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Jung, William Blake and our answer to *Job*

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Abstract

In this paper, which was originally presented to the *Collegium Jungianum Brunense*, Brno, in April 2001, it is proposed that Carl Jung's answer to the *Book of Job* should be seen as an authentic attempt to deal with the problem of human suffering. It becomes clear that *Job* can be regarded as the archetype of the human response to suffering. In order to elaborate on this, the work of the English poet, artist and engraver, William Blake, will be drawn upon. Nearly a century before the emergence of the discipline of modern psychology, and at least 150 years before Jung wrote *Answer to Job*, Blake was calling upon his own lived experience to interpret the *Book of Job* in a series of remarkable illustrations. In the light of this, I clarify my own understanding of the notion of *archetype*, especially with respect to themes taken from both Jung and Blake. What emerges is the recognition of the *coincidentia oppositorium* as the crucial archetype of the human psyche, and I argue that a view emerges of the human response to suffering that is far richer and far more subtle than anything modern psychology has as yet come up with.

▪ Introduction: Jung and the tension of opposites

> *". . . I felt that here the grief, the capacity for grasping suffering through participation - something to which our age seems increasingly impervious and incapable of accomplishing - was like what my black countrymen so movingly call 'the stringing of beads'. In this ancient and beautiful Bantu metaphor, each tear of sorrow shed is a jewel that has to be strung on an unbroken thread of feeling into a necklace, which one can thereafter wear as an ornament of grace around the image of one's spirit and so prepare the way for the final metaphor: 'Let in our sister, Grief, who should always have a place by our fire'."*
>
> **Laurens van der Post** (*About Blady: A pattern out of time*, 1991; p. 76)

It is my own view, a view I think shared by many others, that Carl Jung occupies a unique place in the field of psychology. If we think of our discipline as made up of what Abraham Maslow has described as four forces*: behavioural, psychodynamic, humanistic* and *transpersonal*, then it is notable that Jung, unlike most other major figures in psychology, has made highly significant contributions in all four of these areas. I am not aware of any other psychologist who even approaches this

achievement. Jung's breadth and depth of focus is unrivalled, and yet in the wider discipline the scale of his contribution to psychology is rarely fully acknowledged. Some find his work difficult, some find it too esoteric, but I would argue that he simply needs to be taken more seriously. Challenging as they are, many of his core ideas, his study of alchemy, his treatment of the story of *Job*, must be taken seriously. This paper will specifically focus on his *Answer to Job*.

It would perhaps be helpful if I put my own interest in Jung into some kind of overall context. For many years now, I have found Jung's ideas a continual source of profound inspiration. They are especially relevant in my work as a psychotherapist. I was trained as a transpersonal counsellor, and while that was not a Jungian training, it drew heavily upon Jungian ideas and theories. His concepts of *shadow, anima/animus, Self, individuation, psychological types, collective unconscious, active imagination* and *synchronicity* are quite indispensable in my own work. Jung recognizes the tension of opposites inherent to human experience. I find the most inspiration in his sense of the paradoxical conflicts that we are subject to, and the recognition of the darker, hidden side of human nature. Client's express their grief, and bring along their accounts of pain and suffering that they have lived and are living through. I attempt to participate in their struggle to find some understanding and meaning in all this. It seems to me that *loss* is the inevitable theme of all counselling and therapeutic practice, and underlying human loss there lies a fundamental transpersonal or spiritual tension, something that Laurens van der Post calls *"a capacity for grasping human suffering through participation."* It is my view that the model of the human psyche proposed by Jung is one of the few ways of trying to deal with this fundamental tension.

My own appreciation of Jung's ideas has been greatly helped by my deepening interest in the works of the English poet, artist and engraver, William Blake. Some 18 years ago, I had a counselling tutor who was trained as a Jungian therapist. He often pointed out connections between Blake's ideas and those of Jung. Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* and *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, echoed with Jungian themes. It is out of those observations that the ideas presented in this paper grew.

A few years later, a colleague pointed out to me that Jung and Blake both had a deep interest in the story of *Job*, and I decided to look at this more closely. Both Jung and Blake were introverted visionaries, both saw their work as tasks imposed from within, the source was always a fateful compulsion. Both set the human imagination above all else, and recognized the miracle of human reflective consciousness. Both were Christians but were in conflict with the religious doctrines they came up against in their lives, and both recognized the need to occasionally jolt human beings into consciousness. Both recognized the inherently paradoxical quality of human nature, and the role that the tension of opposites plays in human experience.

This paper is not concerned with the theological issues, nor with the figure of Jung himself, but with the existential issues raised by his work, in particular with reference to his *Answer to Job*. The focus here is on the direct and immediate relevance of these existential issues to grasping the nature of human lived experience. William Blake's own study of the *Book of Job* clearly prefigures Jung's work, and there is much to be learnt from a close examination of the obvious parallels to be found in their work. My own study of Blake and Jung does fall within a much wider heuristic inquiry (Hiles, 1999), which comprises a much larger project concerned ultimately with *the meaning of suffering* (Hiles, in progress).

▪ The *Book of Job*: An authentic account of human suffering

Human suffering takes many forms - from commonplace disappointments, frustrations, illnesses - through loss, loneliness, identity crisis, emotional turmoil - to human response in the face of tragedy, disaster, death, pointless and meaningless acts of violence, war, genocide. It is Viktor Frankl (1946[1987]) who points out that, because human suffering seems so pointless and meaningless, it is the ultimate challenge in human growth. And, in the preface to Frankl's book, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Gordon Allport says:-

> *" . . to live is to suffer, to survive is to find meaning in the suffering - if there is a purpose in life at all, there must be a purpose in suffering and dying - but no-one can tell another what that purpose is."*

From human culture, myths and organizing practices emerge to offer some kind of meaning. These may offer a view that *suffering is meaningless*, or *suffering is fate*, or *suffering is the consequence of sin*. In my own work, I have adopted the existential-transpersonal view that *suffering is necessary to being human* (Hiles, 1999).

The many influences that have given rise to my interest in this theme include: Frankl, van der Post, Western mystical thought (Julian of Norwich; John of the Cross - *Dark Night of the Soul*; *The Cloud of Unknowing*; Meister Eckert; etc), Eastern mystical thought (Sufism; Taoism); Buddhism's Four Noble Truths:- *The Truth of Suffering - The Truth of the Origin of Suffering - The Truth of Cessation of Suffering - The Truth of the Eight-fold Path to the Cessation of Suffering*; and the Buddhist proposal of four ways of dealing with suffering:- *the path of resistance - the path of depression - the path of resignation - the path of sacrifice*. Other influences include: the writings of Chaucer, Milton, Dante, Goethe, Shakespeare; alchemical work; the popular media's fascination with violence; and the clinical insights of Freud/Bion (*loss*), Lacan (*lack*), Assagioli *(fear of suffering*), and the practice of counselling (*grief*, *crisis as opportunity*) etc., etc. However, the main inspiration has been the Old Testament *Book*

of Job, Carl Jung's *Answer to Job* (1952) and most importantly William Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job* (originally published 1825).

The *Book of Job* was written somewhere between 600 and 400 BCE, and is recognized by scholars as one of the greatest books ever written. As an authentic essay on human suffering, it has been the focus of countless commentaries, but none, I would argue, to rival that of William Blake. Nevertheless, all commentaries must begin with the story of *Job*.

The Biblical Story of *Job*

Job was an upright, devout and prosperous man from the land of Uz. One day, *Yahweh* (God) is challenged by *Satan* (the Accuser) to test *Job's* faith. *Satan* argues that, if all possessions are taken away from him, then *Job's* faith will be revealed as shallow, and he will curse God for his plight; *Job's* faith is conditional on God's granting him prosperity and good fortune. And so God gives permission for *Satan* to take away *Job's* livestock, his possessions, his children, and eventually his health. *Job* accepts that what has happened is God's will, but does not understand why. He curses the day he was born, but does not curse God. Crucially, three friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar visit *Job*, and argue that he must have sinned to cause such misfortune.

Despite their unrelenting arguments, and the pressure to confess his sins, Job stands firm, and the friends are finally silenced. Next, Elihu, who has hesitated to speak because of his youth, points out that if *Job* is guilty of anything then it is self-righteousness, since in pleading his own righteousness, and in questioning God's reasons, he has placed himself above God. Following this intervention by Elihu, *Job* has a vision of God appearing from out of the whirlwind. God rebukes *Job* for questioning his reasons. God proceeds to catalogue creation, showing how full of wonder is the earth, the mysteries that *Job* cannot hope to penetrate, and how monstrous processes are at work (*Behemoth* and *Leviathan*) that *Job* cannot control. *Job's* humility returns, his faith is renewed fully, and he is rewarded by the return of his health and his children. His possessions are doubled. *Job* dies old and full of days.

▪ *Answer to Job*: Jung's authentic response

The *Book of Job* has inspired many interpretations and commentaries. Carl Jung wrote his response as an *Answer to Job* (Jung, 1952), which he wrote in one burst of energy during an illness. It has been reported that during this illness a figure sat on his bedpost and dictated *Answer to Job* to him (see Edinger, 1992), in what seems to be a very similar experience to Jung's writing the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, in 1916. After he had finished *Answer to Job* he felt well again. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, (Jung, 1961), he remarks:

> *"The inner root of [Answer to Job] is to be found in Aion. There I had dealt with the psychology of Christianity, and Job is a kind of prefiguration of Christ. The link between them is the idea of suffering. Christ is the suffering servant of God, and so was Job . . . The ambivalent God-image plays a crucial part in the Book of Job. Job expects that God will, in a sense stand by him against God; in this we have a picture of God's tragic contradictoriness. This was the main theme of* ***Answer to Job"*** (p. 243).

Jung goes on to point out that:

> *"The many questions from the public and from patients had made me feel that I must express myself more clearly about the religious problems of modern man. For years I hesitated to do so, because I was fully aware of the storm I would be unleashing. But at last I could not help being gripped by the problem, in all its urgency and difficulty, and I found myself compelled to give an answer. I did so in a form in which the problem had presented itself to me, that is, as an experience charged with emotion"* (p. 243).

It should be noted that *Answer to Job* was the one work with which he was completely satisfied. In his old age, Jung once remarked that *" . . now that he knew more he would like to rewrite all of his books except* ***Answer to Job****, but he would leave that one just as it stands"* (von Franz, 1975, p. 161). Edward Edinger (1992) suggests that *Answer to Job* is possibly the most complete statement of Jung's essential message, but it is a message that has shocked many people, including theologians, other psychologists and even some of his close friends (see Adler, 1976).

Jung makes it clear that he is writing in the way that:

> *" . . a modern man with a Christian education and background comes to terms with the divine darkness which is unveiled in the Book of Job, and what effect it has on him"* (Jung, C.W. 9, par. 561).

Jung is concerned with what he calls a psychic truth, and he proposes that the *Book of Job* can serve as a paradigm for a certain experience of God, and that this has a special significance for our situation in today's world (Jung, C.W. 9, par. 562). In the story of *Job*, the portrayal of *Yahweh* is as both a persecutor and a helper in the same image, and both aspects are as real as each other. *Yahweh* is not split but is a totality of inner opposites, and this Jung identifies as the *coincidentia oppositorium*, the conjunction of opposites (Jung, C.W. 9, par. 664). The importance of this conjunction must not be

underestimated, and we will return to this matter later. Jung proposes that this terrible, tormenting image of *Yahweh* constitutes his moral defeat at the hands of *Job*, and consequently *Job* should be seen as standing morally higher than *Yahweh* (Jung, C.W. 9, par. 640).

What is striking about *Answer to Job*, is that the story of *Job* is only a starting point for Jung's sweeping survey of many of the books from the Old and New Testament which share a very similar theme. It turns out that Jung hardly mentions *Job* in the second half of his book, and also, more problematically, in my opinion, nothing is really resolved. Jung's *Answer to Job* is a very angry book, and as such it probably suffers from the projections and distortions that inevitably accompany human anger.

However, the main point to be made is that Jung presents his work as *"an experience charged with emotion"*. Clearly Jung's answer is an authentic answer, and needs to be approached in precisely that way. *Answer to Job* is the culmination of Jung's own heuristic inquiry (see Moustakas, 1990; Hiles 1999), i.e. his own life-long inquiry into the exploration of the meaning of human suffering, and the tragic spiritual conflicts this must entail. Marie-Louise von Franz reports that when Jung was asked how he could live with the knowledge he had recorded in *Answer to Job*, he replied "*I live in my deepest hell, and from there I cannot fall any further"* (von Franz, 1975, p. 174).

What this suggests is that Jung's *Answer to Job* must be approached as an authentic account of his lived experience of the turmoil and conflict of opposites that were emerging from his scholarly work. Of course, it is only from such authentic accounts that human culture can slowly progress. Furthermore, it is important to realize that in this respect Jung's work is not at all unique. Indeed, the *Book of Job* itself is most certainly just such an authentic account, as too is William Blake's interpretation of the story of *Job*. The possibility that is explored here is that Blake perhaps went a little further than Jung in his exploration of the human psyche. However, any comparison of Blake and Jung is only incidental to the main task, which is to explore how Blake can offer any useful perspective on Jung's work.

Jung was at least familiar with Blake's work. In a letter he strangely remarked that:

> "*I am no particular friend of Blake, whom I am always inclined to criticize."*
> (Adler, 1976 - *Letter to Werblowsky, 28 Mar 1951*).

And in another letter, Jung explains that:

> "*I find Blake a tantalizing study, since he has compiled a lot of half- or undigested knowledge in his fantasies. According to my idea, they are an artistic*

production rather than an authentic representation of unconscious processes. He lived at a time when such incredible concoctions were fashionable."
(Adler, 1973 - *Letter to Nanavutty, 11 Nov 1948*).

Although it is clear from these remarks that Jung did not have a very high regard for Blake's work, the similarity of their basic positions warrants the integration that is proposed here. And, while there is no evidence that Jung was familiar with the series of engravings to the *Book of Job* published by Blake in 1825, this cannot undermine my use of Blake's work to throw light on the issues that Jung is confronting in *Answer to Job*.

▪ William Blake's answer to *Job*: An authentic interpretation

William Blake (1757-1827) was poet, painter, engraver, publisher, philosopher, prophet, mystic - *"the greatest imaginative genius born in England in the 18th century"* (Preston, 1944), and there are some who might claim him to be the most original British thinker of the past 200 years. His poetry, paintings and engravings are widely known, indeed, as recently as a few months ago, there was an exhibition of his work at the Imperial Riding School, Prague Castle, from September to November 2000, and the largest Blake exhibition ever mounted was held at the Tate Gallery, in London, from November 2000 to February 2001 (Hamlyn & Phillips, 2000).

The *Book of Job* was a continuing influence on Blake throughout his life. It inspired many paintings. He produced at least two sets of drawings, and he was commissioned to produce a set of engravings that will be the focus of the present study. These engravings were the last work Blake completed before he died. The engraved *Illustrations to the Book of Job* consist of a series of 22 plates. These are arguably his most important work. They are not merely illustration, but a commentary, and a radical reinterpretation of the Old Testament story. They are an authentic expression of Blake's own lived experience. The entire work is profoundly humanistic, existential and transpersonal in scope. Several important editions of these engravings, and relevant background material, have now been published (Bindman, 1970; Damon, 1966; Blake, 1825 [1995]).

These engraved illustrations of *Job* have inspired many scholars, including psychotherapists as disparate as, for example, the Freudian, Marion Milner (1956), and the Jungian, Edward Edinger (1986). Indeed, commenting on his own interpretation of Blake's engravings, Edinger (1992) points out the therapeutic relevance in this remark:

" . . it is a kind of portable analytic hour – it applies to every life problem that one encounters, if one goes deeply enough, to the core of it" (p. 36).

The biblical *Book of Job* is an eloquent attack on spiritual blindness, and Blake's interpretation, some 2,500 years later, is no less provocative. Blake was a severe critic of *mere reason*, and the post-enlightenment age. He, instead, emphasizes the creative imagination, the Poetic Genius, and its role in spiritual unfoldment. In his engravings, Blake clearly departs from the original story and is offering insight that has the potential to transform the reader (Hiles, 1999). While there have been numerous other scholarly commentaries on Blake's illustrations (see Wicksteed, 1910; Milner, 1956; Damon, 1965; Wright 1972; Raine, 1982, 1991; Edinger, 1986; Solomon, 1993), the commentary offered here is the result of my own engagement with these engravings.

Blake's illustrations are not simple accompaniments to the text, but interpret and extend it. They clearly offer an authentic expression of his own suffering, and how he came to understand it. Table 1 presents a comparison between the structure of the biblical text and the 22 plates that make up Blake's work. The biblical text of *The Book of Job* is made up of 42 Chapters, with Chapters 3 through 37 being taken up by the speeches and exchanges between *Job* and Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar and Elihu.

Table 1: Comparison of Job Text with William Blake's 22 Illustrations

Structure of Book of Job	**William Blake Plates**	***Cross-reference***
	[Title Plate]	*[none]*
Prologue ***1:1 - 1:5*** **[Job's integrity]**	***Plate 1***	*1:5*
Yahweh & Satan ***1:6 - 2:13*** **[Job is tested twice]** **[Job's friends arrive]**	***Plates 2,3, 4,5, 6 & 7***	*1:8; 1:19; 1:16; 2:7; 2:7; & 2:12*
Job & Friends ***3:1 - 31:40*** **[Job's lamentation]** **[Three rounds of speeches by Job's accuser/friends Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, with Job's reply to each speech]** [**Round 1**] *4:1 - 14:22* [**Round 2**] *15:1 - 21:34*	***Plate 8*** ***Plate 9*** ***Plate 10***	*3:3* *4:15* *12:4*

/cont.

Table 1: (cont./)

Job & Friends ***(cont.)*** [**Round 3**] *22:1 - 25:6* **[Job's parable]** *26:1 - 27:23* ***["where shall wisdom be found"]*** *28:1 - 28:28* **[Job's parable continues]** *29:1 - 31:4*	***[Plate 11]***	*[none - except to 7:14]*
Elihu & Job ***32:1 - 37.24*** **[Elihu's intervention - four speeches]**	***Plate 12***	*32:6*
Yahweh & Job ***38:1 - 42.6*** **[Two exchanges]**	***Plate 13*** ***Plate 14*** ***Plate 15*** ***[Plate 16]*** ***Plate 17***	*38:1* *38:7* *40:15* *[none]* *42:5*
Epilogue ***42:7 - 42:17*** **[Job's reinstatement]**	***Plates 18,19*** ***[Plate 20]*** ***Plate 21***	*42:8; 42:11* *[none]* *42:12*

The Major comparisons:
(1) The title page
(2) Intertextual commentary
(3) Blake's "visual language" - i.e. Job/God likeness, above/below, left/right, background landscape, passage of time, etc.
(4) The role of Job's wife
(5) Blake's "additional" plates
(6) Overall structure/emphasis

Table 1 is presented in a manner that is designed to emphasize how Blake makes his focus the first two and last four chapters of *Job*. Plates 1 through 6 relate to Chapter 1 and just the first half of Chapter 2, while Plates 13 through 21 relate to the last four chapters of the biblical text. Furthermore, it should be noted that Plates 19, 20 and 21 relate only indirectly to the final few verses of Chapter 42. Blake places *Job's* lowest point of torment and utter despair precisely at the *middle* of the sequence, i.e. Plate 11. The vision of God appearing out of the whirlwind in Plate 13 does not occur until Chapter 38 in the biblical text.

It should be clear from this that Blake is not simply illustrating the biblical text, but adding emphasis, adding commentary and interpretation, and on several occasions adding plates that have no direct correspondence to the text at all. Blake introduces a symmetry to his interpretation that is not there in the original text. Blake's achievement can only be appreciated when these details are closely examined. The following can only be a brief summary of the main features of Blake's work.

The title page

The Title Plate (see Figure 1) is far more important than it would seem on first inspection. It can, of course, be taken as a simple cover for the 21 plates to follow. However, its most striking feature is the sweeping curve of angels, falling and then rising, mirroring the sun's path in the 21 plates.

Figure 1: The Title Plate

It is relevant to point out here that originally there were just 19 watercolours (known as the *Butts Set*) in the series upon which the engravings were based. Blake was commissioned by John Linnell in 1821 to produce a series of 20 engravings, i.e. a title page plus engravings of the 19 watercolours. Between 1823 and 1825, Blake decided

to add two further plates (Plates 17 and 20) to the engraved set. This made a total of 22 plates, a title page plus 21 designs. There is no record of why Blake made the addition of these two engravings to the series, but we can be certain that Blake had his reasons. One clue lies in the inclusion of the seven angels in the design for the Title Plate. The interpretation offered here is based on the simple idea that *Job's* journey down into despair, and his return to well-being, which is outlined in the 21 plates, can be taken as a *seven stage process*. The 21 plates can therefore be taken in three's, forming seven groups, corresponding to the respective stages. I have given labels to each of these stages (see Table 2), either as they suggest themselves from Blake's text, or as inspired by the vast wisdom literature that has now accumulated around the understanding of human suffering. It would seem that Blake is offering a more subtle model of the human response to loss than anything currently available in the recent psychological literature.

Intertextual commentary

Another striking feature of the engravings is the inclusion of illuminated borders, almost as an afterthought. The margins of each of the 21 engravings are richly illustrated and annotated with quotations taken not just from the *Book of Job*, but also from other books of the Old Testament, as well as from the *New Testament*. Reading after reading, this intertextuality continues to astonish. This intertextuality is further enhanced by Blake's own "visual language".

Blake's "visual language"

Owing much to the original study of Blake's work by Wicksteed (1910) there has been considerable attention to the visual language employed by Blake in the *Job* engravings. Some of the striking features concern the obvious likeness of *Job* and God, the conventions and interpretations of above/below, left/right, and the motifs used in the background landscape to convey the passage of time, etc. In addition, Blake's visual language becomes clearer when examining the small changes that he makes between the original 19 watercolours and the set of 22 engraved plates.

The role of Job's wife

Blake radically alters the role of *Job's* wife. She is only briefly mentioned in the biblical text, but occurs in all engravings, except Plates 3 and 11. Blake portrays her as *Job's* abiding companion, a sort of anima figure, or counsellor.

Blake's "additional" plates

When considering the comparison between the biblical text and the engravings (Table 1) it is clear that Blake adds four plates that have no direct textual reference (i.e. the Title Plate and Plates 11, 16 and 20). The Title Plate as a clue to Blake's real intentions has been discussed above, but the other three plates also reveal something of Blake's

Figure 2: Plate 11

underlying idea. Plate 11 (see Figure 2) does more or less correspond to the reference to Job's dreams that occurs very much earlier in the biblical text (*Job* 7, v14), but is clearly a much more profound interpretation of *Job's* torment and despair than that verse indicates. Plate 16 depicts the dramatic fall of Satan which is *not* referred to in the biblical text. And, Plate 20 (see Figure 3) reaches far beyond the biblical text to *Job's* recounting of his *dark night of the soul*, seeming to explicitly acknowledge the seventh distinct stage of *Job's* experience of loss, the stage that I have called *Return*.

Blake's overall structure and emphasis

Together with the details noted above, it is clear that Blake makes a significant departure from the biblical text in terms of both the structure and emphasis of the series of plates. He eschews the cycle of speeches which occupy approximately 34 of the 42 Chapters of *The Book of Job*. Instead, Blake seems to concentrate on *Job's* experience, and process of transformation. Blake also significantly expands the final stage of *Job's* transformation, the stage of *Return*. Blake here seems to be acknowledging both his creative work and his own experience of suffering, i.e. through his work as a poet, artist and engraver, he is able to offer up a creative synthesis as an authentic expression to his readers.

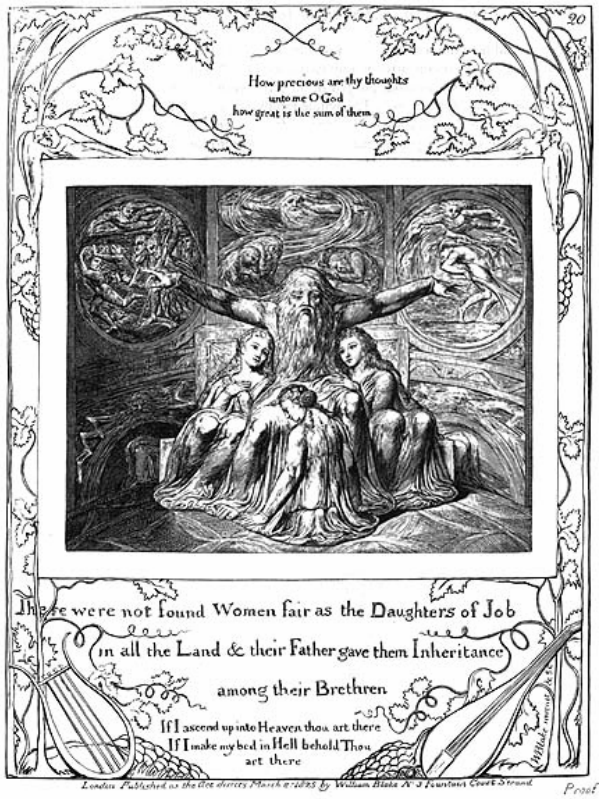

Figure 3: Plate 20

Whatever one makes of these features in Blake's work, there is little doubt that they are highly significant. Blake was attentive to every detail in his work, and was clearly at the very peak of his artistic work in executing these engravings. To further reinforce this point, in another context, Blake was to remark:

> "*I intreat, then, that the Spectator will attend to the Hands & Feet, to the Lineaments of the Countenances; they are all descriptive of Character, & not a line is drawn without intention, & that most discriminate & particular. As Poetry admits not a Letter that is Insignificant, so Painting admits not a Grain of Sand or a Blade of Grass Insignificant - much less an Insignificant Blur or Mark.*"
>
> (William Blake - *A Vision of the Last Judgment*)

Table 1 is a reflection of my own deep and extensive interest in the revisions and expansions Blake made to his engravings of *Job*, as well as the relationship between the illustrations and the original biblical text. My observations have lead me to propose that underlying Blake's work is a clear transpersonal vision of the processes involved as we confront the archetype of suffering. And it is this vision that can considerably enhance our reading of Jung's *Answer to Job*.

▪ Transpersonal insights into the meaning of suffering

While there are very many ways of interpreting Blake's work, recognizing the correspondences, and placing it in the context of his elaborate symbolic language (see Damon, 1966; Raine, 1982), it is possibly the simplest of interpretations that will be explored here. The proposal is that, taking the clue from the Title Plate, Blake's text can be interpreted as reflecting a *seven stage process of transformation* in response to suffering (Table 2). The 21 plates are to be taken in order, and divided up into *seven groups of three*, (i.e. Plates 1, 2, 3 and 4, 5, 6 and so on). I am not aware of anyone else who has proposed this simple underlying structure.

Table 2: Seven transpersonal themes in the psychological response to loss

The Seven Transpersonal Themes in William Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*

(1) Attachment *(unconscious)*	*(Plates 1-3)*
(2) Loss *(conscious)*	*(Plates 4-6)*
(3) Denial *(rationalization)*	*(Plates 7-9)*
(4) Abandonment *(spiritual emergency)*	*(Plates 10-12)*
(5) Insight *(revelation)*	*(Plates 13-15)*
(6) Acceptance *(transformation)*	*(Plates 16-18)*
(7) Return *(grace, sharing)*	*(Plates 19-21)*

n.b. These mirror, but also extend, the basic psychological model of the ***grieving process*** (i.e. *shock, denial, despair, adjustment*).

It is quite clear that the 21 plates have an underlying symmetry, with Plate 11 clearly corresponding to the lowest point in *Job's* journey. This symmetry and Blake's intention are no more clear than in the Title Plate, and in his extending the designs from 19 to 21. Foster Damon (1965, 1966) suggests that the seven angels represent Blake's *Seven Eyes of God* - Lucifer, Molech, Elohim, Shaddai, Pahad, Jehovah, Jesus.

Damon proposes that these are not to be taken simply as seven manifestations of the God-image, but also the *path of experience*, the course of human thought in its search for spirituality. Damon's interpretation is perhaps rather forced, and a simpler scheme needs first to be considered.

The interpretation summarized in Table 2 suggests that Blake's work can be used to extend considerably the psychological model of the *grieving process* (i.e. *shock, denial, despair, adjustment*) to a more subtle distinctions of these seven stages. Blake can be seen to be directly offering an answer to the question of the *meaning of suffering*. Furthermore, the point is that this work is a key contribution to transpersonal psychology.

The following brief commentary on Blake's *Illustrations* is designed primarily to explore its relation to a transpersonal view of the grieving process. Such a commentary can in no way replace the experience of the original text itself, and the process of *discerning* its meaning. Nor can it replace the experience of grief itself, the grasping of suffering through participation. It helps to approach the text with some eye to the detail of Blake's visual language. The 21 plates have simply been placed into seven groups of three (a link to all 22 of Blake's engravings can be found at the end of this paper).

- ***Attachment*** **[Plates 1 - 3]**

  Suffering and the grieving of loss are motivated by *attachment* to material objects and events. This attachment is for the most part unconscious. *Job's* wealth can be seen as reward for his piety and uprightness, but this same wealth makes the potential for the experience of loss far greater. There is a superficiality to *Job's* world. In Plate 1 the book that he holds on his lap symbolizes the law, but the instruments hanging in the tree are not being played, which indicates that *Job* is not fully "alive." The sun is setting on the left, *Job's* "dark night of the soul" is about to begin. The quotation (from *Corinthians*) on the altar: *"The letter Killeth – The Spirit giveth Life – It is Spiritually Discerned"* is both an observation on *Job's* literalness, and an invitation to the reader of Blake's text, to take nothing literally, but to experience, or discern, the meaning for yourself. In Plates 2 and 3, *Job* is still unaware of the challenge to his faith that *Satan*, the accuser, has proposed to God. Despite *Job's* seeming contentment, an unconscious doubt is about to be exposed. This unconscious conflict lies at the core of human existence.

- ***Loss*** **[Plates 4 - 6]**

  Loss is the conscious awareness of the break from an attached object. In Plate 4, *Job* becomes conscious of the *loss* that has now befallen him. The role of *Job's* wife as his companion and counsellor is established. In Plate 5, *Job* pleads his

case through his charitable actions. But in Plate 6 his loss only is extended, as his body is racked with boils. It should be noted how the position of the setting sun in Plate 6 is little changed from Plate 1, suggesting that the actions in Plates 2 through 5 have happened suddenly, in but an instance.

• ***Denial*** **[Plates 7 - 9]**
The next experience is *denial,* which can be considerably heightened by rationalizing of the loss. This is acted out for *Job* by his three friends, who try to account for his misfortune by searching for a reason, claiming there must be some cause or sin that he has committed to justify this punishment. *Job* remains righteous. He does not reject his faith, but he does curse the day he was born.

• ***Abandonment*** **[Plates 10 - 12]**
The lowest point is reached in the feelings of *abandonment* experienced as a spiritual emergency. *Job's* grief is illustrated in Plate 10 when his three friends finally take on the role of accusers (i.e. Job's three friends embody *Satan*). *Job's* experience turns to torment in his loneliest moment in Plate 11 (see Figure 2). At the top of this plate, Blake represents God's tragic contradictoriness, with the figure of God entwined by the serpent, and this pre-figures Jung's same idea. This is a recurring theme in Blake's poetry, drawings and paintings. This can be taken as Blake's representation of the *coincidentia oppositorium*, the conjunction of opposites, which I will argue later is the primary manifestation of the *God* archetype in human consciousness. In Plate 11, the three friends are absent and have fallen silent, and *Job's* wife/counsellor is unable to accompany him. Coming out of this moment of complete despair, a feint glimmer of understanding manifests in the young figure of Elihu, who in Plate 12 points out *Job's* error. The glazed expression on *Job's* face, and his posture here, indicate his unconscious resistance. *Job* attends in a muted, bewildered silence to Elihu's words.

• ***Insight*** **[Plates 13 - 15]**
Confrontation and working through despair leads to *insight* and revelation. *Job* experiences this in Plate 13 as a vision of God appearing out of the whirlwind. *Job's* friends can not share in this vision. God outlines the nature of creation both in its glory and magnificence in Plate 14, which is subtly altered from an original drawing, and in Plate 15 points out its mystery and depths. The out-stretched arms of God in Plates 13 & 14 signify how God's creation includes everything, crucially this includes the interplay of opposites – light and dark – above and below – joy and suffering (this motif of out-stretched arms to signify the inclusion of opposites is frequently used by Blake). *Job* realizes that everything has been placed in the world for a reason. Although beyond our understanding, suffering too has its place. Suffering is necessary to being human.

• ***Acceptance*** **[Plates 16 - 18]**
Insight becomes transformed in the experience of *acceptance*. *Job* is transformed by his acceptance, and his faith is rewarded and strengthened. His unconscious doubts fall away. In Plate 16 the original test of *Job's* faith proposed by *Satan* is rejected. In Plate 17, despite the *Book of Job* being an Old Testament text, Blake grants *Job* a vision of *Christ*!! This acknowledges precisely the same claim made by Jung, that *Job* is a pre-figuration of Christ. *Job* finally transcends the perspective of his friends in Plate 18, which is altered significantly from an earlier watercolour. (It should be noted that the quotations in the margins here are from the New Testament, from *John* and *Matthew* in Plates 17 and 18 respectively).

• ***Return*** **[Plates 19 - 21]**
The transformation experienced by the acceptance of the meaning of suffering is marked by an outward *Return* – an expression of grace, and *a giving back* so that others can learn too from the experience. *Job's* full understanding is expressed through his humility in Plate 19, and in Plate 20 as a *Return*, in recounting the story of his experiences to his daughters (see Figure 3). This plate is both an addition to the biblical text, and a significant addition that Blake made to the original series of 19 watercolours. The outstretched arms of *Job* signifies both the all encompassing vision of God, and *Job's* sharing of his great insight of God's creation with others. Finally, *Job's* transformation into being a "fully alive" person is portrayed in Plate 21. The instruments are now brought down from the tree and are being played. The sun rises in the new dawn.

Whatever is being represented in these last three engravings concerning the meaning of suffering, it would seem that it most likely has something to do with how a person, who comes through the experience of suffering, is lead to share that experience with others. The *Return* here is in the sense of not simply coming back, but in *giving* back to others and to the wider community. This *Return*, in the form of sharing, is most often expressed in *helping others get through their suffering*, drawing upon the strength one has found in getting through one's own suffering. This is of course an expression of the *Shaman,* or wounded healer archetype. Ultimately, suffering is possibly the most important way in which we learn to empathize with others, and overcome the obstacle of intersubjectivity that is existentially built into our being (Hiles, 1997). Furthermore, I wish to claim that the explicit or implicit intentions of the original author of the *Job* text, and of Blake in his *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, and also of Jung in his *Answer to Job*, are all exactly the same. They all draw upon their own authentic experience of suffering, and are driven to "share" that experience with others.

▪ Recognizing the *Job* archetype in ourselves

Job is one of several wisdom archetypes, e.g. *Sophia*, the *Sage,* the *Crone*, etc. The uniqueness of the *Job* archetype lies in the wisdom that arises from participation in the experience of suffering. I am certainly not the first to propose that *Job* is the archetype of human suffering. While Jung does not seem to make such a suggestion, it is clearly implicit in his writing. Edward Edinger (1986) too has proposed this basic idea, although the view of the *Job* archetype presented here turns out to be a little different from his.

It would be of some help if I first clarify my own use of the term archetype. The notion of archetype is not straightforward, not least because it cannot be directly observed or experienced. Archetypes can only be inferred from our experience of symbols, our neuroses and complexes, and the myths and narratives that dominate our thinking. Jung (1946) characterized the archetype by saying:

> *"Whatever we say about the archetypes, they remain visualizations or concretizations which pertain to the field of consciousness, But we cannot speak about archetypes in any other way. We must, however, constantly bare in mind that what we mean by 'archetype' is itself irrepresentable, but has effects that make visualizations of it possible"* (Jung, C.W. 8, par. 417)

Elsewhere, Jung (1938) forcibly points out:

> *"Again and again I encounter the mistaken notion that an archetype is determined in regards to its content [. . i.e.] a kind of unconscious idea. [. .] It is necessary to point out once more that archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree"* (Jung, C.W. 9, par. 155).

Jung was taken to task many times over this notion of archetype, since it is itself not a thing, but expresses itself through material events and things. It is my view that the best way to approach this is to think of an archetype as a predisposed way of *relating* to events, things, ourselves, the past, the present, the future, etc. Taken in this way, an archetype obviously has no material existence, as such. Relations are simply imminent in the material world, and human beings are born with the predisposition to search for and "find" relations between things in the world. Archetypes are abstract qualities, and are non-material in themselves, as indeed are all relations. Archetypes are the prototypes of the patterns and meanings that we "discover" in our experience of the world. The paradox of the archetype is that it is both universal (collective), and yet only accessible through individual participatory experience. Moreover, when we talk of the *Mother* archetype, or the *Trickster* archetype, strictly speaking, we are referring

to our *relationship* to the quality of mothering, our *relationship* to the quality of the trickster figure.

Taking this view on board, we can see that *Job* should not be seen as the archetype of suffering, but instead we should think of *Job* as the archetype of our *relationship to suffering*. The story of *Job* is not just about suffering, or about the human experience of suffering, but about the wisdom that can unfold from our experience of suffering. The *Job* archetype is something that we all possess, but only with profound difficulty, can we access it in ourselves. Of necessity, each of us must formulate our own answer to *Job*, from our experience of, and participation in, suffering.

The importance of our experience of the *Job* archetype is that it so clearly portrays the *coincidentia oppositorium*, the coincidence or conjunction of opposites that are brought into human consciousness (nb. I must stress this is *not* the marriage of opposites). This is an idea which occupies such an important place in Jung's psychology. However, what is at stake here is not the recognition of opposites, or the interplay of opposites in our experience, or even the union or marriage of opposites, but the shocking realization of their conjunction in the *same* object or situation. The reason why the *coincidentia oppositorium* is so crucial is that it does not simply represent the opposition of fear and love, but represents *fear and love of the same object*. Fearing one object, and loving another, is hardly a challenging experience. But fearing and loving the same object, now that is a completely different matter!!

This is a theme, or psychic truth, that must lie at the core of an existential-transpersonal model of human experience. It is almost certain that the *fearful symmetry* which William Blake refers to in his poem, *The Tyger,* is precisely this conjunction of opposites:

> *"Tyger, Tyger burning bright, In the forests of the night: What immortal hand or eye, Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?"*
>
> William Blake (*The Tyger*).

I have tried to represent this core idea in Figure 4, where the basic experience of opposites is contrasted with the conjunction of opposites. It is proposed that this conjunction is what constitutes the *God* archetype, which Jung equates with the archetype of the *Self*. Confrontation with this archetype reveals the tragic contradictoriness of the *Self*, and of God, and is experienced as *the dark night of the soul*. The *coincidentia oppositorium* is the crucial archetype of the human psyche, it is the ultimate challenge to human growth, it is the unconscious conflict at the core of human existence. Furthermore, it is possible that it presents itself to us at critical stages

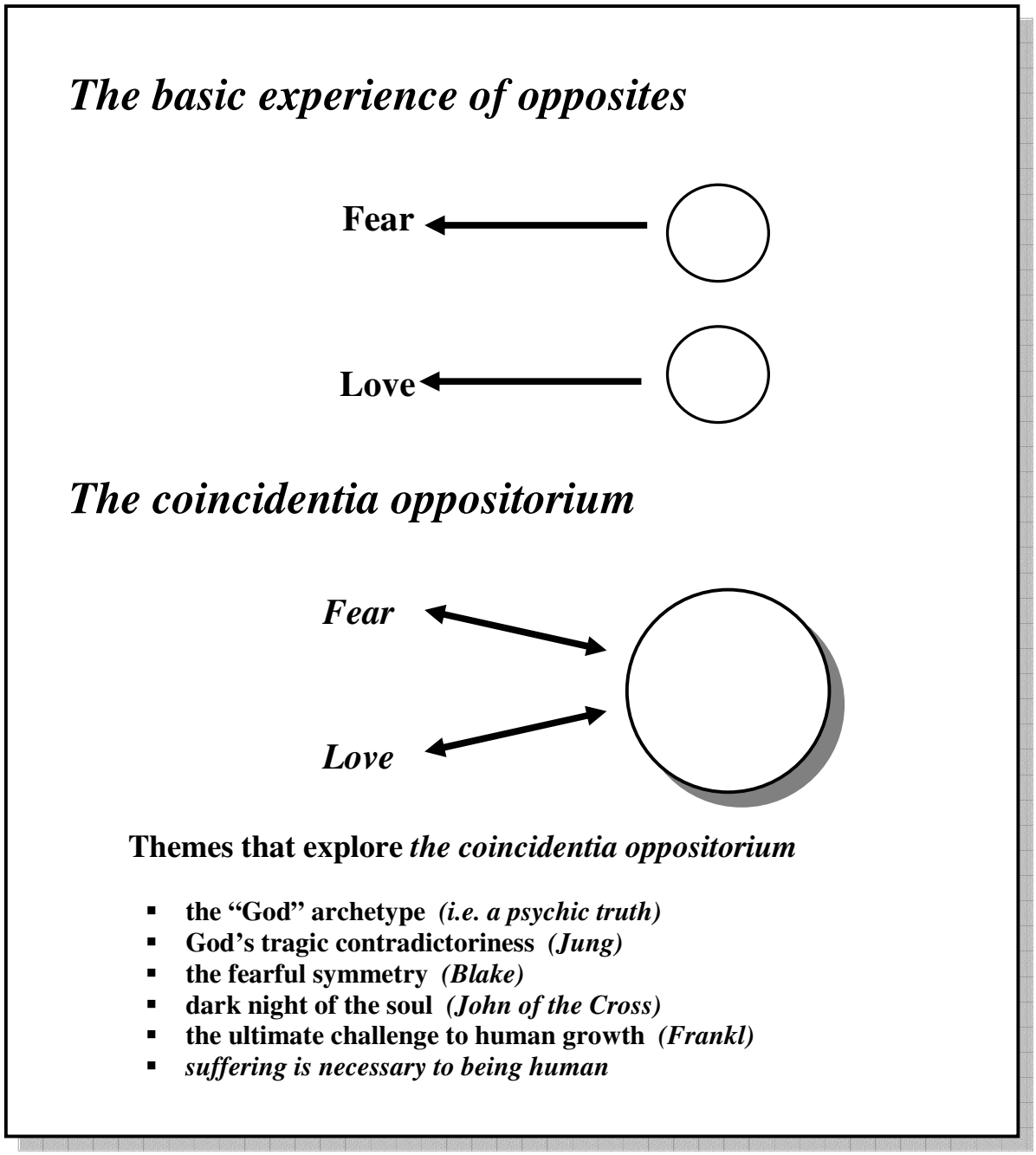

Figure 4: The unconscious conflict at the core of human existence

throughout life, from the earliest stages of infant human growth as unconscious envy (Klein, 1957), to the later stages in the prospect of death.

If we take this seriously, then it does not take much effort to realize that the *God* archetype could not manifest itself in human consciousness in any other way. It is precisely this realization that lies at the core of Blake's interpretation of *Job*, but which Jung strangely fails to make explicit despite his extensive study of alchemy, and the creative tension of opposites. A close examination of the major difference between Jung's and Blake's interpretation of *Job* shows that, whereas Jung sees *Job* as morally defeating God, there is no suggestion of this in Blake's engravings at all. This is a crucial point. For Blake the conjunction comes at the midpoint, i.e. at Plate 11. The *marriage,* or union, of opposites that unfolds in the second half of Blake's designs would not be possible without this terrifying conjunction being experienced first. The notion of a moral defeat, over God by *Job,* is really a symptom of being *stuck* in the *coincidentia oppositorium,* and not being able to move beyond it.

Blake therefore offers a resolution that Jung falls well short of. Blake is offering a richer and far more subtle view of the human response to suffering than can be found in Jung's *Answer to Job*.

▪ Our answer to *Job*

In summary, I want to establish the collective nature of the archetype *of our relation to suffering*, and I will make two points:

(i) we can learn about archetypes through the authentic expression of others, through the direct, first-hand accounts of others' lived experience – this can be from friends, partners, clients, and texts ancient and modern, in the creative synthesis of music, song, dance, poems, writing, paintings, sculpture, scratches in the sand, and so on – it is in this sense that we should approach the authentic expressions found in the work of writers and artists such as Jung and Blake, and many, many others

(ii) but most importantly of all, and remembering the quote from Laurens van der Post at the beginning of this paper, we can and must learn about them directly for ourselves through our own lived experience, through participation in, and confrontation with, some of life's most difficult and painful experiences.

Placed in the context of Jung's idea of the collective unconscious, I find it not in the least strange that both Jung and Blake in composing their separate answers to *Job* should be at times following such very similar paths. In making sense of their own

experiences, both have been deeply inspired by the original biblical text. Both are drawing upon what must be the expression of the same underlying archetype. And both find themselves tracing at times the very same path. One example will suffice. Blake, for example, quotes in Plate 1 of his *Illustrations to the Book of Job,* from *I Corinthians 2:14*, thus:

> *It is Spiritually Discerned*

and, Jung, in his *Answer to Job* (Jung, C.W. 11, par. 659) quotes from Corinthians, the very same idea, but just four verses earlier*, (I Corinthians 2:10*), that:

> *[spirit] searches everything, even the depths of God*

Both Blake and Jung I am sure would agree that, through lived experience, through our participation in spiritual tensions, life is spiritually discerned. In participation with suffering, each of us will follow very much the same path, but each of us must discern our own answer to *Job*.

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Internet Resources

Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job are available here:

http://www.gailgastfield.com/job/job.htm

Stylistic Note: I have italicized all *archetypes* in this paper

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