:

If Oedipus is our myth, then Laius plays a part in it: to come close in love between father and sons also brings murder near. That cry for father, for a first principle, a creation myth, a roof that guarantees, an altar with sustaining presence, a base, a rock, pillar, platform, sheltering portal, a bright good sky, land of one's fathers, patrimony, inheritance, endowment, that cry for substance and structure to found one's spirit and protect one's life, that cry for a fathering God can never be fully satisfied because father brings murder near. 'Eloi, eloi lema sabachtnahi' (Mark 15: 34) is indeed the archetypal cry of sonship witnessing the truth of the murderous father. (128)

By connecting Christ's call from the cross to his father to Laius's murderous intent, Hillman concludes that the "murderous father" is archetypal. Jung, himself, in his *Answer to Job*, finds the pattern of murderous father in God the Father seeking payment for human sin through the death of his son. Jung, however, revises this pattern as the divine seeking self-transformation through becoming human.¹⁶ Sophocles's vision in *Oedipus at Colonus* portrays the reverse: human vengeance being divinized.

But what if acting out vengeance is and has been part of a patriarchal mode of social organization and psychological construction that is a cultural complex rather than an expression of an immutable archetype? (I include the descriptor "patriarchal" not because I think that vengeance is limited to patriarchies, but because the term applies to the culture being referenced. Given that vengeance is a particularly virulent expression of the will to

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power, I anticipate its dynamic in any “archy,” that is, any relationship or social organization that legitimates subordinating some human beings to others.)¹⁷ Thomas Singer and Samuel L. Kimbles in their book mainstreaming the concept of cultural complex in Jungian studies begin their definition of a cultural complex by noting its repetitive character. They write: “Like individual complexes, cultural complexes tend to be repetitive, autonomous, resist consciousness, and collect experience that confirms their historical point of view” (6). If we conceive as manifestations of cultural complexes the extensive history of patriarchal cultures validating vengeance, then we can imagine that just as the grip of personal complexes can be loosened, being possessed by the power of the cultural complex of vengeance could be resisted through consciousness.

Examining Oedipus in terms of his handling of his knowledge of how what he had done informs who he has been raises the issue of human knowledge and its relationship to responsibility. Jung, referring to a patient’s unconscious psychological incest, remarks, “You can hardly hold a man responsible for his unconsciousness, but the fact remains that in this matter nature knows neither patience nor pity . . .” (CW 17, par. 218). This remark touches on a source of unconsciousness that Jung oddly slights in his description of psychological unconsciousness: ignorance. Indeed, Christopher Hauke’s following citation of Jung’s description of the personal unconscious in CW 8, par. 382, seems to validate such an assertion:

. . . the unconscious depicts an extremely fluid state of affairs: everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness: all this is the content of the unconscious.” (qtd. on 65-66)¹⁸

The Oedipus plays offer a foundational supplement: ignorance. Ignorance is the most inevitable form of unconsciousness. It is the universal relation to knowledge shared by all human beings, particularly with regard to who we unconsciously are and what we unconsciously do. This limitation may be the hardest of all for the ego to absorb, that we can never know enough to avoid unintended consequences that reflect upon who we are and affect our worlds.

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus has learned to know that he can act out of ignorance, as in his unintentional violation of a sacred grove. Further, he is willing

to learn how to placate offended gods, as in his listening to the citizens' counsel about how to enact the rites that will appease the goddesses whose space he has invaded. But he uses ignorance to exonerate himself from responsibility for what he has done, a stance leading, as I have argued, to his acting out a repetition of filicide. Jung, as I noted earlier in connection with his comment about unconscious incest, does not think humans can be held responsible for actions committed in ignorance. In *Answer to Job*, he again states that ignorance evades blame. He says of the visions of "Ezekiel or Enoch" that their "conscious situation was mainly characterized by an ignorance (for which they were not to blame)" (CW 11, par. 698). The Oedipus plays pose readers with the question of whether one can indeed find a psychologically healing way to take responsibility for acts committed in ignorance, a way that is neither an inflation nor an entrapment in victimization.

Antigone's speech suggests that reflecting upon the past effects of being possessed might free her father from repeating destructive responses. Oedipus's raging curses demonstrate, however, that when one is in the grip of feeling victimized, one is by definition removed from such reflective consciousness. Thus the implication is that extricating oneself from feeling victimized at being limited by ignorance needs to precede the situation calling for either reflection or repetition. In other words, a deflation of the self-image of consciousness, an acceptance of fundamental limits to our knowledge of ourselves and of our world, would be an ego stance offering some protection from either the position of inflation or the sense of victimization that Sophocles dramatizes through Oedipus. Such an acceptance could indeed have been an aspect of integration for Oedipus. It would have functioned as compensation to his inflated sense of the power of knowledge. His knowing the revelation of the oracle gave him, he thought, the opportunity to evade it. His knowing the answer to the riddle of the sphinx gave him the position of tyrant of Thebes and husband of the Queen. The plot reveals the limitations of his knowledge, the illusion of control through knowledge in which he lived.

Jung describes the level of required acceptance in his explanation of the need to lose "the illusion of the supremacy of consciousness" that leads one to say, "I live." He writes: "Once this illusion is shattered by a recognition of the unconscious, the unconscious will appear as something objective in which the ego is included" (CW 13, par. 76). He goes on to illustrate this psychological change with the transformation that occurs within a father:

It is . . . a change of feeling similar to that experienced by a father to whom a son has been born. . . . It is always a difficult thing to express, in intellectual terms, subtle feelings that are nevertheless infinitely important for the individual's life and well-being. It is, in a sense, the feeling that we have been "replaced," but without the connotation of having been deposed. . . . Religious

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language is full of imagery depicted in this feeling of free dependence, of calm acceptance. (*CW* 13, par. 77)

Oedipus never reaches this level of psychological development. He would have had to think of forces working within him—the “gods”—as part of himself. But he thinks of these forces as outside himself: “The bloody death, the incest, the calamities . . . / I suffered them, / By fate, against my will! It was God’s pleasure” (Scene IV, p. 133). Precisely the separation between himself and the gods is negated through his being taken up with the Furies at death. This development has many irreconcilable implications.

First of all, Oedipus’s commitment to exercising power is affirmed. He successfully resists Creon’s claiming of his corpse for Thebes and bestows his blessing upon Theseus and his descendants for the benefit of Athens. In other words, while he takes no responsibility for the gods’ work through him in his parricide and incest, he triumphantly exercises power through them as hero with a blessing to bestow. Secondly, his failure to find a way to accept responsibility for his acts, a failure that leads to ongoing cycles of vengeance, has found its place in the pantheon: vengeance continues not only in the divine Furies but also in the human Oedipus joined with the Furies. His joining them also returns to them in his person their ancient role and purpose. The Furies, one must recall, in Aeschylus’s play, no longer avenged deaths perpetrated upon kin. Rather, they became Eumenides, placated goddesses committed to the welfare of the citizens and city-state of Athens. Sophocles, by joining them with Oedipus—murderer of kin par excellence, both unconsciously the destroyer of father and consciously the destroyer of sons—connects vengeance conceived as pertaining to citizens to vengeance pertaining to family. The rule of the father, linked with mercy to matricides in Aeschylus’s play, is again joined to vengeance against kin—the vengeance of the son, survivor of failed infanticide, turned murderous father. Finally, Oedipus’s joining the Furies removes the distance required for him to be seen as non-responsible victim.

So in what sense can one be responsible for acts committed in ignorance by beings fated to guilt? For an exploration of this question, I turn to the understanding of guilt and responsibility articulated by Edward C. Whitmont in his 1963 lecture bearing that title. Whitmont patiently details the inevitability of experiencing guilt. He begins by asserting that for an individual to mature, he or she must have been inculcated with a sense of right and wrong. This situation is complicated both by “simple facts in our animal nature” and by the arbitrariness of cultural values.¹⁹ Once the distinction between right and wrong is internalized, then many conflicts arise that must result in a sense of guilt: the conflict between our passions and drives and our sense of conventional moral obligation; the conflict

between our parents' values and our own; the conflict between our parents' values and those of their parents not reconciled and living on in us; the conflict between an individual soul's conscience and culturally imposed obligations.²⁰ He offers a partial summary:

Wherever we turn, we run into a conflict. We feel impelled to bring into union what seemingly nature has structured into inevitable conflict. To the extent we fail in bringing about this inner conformity, that we fail to submit our passions to ego control, our ego values to the conventional mores, and to the extent that we discover our mores at variance with what our deepest conscience and conviction tell us is right, to that extent that there is any deviation anywhere to this conformity, we find ourselves in guilt and conflict. (Disc 1)

Whitmont turns to a protestant version of the Christian faith to establish a religious metaphor for understanding the human situation of inevitable guilt. He cites the Westminster Confession of Faith: "Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary unto, doth bring . . . guilt onto the sinner whereby he is bound over unto the wrath of God and cursed of the law and so made subject to death with all miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal" (Disc 1). Accounting for this situation, another paragraph in the Confession of Faith proclaims: "Our first parents sinned being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan. This their sin God was pleased according to his wise and holy counsel to permit having proposed so to order it to his own glory" (Disc 1).

Whitmont does not duck the self-centered unrelatedness of God to human suffering in this explanation. He says, "Now you may ask is this not unfair, unjust, and cruel? If you say so, I cannot argue it" (Disc 1). Instead of arguing, he seeks the meaning of this fate. He asks, "what is the meaning if any to be expected to accept responsibility for guilt that cannot be avoided—in fact that has been ordained by the very authority that supposedly opposes it?" (Disc 1) This question is the one posed by Sophocles's Oedipus plays.

Whitmont answers with the Grimm's fairy tale, "Our Lady's Child." In this tale, a woodcutter too poor to feed his child is visited by Mary in the woods who offers to take care of his daughter. He gives her to Mary who takes her to heaven where she lives a life of luxury and security with angels as playmates until age fourteen. Then Mary takes a trip and leaves her in charge of the keys to thirteen doors of heaven, giving her permission to open twelve of them, but never the thirteenth. To few readers' surprise, after opening the twelve and finding in each an apostle bathed in light, she cannot resist the temptation just to stick the key into the lock of the thirteenth with no conscious intention, of course, to turn it. Without her willing it, after the simple insertion of the key, the door springs open. There sat the

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trinity in “fire and splendor.” Amazed, she gazes and touches the light with her finger, which turns golden. Terrified, she runs away and cannot wash off the gold from her finger. Mary returns and asks her if she opened the thirteenth door. She lies, and Mary banishes her, naked and mute, to earth. There she is found by a king and found to be so beautiful that he marries her. She bears a son, and Mary returns and asks her again if she opened the thirteenth door. Again she lies, and Mary takes the child. She bears another son; the question and lie recur, and Mary takes the second child, causing the populace to begin to question whether the king’s wife is a witch. Then she bears a daughter, again losing her to Mary through refusing to acknowledge what she had done, and the king can no longer protect her. As the fire is being set at her feet, she wishes that she had another opportunity to confess when her voice is given back to her, and she calls out to Mary that indeed she did it. Mary then descends cradling the baby daughter in her arms and with the sons at her side. Because she admits what she has done, the woman’s voice, family, and life are restored. Whitmont points out that the tale not only represents the necessity of confession and repentance, but also the equivalence between sin and the direct vision of the godhead. In other words, a connection to the divine inheres in the sin, but in order to live a fruitful, expressive life, one needs to embrace a kind of consciousness that acknowledges responsibility and remorse even in the absence of intent. Confessing, Whitmont suggests, places “our responsibility into the reality of actual, irrevocable concrete personal commitment,” and this taking of responsibility “changes also the attitude of the unconscious” (Disc 2). Transformation in the unconscious enables the personality to act to atone. In Whitmont’s words:

Only through becoming an incarnated reality, in concrete life, in concrete relationship, do the forces of the psyche become effective and do they reach the fulfillment that they are striving for. . . . Confession is a decisive step of personal commitment to an act. It is an admission of responsibility, a declaration that one is now answerable for the act, that one is ready to shoulder the obligation, the challenge, and to work upon and take on its consequences. Hence responsibility is the acceptance of the commitment to, as the I Ching puts it, work on what has been spoiled . . . a commitment to the act of creative transformation. (Disc 2)

Oedipus has an opportunity for such a confession and commitment when he is confronted by the citizens of Colonus about his past, but he is able only to portray himself as a victim of the gods. Obviously I am not saying that Sophocles should have portrayed Oedipus as having reached the level of integration described by Whitmont. Rather I am calling for a recognition of the limitations of his vision. If readers begin by acknowledging Oedipus’s failure to loosen the bonds of the

cultural complex to take vengeance, they can begin the creative work of imagining what alternatives might lead to more psychological freedom. Whitmont points to taking responsibility in the sense of letting go of the hope of innocence, a hope maintained by focusing on conscious intent. Instead of focusing on the question of guilt or innocence, Whitmont advises consciously taking in what one has actually done, and then beginning the work of creatively trying to affect the consequences. In Oedipus's situation, that would presumably have included thinking about how to father his children differently than he had been fathered. Perhaps Antigone's life need not have been subordinated to his own. Perhaps seeking some way to communicate with his sons might have influenced their understanding of power and relationship.

In *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* Jung presents two theories interpreting the forces determining human life: the one he calls Eros and the other the Will to Power. He goes beyond them in claiming a drive from an autonomous unconscious to manifest in individuated lives. The process of individuating presumably would result in enough psychological freedom to deal with guilt innovatively and ethically. Sophocles's tales of Oedipus portray him as caught in the will to power except for his love of his daughters,²¹ never able to free himself from the power dynamics of father and son, ex-ruler and aspiring prince.

Gottfried M. Heuer has written about the capacity of relating to transform the will to power. In an essay entitled "The Sacredness of Love," Heuer argues from developments in neurobiology, psychoanalytic theory, and cultural enactments of restorative justice for the transformative power of relating. Heuer cites work by the neurobiologist Joachim Bauer that argues for the foundational role of cooperation in the "production of genes" and the "origin of individual cells" (604; see Bauer 150-52). He cites the psychoanalytic theories of Pamela Donleavy and Ann Shearer, which propose replacing a concept of justice based on the *talio* with a concept of restorative justice based on healing. Finally, he cites two famous examples of replacing a violent will to power with human relationship: 1) the spontaneous truce during World War I at Christmas among German and French soldiers that resulted in singing, smoking, and playing together; and 2) the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's largely successful avoidance of retaliatory bloodbath through confessions of suffering and guilt by Apartheid's victims and perpetrators (611-13).

Heuer's work raises hope about the power of relatedness to affect the negative aspects of the will to power of which vengeance is a mighty instance. We do have a myth offering an imagined version of this power: Virgil's *Aeneid*. Zoja's study of the father highlights how Aeneas chooses to resist the desire to wreak vengeance on those destroying his city in order to honor his relationships with his father and son by rescuing them. Virgil's portrayal of this alternative to acting out

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vengeance supports reading the divinization of Oedipus's retaliating against his sons as an expression of a cultural complex capable of being resisted.

Being able to resist enacting vengeance is a crying need of our times. We cannot help seeing the ravages of vengeance worldwide. Bosnia, Ruanda, Israel and Palestine, Al Queda, and America in Iraq are but a few familiar, heart-rending examples. There was a brief moment after the onslaught of 9/11 for Americans and the world to respond to the will to power with restorative justice rather than vengeance. Imagine if Americans had sought the perpetrators as criminals instead of declaring war, had tried them instead of killing them, and, most important, had tried to understand the causes of their hatred in order to try to respond creatively to the underlying problems. Instead, responding as children in need of a father, citizens and legislators surrendered power to George W. Bush, a leader who before 9/11 had been deemed a failure by the majority of Americans, a leader who took advantage of Americans' sense of having been wronged to seek a war with Iraq and with Iraq's leader who had sought the death of Bush's father.

Thousands of lives, American and Iraqi, and billions of dollars have been sacrificed to that decision to continue seeking power and vengeance. I do not, of course, want to be understood as simply negating power. I wish to emphasize the distinction between seeking power to dominate and impose one's will on those subordinated, and exercising creative power enabled by a conscious relationship with unconscious energies to heal and further life.

Sophocles has given us the psychological legacy of humans becoming godlike by being vengeful. Jung in *Answer to Job* offers us the psychological work of humanizing a vengeful god through giving up the illusion that the gods—or the forces beyond human power resulting in effects seen as fate—are only good. Whitmont urges us to surrender our hopes of our own innocence and to undertake the creative task of working on what we spoil. If vengeance is conceived as cultural complex rather than as archetype, we can commit, as Whitmont phrases it, to acts of “creative transformation” for wrongs committed against us and for wrongs we ourselves commit.

Jung's and Whitmont's perspectives hardly offer a panacea. Jung believed that complexes must be lived through to the very dregs in order to be lived past. Given the new powers of weaponry and swift physical access of one nation to another, I tremble to think of what the dregs may ultimately consist. Still, recognizing that to be human is to lack enough knowledge to control the consequences of one's acts and accepting this inescapable limitation could be a path toward coping ethically with consequences. Potentially, this version of responsibility for acts committed unconsciously can help cultures as well as persons to integrate horrendous self-knowledge in an enabling way.

Notes

¹ Charles Segal explains the reasons for referring to this first of Sophocles's Oedipus plays as *Oedipus Tyrannus* rather than as the Latin *Oedipus Rex* or English *Oedipus the King*. He writes, "The term *turannos* . . . describes the powerful rulers from the late seventh to the early fifth century B.C.E. . . . By a combination of guile and force, such men emerged from the oligarchy as sole rulers in their city-states, responsible only to themselves. . . . They were necessarily energetic, intelligent, confident, ambitious, and aggressive; they also had to be ruthless and suspicious of plots to overthrow their sometimes precarious position. Interpreters have sometimes looked for such 'tyrannical' qualities in Oedipus, but, for the most part, the play uses the term in a neutral sense of a ruler who . . . has come to power without inheriting it from his family (ironically, Oedipus is also the hereditary king)" (*Oedipus Tyrannus* 6).

² Although scholars cannot date Plato's *Dialogues* precisely, they generally agree that he began writing around 399 after Socrates's execution. They group his writings into three chronological groups and place the *Crito* and sometimes the *Protagoras* in the early group. The fact that he is writing about the ideas of Socrates and Protagoras who lived in the fifth century B.C.E. argues for assuming that the intellectual positions raised in those *Dialogues*, such as the virtue of not retaliating, had currency during the time that Sophocles was writing.

³ For example, Thomas Gould sees Oedipus's death as of a piece with his fate of having being chosen by the gods (59). C. M. Bowra emphasizes the reconciliation in his death: "[Oedipus's conflicts with the gods] are resolved in a final reconciliation when the gods take him to their own . . ." (310). Harold Bloom sees the resolution as Oedipus's being not merely chosen by or reconciled to the gods, but as his being ultimately transformed into a god himself ("Introduction" 7).

⁴ Susan Rowland, for example, in *The Ecocritical Psyche*, commenting upon Freud's static reading of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, writes: "In distinction to Freud, Jung's psychoanalysis is founded upon an intrinsically creative and, in part, unknowable unconscious . . ." (108).

⁵ The distinction between archetypal force and characteristics assigned to such a force is crucial. Peter Mudd significantly clarifies that Jung's early (1916) conceptualization of the anima was of a function, the function of mediating between consciousness and unconsciousness, and in this early formulation Jung did not assign characteristics. Jung's *Psychological Types* and "Essay on Marriage" began assigning characteristics, particularly relatedness to the anima and rationality to the animus. Mudd argues that the characteristics never were inherent to the functions, but that ". . . evolution, especially the instinct for the preservation of the species is [their] gigantic context. . . . Here I [Mudd] would especially stress Jung's concept of adaptation. . . . Quite simply, nature demanded role assignment but not because the woman or the man was or is the role, but because the roles existed as archetypal patterns which were activated as a means of adaptation to the life process." With that as his premise, Mudd argues that since survival of the species no longer depends upon maximum regeneration of the species, in fact, that over-population presents a threat to species survival, the function performed by anima and animus no longer is furthered by the assignment to them of specific characteristics for purposes of reproduction. In other words, the archetypal force of anima is not to be identified with any particular characteristic. This perspective opens the way to applying what Christopher Hauke has called a "contrastive method" (200) focusing on differences in manifestations of any particular archetypal force.

⁶ Christopher Hauke, for example, in *Jung and the Postmodern*, writes: "[Michael Vannoy] Adams advocates a *psychology of knowledge* which helps us see how the archetypes of the

collective unconscious participate in the formation of human social reality in much the same way as Berger and Luckman describe its formation from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge. This might lead us to investigate not more *similarities* in some essentialist structuralist effort (of which the Jungian use of archetypes is often accused) but, on the contrary, to seek out ‘difference,’ ‘to develop a deliberate *contrastive method* and apply it to contemporary issues of collective psychology—for example, to the topics of diversity, pluralism, and multiculturalism” (200).

⁷ A selective history of critical treatment of the issue of Oedipus’s guilt or innocence is given in Charles Segal’s *Oedipus Tyrannus* 37-43. E. R. Dodds lists six critics contemporary with himself who “however much they differ on other points, all agree about the essential moral innocence of Oedipus” (Bloom 2007, 21).

⁸ The following is a rough dividing of Ancient Greek periods. The Homeric period was non-literate, consisting primarily of tiny communities, and extended to about 800 B.C.E. The Archaic period can be marked as ending in 510 B.C.E. with the death of the last Athenian tyrant. The classicist period similarly can be marked as ending in 342 B.C.E. with the death of Alexander. Chronologically, Sophocles presumably would share the values of the classicist period, but E. R. Dodds clarifies that he was of the older world. Dodds writes: “It was above all Sophocles, the last great exponent of the archaic world-view, who expressed the full tragic significance of the old religious themes in their unsoftened, unmoralised forms—the overwhelming sense of human helplessness in the face of the divine mystery, and of the *ate* that waits on all human achievement—and who made these thoughts part of the cultural inheritance of Western Man” (*The Greeks* 49).

⁹ According to Plato, Athene derived from Neith, an Egyptian war and huntress goddess. Neith’s name can be interpreted as meaning “water” and thus makes possible reading her as a personification of primordial creation, a creatrix, a mother goddess.

¹⁰ There is dramatic irony in these lines in that Oedipus does have more to hope for from death than does Theseus. Oedipus will be taken up with goddesses when he dies.

¹¹ It is probably not irrelevant that, according to Cicero, Sophocles himself was brought by his sons to court to prove his inability to manage his own affairs during the time he was writing *Oedipus at Colonus*. The story goes that Sophocles read a current revision of the play and asked the court whether it read like the work of an imbecile. He was found competent to manage his own affairs (31). This conflict may also help account for Sophocles’s unusual choice of an old man as sympathetic protagonist. Bernard Knox comments on the uniqueness of Sophocles’s positive treatment of an old man in Greek theatre (Bloom 1999, 47).

¹² James Hillman notes that part of the literary history of Mount Kithaeron is that a son named Cithaeron, “envious and greedy of his father’s domain,” killed his father by pushing him off a cliff and then he, himself, also fell off that cliff (*Oedipus Variations* 111).

¹³ In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud cites J. G. Frazer’s conclusion in *The Golden Bough* that “the earliest kings were foreigners who, after a brief reign, were sacrificed with solemn festivities as representatives of the deity” (65). Human anger at their conceived deities was displaced upon a substitute. Oedipus’s curses may be similarly interpreted.

¹⁴ Dan Anderson graciously gave me permission to use his extensive post in an e-mail on March 15, 2013.

¹⁵ Sophocles wrote his *Antigone* before the other Oedipus plays, but the chronology of intra-family murders is not affected by the order in which he wrote the plays.

¹⁶ A detailed comparison of Jung's understanding of father and son, divine vengeance and love, as detailed in *Answer to Job* with Sophocles's treatment of father-son relations and vengeance in his Oedipus plays is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is a rich subject for exploration, particularly the ideas concerning the indwelling of god in the human in Jung's vision and the co-dwelling of the human and gods in Sophocles's portrayals.

¹⁷ That patriarchies themselves may be seen as cultural constructions rather than as a monolithic form of social organization is persuasively documented by Gerda Lerner in her ground-breaking study, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, which offers extensive evidence of the development of patriarchal attitudes and practices as historical process.

¹⁸ Jung begins this passage by asserting: "The unconscious is not simply the unknown, it is rather the *unknown psychic* . . ." (CW 8, par. 382). His emphasis here is to persuade readers of the existence of psyche, and thus he slights ignorance in describing the unconscious.

¹⁹ Whitmont offers the amusing example of a 1750 case in France of a man accused of sodomy with a donkey. The man is found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging, but the donkey also had to be tried. Expert witnesses such as the Prior testify and sign affidavits as to the donkey's previously unblemished life, and the donkey is finally acquitted. Had the animal been found guilty, it would also have been hanged or burned to death in the public square. Whitmont surprisingly points out not that the standard of holding animals accountable for being sodomized no longer is a cultural norm but rather that cultural attitudes toward human sodomy have changed. In any case, he makes his point that cultural standards of right and wrong can be marked by arbitrariness.

²⁰ Whitmont here cites the man who attempted to assassinate Hitler. This man confessed before acting but was not forgiven because the conventional value was that murder could not be condoned.

²¹ Hillman concludes his reflections on *Oedipus at Colonus* by focusing on the love Oedipus expresses for his daughters before he goes to die (154). Of course, his daughters have surrendered their lives to their father's welfare so that his love for them springs from his privileging of his own life.

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