

# The father of life and death



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Nathan Paper Psychological Analysis of Adam and Eve 09 February 2007 The Father of Life and Death In the Old Testament creation myth can be found what is perhaps the oldest and (though arguably) most pure example for the analytical application of Eros, Thanatos, and the rise of the Oedipal Conflict in the human psyche. All three concepts integrate to form an interesting tripartite mosaic of the human mind. By examining passages of this myth, it can be found that these three ideas predate our conscious knowledge of them.

First, I would like to address the presence of the oedipal conflict, as I feel that it is the most blatantly present of the three. God, who can quite obviously be viewed as the divine father of Adam, denies his son access to the "fruit of the womb," one might say, as stated in Genesis 2: 9, "In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." Later, in Genesis 2: 16-17, it states "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" Adam "the son," however, rebels against God "the father."

When Adam is confronted with what he has done by eating of the forbidden fruit, he blames his behavior on the only present mother figure, Eve, who he accuses of tempting him. However, from the Oedipus view, this banishment can be seen as a victory because Adam is not cast out alone and is not separated from the maternal/feminine figure. Despite banishment from paradise, Adam is able to retain his relationship to the matriarchal figure, Eve. Therefore, in the Oedipus sense, Adam has achieved an odd kind of victory, seeing that he has secured the "trophy" of having Eve as his wife.

From a different angle, God has cast Adam " the son" out of Eden forever similar to a father kicking his offspring out of the home. By doing so, Adams is allowed to remain safe with the goddess The only problematic issue that I have found with the application of the Oedipal conflict is that Adam " the son" never directly rebels against God " the father." In addition, there is no divine feminine figure, no " mother goddess," present in Eden. Eve, in fact, is a less-than-ideal model of the feminine, portrayed as childish and easily fooled. In the absence of the divine mother, God " the father," the divine masculine, is portrayed as the sole parent.

Eros, the idea of creation often associated with the feminine, has been made masculine in this creation myth. The patriarchal God gives life to Adam. He then gives life to Eve with the rib of Adam. Eve, then, is shown to be the creation of the divine patriarch and the husband. The female, consequently, must read this myth to mean that the feminine cannot exist without the masculine. The woman is below the male; therefore, she lives to serve him. Such a self-degrading belief could result in the perfectly clean image of the " mother-wife," personified by characters such as Donna Reed in the early nuclear-family sitcoms.

In Genesis 3: 3, it states that " When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." This passage lends one to the idea that Adam and Eve became subject to the condition of being human (imperfect). As any human being is aware, the unavoidable consequence of experiencing life is

that one must eventually also surrender to death. This seems a consequence too great for either to bear. Bearable or not, however, the truth cannot be denied.

In an application of the idea of Thanatos, one may find that the death experienced by Adam and Eve is more sublime than actual. Obviously, physical death becomes a reality that was previously non-existent for the pair once they have eaten of the fruit. However, in the sense of Thanatos, I feel that death is experienced through a sense of separation from the divine, perfect world. The connection to God, the "father," is lost. This separation is a death of the spirit, comparable to the understanding that once a baby has left the womb he or she begins the journey towards death. Eden is the womb of God. Just as a baby must eventually leave the womb, so must Adam and Eve depart from Eden. This is a painful but unavoidable occurrence, much like childbirth.