The Deep Structure of Imagination

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"Imagination moves us to feel moved by something clearly within us that nonetheless is not us, that comes to us as an I and addresses us as a You."[1]
—Ann and Barry Ulanov

One of the major topics of Ann Ulanov's work is that of the imagination, particularly the "life of the imaginary," associated with the unconscious. For Ulanov, following Jung, the unconscious is a creative matrix—a primordial wellspring from which conscious thinking flows and on which it depends. This conscious, secondary-process thinking includes the various ways we think about human experience and "selfhood," as well as the ways we think about God.

Yet the imagination has not always fared so well in the postmodern era, in which there is a felt sense that the self has been dispersed, dissolved, and deconstructed. So what has happened to the human capacity to imagine? Has the imagination also been dissolved?

More than a few philosophers and cultural theorists have lamented the fate of the postmodern imagination. They claim that the imagination has been stripped of its creative potential and referential depth; that it has been reduced to parody and mimicry, playing around on the surface of things. In his *Wake of Imagination*, for example, Richard Kearney analyzes the history of imagination from biblical and classical through medieval and Enlightenment paradigms. He concludes that rather than pointing beyond themselves, postmodern images are simply proliferated in an endless play-of-mirrors, trapped in a chain of linguistic signifiers, and incapable of being transcended by anything extra-imaginal or extra-textual.[2] George Steiner tracks the seeming failure of the literary imagination. "There is in words and sentences no pre-established affinity with objects," he writes, "no mystery of consonance with the world. No figura of things. . . ."[3]

I am not so willing to concede the death of imagination. In fact, it is precisely that "*mystery of consonance*"—that "*figura*"—which I wish to attend. My claim is that even when it *seems* to stop, imagination nonetheless goes on.[4] Even

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1   Ann and Barry Ulanov, *The Healing Imagination* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag, 1991), 37.

2   Richard Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1988).

3   George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), 105.

4   Kearney, *Wake*, 397.

when it appears trapped in surface play, imagination hints at depths beyond itself. The negation of figuration is, after all, its own figurative endeavor.

In this essay, then, I will develop my notion of the deep structure of imagination, making use of Kearney's paradigmatic analysis of the imagination and by invoking an ancient term associated with depth and space, *chora.* By the "deep structure of imagination," I mean a dynamic capacity for organizing experience, perception, and meaning. This deep structure is a driving force in the emergence of the self. It grounds and permeates all mental activity, including our constructions of theory and theology. It is the point of contact between human experience and divine disclosure. My aim is to provide a theoretical framework for entering more fully into the nature of imagination's source, what Ulanov describes as that "presence" which is a part of us, yet not us; which moves within us, yet addresses us from beyond.[5]

IMAGINATION: A PARADIGMATIC AND DIALECTICAL READING

What *is* imagination? Etymology reveals a wide semantic array. In Greek, imagination is rendered as both *phantasia* (fantasy) and *eikasia* (a mirroring/mirror image); in Latin, *imaginatio*; in German, *Einbildungskraft* (fancy or vision) and *Phantasie*; in French (and English), *imagination.* Together, these several connotations refer to what philosopher Mary Warnock describes as the function of an "as if" way of perceiving and experiencing. Imagination refers to the human ability to create mental images; to our proclivity for engaging in symbolic representation; to our image-making, capacity.[6]

We can trace this semantic breadth in the various understandings of imagination throughout history. The ancient mind, for example, regarded the imagination solely as a receptive, reproductive faculty; what Kearney terms the *mimetic imagination*. In the biblical world—both Hebraic and Christian—and continuing through classical and medieval times, the "productions" of the imagination were regarded as mere copies of an external, transcendent reality. Only later, with the emergence of the Enlightenment and the "turn to the subject," was the imagination understood as generative and creative in its own right, an independent and autonomous source of origination, what Kearney calls the *productive imagination.*

Kearney claims that, following the Enlightenment, the image-making function of imagination has been in crisis. In an effort to develop an alternative to what he perceives as an active nihilism, in which we remain trapped in a labyrinth of an endless play of (non) meaning, he retrieves these past understandings of imagination and places them in a dialectical relationship with one another and with current trends. Ultimately, he proposes a new agenda for the postmodern imagination, one which is simultaneously ethical, critical, and poetic: *ethical*, because

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5   Ann and Barry Ulanov, *The Healing Imagination* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag, 1991), 37.

6   Mary Warnock, *Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 10.

instead of a parodic play-of-mirrors which denies any extra-imaginal "other," our images must possess a certain regard for the claims of the other; *critical*, because there must always be a moment when we discern the obligation those claims hold for us; *poetic,* because the work of the imagination should always be playful and creative, offering something other than a deconstructive critique through parody and satire.

Kearney gathers up the ethical, the critical, and the poetic functions of his alternative paradigm into a provisional whole. Rather than choosing between the premodern and modern forms of imagination, as if they presented us with either/or alternatives, he suggests a postmodern approach that would integrate them. The ethical emphasis of the premodern would thus combine with the poetical emphasis of the modern. "A new alliance would be forged," Kearney writes, "where the hidden or officially neglected dimensions of each paradigm (premodern and modern) might converge and breathe new life into an ostensibly dying imagination. . . .Here again we are reminded that the poetico-ethical imagination we are advancing is above all an empathic imagination."[7] Such a proposal for an alternative postmodern imagination is a daring exercise in the poetics of the possible, particularly in an intellectual and cultural milieu that increasingly insists on the impossibility of meaning.

It is difficult to envision what could be more hopeful, in our present context, than the empathic imagination Kearney commends. Still, I wonder if Kearney's alternative and visionary model of a "new alliance" might too much resemble its constituent parts. What I want to keep open, here, is the possibility of the emergence of something new which is more than the proverbial sum of its parts; something, indeed, which *cannot* be predicted from the fragments that a hermeneutical retrieval might assemble for us.

Kearney, himself, seems ultimately to be in pursuit of the new that resides both within and beyond a poetics of the possible. Towards the end of his project, he admits that the imagination will always be in crisis, for its representational capabilities—whether mimetic, productive, or parodic—remain inevitably limited. "This is why we feel bound to continue the search for a postmodern imagination," Kearney writes, "one willing to accept that whatever particular narrative it chooses or whatever image it constructs, there is always some dimension of otherness which transcends it."[8]

Invoking the dimension of otherness gives rise to a number of challenging and critical questions. What is the "otherness" of this other? Where does it reside? What is its source, its logic, its name? What is its connection to that space where the imagination performs its transgressive function, crisscrossing the boundaries between the unreal and the real, inner and outer, subject and object?

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7   Ibid., 392.
8   Ibid., 396.

DIMENSIONS OF OTHERNESS

One way to approach such questions about otherness is with the notion of *space*—a space that is, itself, bordered by all manner of opposites. Here I take up an ancient term for this kind of space, that of *chora*. *Chora* has become something of a preoccupation for a number of postmodern thinkers. But its origins are decidedly premodern. As a philosophical term, *chora* first appeared in Plato's dialogue *Timaeus*. In this late dialogue, Plato revisits the "big picture" of this entire philosophical system. So he considers the eternal and unchanging Forms, which can be the object of our knowing, and the changing objects of the world of sense, which exist as mere Copies of the unchanging Forms.

Plato concluded that Forms and their Copies, alone, could not fully account for the inventory of the world. So he asks one of the greatest, most fundamental of all questions: What is the primordial source of all that exists; of all things that come to be? After struggling to identify the fundamental conditions for the possibility of being, and a world of being, Plato argues for a third type (*triton genos*), a category distinct from both Form and Copies. *Chora* is the name Plato gives this third thing, this mysterious source of being, this *other*.[9]

Chora can mean a variety of things in Greek, including mother, a receptacle, a womb, nurse, a base material for the making of perfume, and a winnowing sieve used in the bread-making process. Common to each of these associations is the idea of a matrix, that which contains the possibility of emergence and the actuality of becoming. Plato uses this term to refer to a certain quality of space. A placeless space, in fact, from which everything that is comes to be. For Plato this allusive and virtually untranslatable concept fundamentally challenges our usual categories of rationality. He suggested that *chora* is perhaps best apprehended through a dream-like state of consciousness, something akin to reverie or imagination.[10]

In his commentary on *Timaeus*, John Sallis celebrates this ability of *chora* to challenge rational logic. And he cautions against any attempt to explain the term. Indeed, Sallis' dreamy prose has the effect of pushing the reader to the edges of rationality and evoking the imaginative, dream-like consciousness Plato commended. "By insisting on a reading of the chorology in which the meaning of the Χόρα [chora] would come to be determined," he writes, "the resulting interpretations produced a reduction of the χόρα, situating it within a horizon of sense that it would otherwise both limit and escape, effacing its distinctiveness in the very gesture of interpretation, in the very demand that the chorology make sense, in the refusal to read in it, instead, a limiting of both making and sense."[11]

In my mind, this kind of hermeneutical refusal places *chora* in the dreamy proximity of the unpronounceable YHWH, the Hebrew name for the Holy One, which—by divine decree—refuses the limitation that would accompany its utter-

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9   Plato. *Timaeus* 52a–b, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997), 1255.

10   Kearney, *Strangers*, 152.

11   John Sallis, *Chorology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 4.

ance.[12] But such a placement of *chora* is just that—proximate. Lingering for a time in our dream-like consciousness we might ask: do all interpretative gestures that attempt to situate *chora* within a horizon of sense necessarily efface its distinctiveness? Rather than hermeneutical *refusal*, might it be that a certain hermeneutical *transgression* into a horizon of sense would honor the phenomenon of meaning's excess while also compounding that excess?

Parallels from Psychoanalysis: D. W. Winnicott and Carl Jung

Winnicott's idea of *potential space* is an example of what such an interpretive transgression might yield. Potential space is the space between inner reality and external life, between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived. Much like Plato, who believed the world consists of more than Forms and Copies, Winnicott insisted that psychic life consists of more than inner and outer reality. And, like the ancient philosopher summoning his *triton genos*, Winnicott similarly invoked a third term, an intermediate area, a *space* which is neither inner nor outer, but to which inner and outer both contribute.

It is in this *potential space*, which first obtains between the infant and the mother/mothering one, that the first "not-me" experience is facilitated and contained; that the initial encounter with otherness is symbolized.[13] It is in this placeless space, this matrix of becoming, that the capacity for imagination and the recognition of otherness emerge, developing in tandem. Here we can observe the connections between imagination, space, and otherness. Transitional space is the mental space we associate with imagination. And Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena is a psychoanalytic theory of the origins of the human capacity to imagine. Moreover, the implication of Winnicott's thinking about the intermediate area of experience is that the capacity to imagine can only emerge in the interaction between persons. It simply cannot develop in isolation, within the infant's own mind. Winnicott's is an intersubjective theory for the origin of symbolic imagination.[14] The origins of imagination are necessarily bound up with otherness.

Potential space and transitional phenomena link with Jung's notion of the mediation of the opposites, the *coniunctio* between inner and outer, subject and ob-

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12   Kearney suggests that the "nameless name" of *chora* functions as a kind of "Hellenic obverse" to Exodus 3:15 ("God also said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and this is my title for all generations." See *Strangers*, 193.

13   See, for example, Winnicott's *Playing and Reality* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1971/2002).

14   Warren Colman, "Symbolic Conceptions: The Idea of the Third," *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 52 (2007): 570.

ject, conscious and unconscious.[15] Indeed, for Jung it is imagination that provides the unifying function resulting from such mediation. Imagination facilitates our reckonings with otherness, represented by the *other* (unconscious) point of departure or *other* point of view—spirited reckonings which ultimately yield a *third* term, a *third* function, a *third space.*

This thirdness, what Jung termed the transcendent function, emerges from a dialogical confrontation between ego and Self. Here, the ego and the contents of the unconscious relate as "other" to one another, each taking its own stand and having its own say. And the space of conversation, which gradually opens up between them, becomes a matrix for a new attitude, a new symbol, a new ordering of reality, and a new embrace of aliveness.[16] Imagination and otherness are inextricably bound throughout this process, but only up to a point. Together, they usher us to the edge of our knowing and perceiving, pointing ultimately to a realm *beyond* our imagining. The meaning of the union of opposites stands outside of our capacity to imagine it, because in that union we encounter an eternal, archetypal image.[17]

Whatever narrative imagination chooses or whatever image it constructs, there is always some dimension of otherness that transcends it. For Jung, this dimension of otherness includes the realm of the eternal and archetypal, where images are not so much constructed as given; not so much created as received. It is this dimension of otherness that presses any search for an alternative postmodern imagination. And it is this realm that offers us that "something" which cannot be predicted from the fragments that any hermeneutical retrieval might assemble for us. However hopeful the empathic imagination—versatile, open-minded, prepared for its encounter with the other—we cannot do without a certain pressing beyond our horizons of meaning and sense. It is through that pressing beyond that our reach continually exceeds our grasp.

THE DEEP STRUCTURE OF IMAGINATION

Further developing my notion of imagination's deep structure, I return to *chora*, a kind of conceptual plaything for a number of postmodern thinkers. Derrida, in what was perhaps the most noteworthy move, seized on the elusive spatiality of Plato's *chora*, appropriating it as a kind of next-of-kin for his (non)notion of

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15   See, for example, C. G. Jung, "Psychological Commentary on the *Tibetan Book of Great Liberation*," in *Psychology and Religion: West and East,* vol. 11 of *Collected Works* (New York: Bollingen, 1954); C. G. Jung "On the Nature of the Psyche," in *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, vol. 8 of *Collected Works* (New York: Bollingen, 1960).

16   Ann Belford Ulanov, "The Third in the Shadow of the Fourth," *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 52 (2007): 589–90.

17   C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, in vol. 14 of *Collected Works* (New York: Bollingen, 1963), p. 167.

différance.[18] *Chora*, for Derrida, is the abyssal chasm, the formless matter of form.[19] Through the play of postmodern permutation, *chora* has come to suggest both *space* and *depth*: a deep space, a bottomless yawn, an anti-matrix . . . signifying nothing. The Deep has become deeply suspect.

Postmodernism, which (consciously) loathes binary thinking, has (unconsciously) constructed a new binary from its deconstructive ruins: *the given* (origins in [sacred] depth) versus *the made* (beginnings in [secular] surface).[20] By introducing the concept of the *deep* structure of fantasy, I continue in a counter-cultural way. Here I am for a deconstruction of this binary; or to use Jungian terms, to serve an imaginative transcendence of the binary—a mediation of the opposites. *Deep structure*, as I envision it, encompasses both the given and the made. Far from being a vacuous abyss, it is here envisioned as a generative space; a matrix for all becoming; a place of encounter with transcendence itself.

ORIGINS AND EXTENSIONS OF DEEP STRUCTURE

The term deep structure originated in the field of linguistics through the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomksy. Saussure believed that the organization of human language is not random, but rather structured in regular, non-arbitrary, and rule-governed ways. Assuming normal capacity and development, human beings are capable of using language according to an unconscious set of rules—the "depth grammar" of language. Chomsky referred to this innate capacity for the linguistic representation of perception and experience as the deep structure of language.

The notion of deep structure quickly moved beyond the field of linguistics, and it continues to be used across a variety of disciplines. Some theologians, for example, have extended the notion of deep structure/depth grammar to describe the phenomenon and function of religious doctrine. Daniel Migliore uses the concept to advance theology's hermeneutical task. He believes that, when attempting to interpret doctrine, the work of theology is to discover "the 'depth grammar' that lies

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18   *Chora* is one of Derrida's many "nonsynonymous substitutions" for différance (others include trace, supplement, infinity, etc). Différance is, itself, a French neologism coined by Derrida that plays on the dual meanings of the French word *différer* (to differ and to defer). Différance hints at a cluster of features which, according to Derrida, determine the production of textual meaning. Derrida claimed, for example, that words and signs can never by themselves fully convey what they mean, but rather rely on other words from which they differ (hence Derrida's insistence on the deferral of meaning through an endless chain of signifiers). Derrida also focused on the difference between words by force of space—a force that differentiates linguistic elements from one another resulting in hierarchies and binary oppositions which further undermine the possibility of meaning.

19   See Jacques Derrida, "Khora," in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit; trans. Ian McLeod. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995).

20   Catherine Keller, *The Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 166–67.

beneath all the 'surface grammar' and all of the particular, and always inadequate, names and images that we employ when we speak of the God of the gospel."[21]

Theologian George Lindbeck employs the term to highlight what he regards as the performative nature of doctrine. He argues that religion is best understood as a linguistic medium that organizes and shapes all life and thought. Religious doctrine, according to Lindbeck, possesses its own unique logic or grammar, including a distinct vocabulary of symbols, both discursive and nondiscursive, that can be meaningfully engaged. Doctrine, for Lindbeck, is an idiom that makes it possible for us to describe the realities, to formulate our beliefs, and to experience inner feelings and responses.[22]

Several psychoanalytic theorists have also extended the notion of deep structure into the domain of psychoanalytic discourse. Christopher Bollas identifies "deep structure" as the "grammar of the ego."[23] This deep structure is formed by the infant's internalization of the mother's "idiom of care," an intricate and unconscious network of rules for processing intrapsychic and intersubjective life, for being and experiencing.[24]

Thomas Ogden envisions a "psychological deep structure" that consists of innate bodily impulses and their corresponding fantasies.[25] Here deep structure is an instinctual, body-based form of knowing. Emmanuel Ghent writes of "biologically organized templates and delimiters" that provide the constraints within which interpersonal experience unfolds.[26] Edgar Levenson associates deep structure with "the centrality of metaphor" and "the mysterious terra incognita of the mind."[27]

DEEP STRUCTURE AND THE ARCHETYPE

While the actual term deep structure does not appear in Jung's work, the concept is nonetheless implicit in his theory of the archetypes. This theory originated in Jung's own self-analysis and from his extensive work with patients suffering from psychosis. What Jung observed is that the imaginal material that manifested in these contexts had no apparent connection to memories, perceptions, or

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21   Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 64.

22   George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984), 33.

23   See, for example, *The Shadow of the Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 72; *Forces of Destiny* (London: Free Association Books, 1989), 195.

24   Bollas, *Forces of Destiny*, 195.

25   Thomas Ogden, *The Matrix of the Mind* (Oxford, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 1990), 13–15.

26   Emmanuel Ghent, "Credo—the Dialectics of One-Person and Two-Person Psychologies," *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 25 (1989): 179.

27   Edgar A. Levenson, "Politics of Interpretation," *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 32, no. 4 (1996): 647.

conscious experiences. He also noted that these images fell into discernible patterns and echoed motifs found in myths and religious symbols, and fairy tales.

Through his analysis of such material, Jung concluded that such images are universal modes of behavior and experience, serving as a kind of foundation from which all subsequent imagery derives. Beginning in 1912, Jung termed these images as *primordial images*. And he continued to use that term despite subsequent modifications in his thinking. Jung believed that no theory of cultural migration could explain the ubiquity of certain motifs, and this led him to conclude that there is a part of the psyche held in common and he called this the collective unconscious.[28]

In 1917 Jung introduced the term *dominants* in his discussions of the collective unconscious, referring to certain nodal points around which images cluster. Analyzing this shift in terminology, Samuels concludes that the notion of an innate structure became the more powerful component of the theory. The concept of pre-existing structure appears to take precedence over subjective experience.

When Jung introduced the term *archetype* in 1919, he continued to emphasize the concept of an innate, inherited structure. But the notion of inheritance, Jung argued, referred to form and pattern rather than content. Jung saw the archetype as a purely formal, empty concept, one that is later filled out with imagery, motifs, ideas, etc. from particular cultural, historical, and biographical contexts.[29] This relationship of archetype to environment functions as a kind of "feedback system": experiences that are repeated leave residues in the psyche that eventually become archetypal structures. And these structures, in turn, influence experience, organizing it in terms of preexisting patterns.[30]

However much Jung's theory of the archetype evolved, one component of the theory that persists is the linking of archetypes with instinct. Early on, Jung described the primordial image or archetype as "the instinct's perception of itself . . . the self-portrait of the instinct . . . ."[31] As Jung's later writings about the connection between instinct and image attest, the metaphor of self-portraiture is best envisioned as a vibrant and interpenetrating dynamism rather than a static entity. "The realization and assimilation of instinct never take place . . . by absorption into the instinctual sphere," Jung wrote, "but only through integration of the image which signifies and evokes the instinct."[32] Instinct and image, according to Jung, share a mutual, interdependent relationship.

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28   Andrew Samuels, "The Theory of Archetypes in Jungian and Post-Jungian Analytical Psychology," *The International Review of Psycho-Analysis* 10 (1983): 429.

29   Ibid., 430.

30   Ibid., 431.

31   Jung. C. G., "Instinct and the Unconscious," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche,* vol. 8 of *Collected Works* (New York: Bollingen, 1960), p. 146.

32   Jung. C. G., "A Review of the Complex Theory," in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, vol. 8 of *Collected Works* (New York: Bollingen, 1960), p. 211.

Deep Structure: A Working Notion

Together, these renderings of deep structure attest that we are dealing with a multifaceted concept. Deep structure variously suggests the sense of something core or essential, surrounded by names and images that are always inadequate; a shared idiom that makes possible a range of practices, beliefs, and experiences; the dim recognition of the ego's silent grammar that risks expression in the mysterious glossolalia of the primary speech of the unconscious; the interdependence of instinct and image; innate schema which influence, and are influenced by, experience and environment.

What, then, does an adequate conceptualization of the deep structure of fantasy require? Not, I think a narrow choosing; a sifting and sorting; a precise selection of one domain of meaning over another. Deep structure is a both/and concept, itself multiple in its meaning. What I prefer, then, is to sustain the work of interpretive transgression: lingering with these several tropes of deep structure; honoring the phenomenon of meaning's excess; and hoping, in the process, to compound that excess.

The deep structure of imagination thus encompasses a number of descriptors. It is *embodied*, admitting the dynamic link between instinct and image. It is *relational*, honoring the interplay between intrapsychic life and intersubjective experience—between being and experiencing. It is *subject to modification*, open to the influence from the environmental surround. It is *given,* claiming and receiving its inheritance with gratitude for what has come before and what lies beyond. And, as a steward of its inheritance, it is *performative and creative*, a spacious matrix for the emergence of the new.

In thinking about deep structure in these ways, I am helped by coming back to *chora*. Indeed, invoking such notions as *space* and *depth* mean dealing with the postmodernist and poststructuralist suspicion of the Deep. Depth, having been implicated in the quest for universal and explanatory origins, has been equated with homogenization and colonization.[33] The Deep has thus been rendered a postmodern and poststructuralist impossibility. Yet this impossibility of depth is para-

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33   Post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha, for example, blames the "dimension of depth" for "the language of Identity with its sense of reality—a measure of the 'me,' which emerges from an acknowledgement of my inwardness, the depth of my character, the profundity of my person, to mention only a few of those qualities through which we commonly articulate our self-consciousness." See *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994/1997), 48ff. Building on Bhabha's critique and ultimately betraying, I think, the trajectory of her otherwise creative hermeneutic of depth, Catherine Keller notes that the notion of the "vertical dimension" of depth "functions as the very medium of homogenization, the solvent of difference—the stabilizing site of the 'before that." See *Face of the Deep* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 161. In terms of the "dimension of depth" evoked by the depth psychologies, I would argue that the "solvent of difference" can produce a sense of commonality and solidarity (kinship) without resulting in a *de facto* homogenization. As Ann Ulanov often puts it, the reality of the unconscious suggests that while we do not share the *same* inner life, we share the same *kind* of inner life. (Personal communication)

doxical. For example, while many postmodern thinkers critique or reject notions of "deep" or "nonsocial subjectivity," they also, unwittingly, presuppose it. As Jane Flax has observed, "The capacity for aesthetic or mystical experience (Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault), the ability to utter new and interesting sentences (Rorty), and the will to resist totalizing discourses (Foucault)," according to Flax, "all require a 'deep' subjectivity."[34]

Theologian Catherine Keller, who is committed to the poststructural-ist project, has proposed a constructive theology of the deep, what she terms a "tehomic theology."[35] "Tehomic" plays off the Hebrew word *tehom*, meaning the deep; a watery chaos; depth itself: *"In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered* the face of the deep*, while a wind from God swept over* the face of the waters."[36] *Tehom* shares an associative link with *chora*.

Keller points out that, at times, Derrida wanted to keep *chora* distinct from chaos, as if anxiously protecting it from a kind of theoretical contamination. By keeping *chora* devoid even of chaos, Derrida hoped to maintain it as an empty space, an abyssal chasm, an anti-matrix that precludes the signification of mean-ing.[37] Through a creative exegesis of both *tehom* and Derrida, Keller reclaims the ancient sense of *chora* as a matrix for becoming a generative space. Keller's theol-ogy of the deep is an attempt at her own poetics of the possible: "For a tehomic discourse," she writes, "it is only as . . . a matrix of possibility that chaos becomes depth. But this Deep . . . has little to do with the homogenizing verticalities and interiorities of the depth that come opposed to surface." As fluid chaos, *chora* is not a homogenizing or totalizing space. In the phrase*, the *face* of the *deep,* the would-be binary of "surface" and "depth" is transcended.

CHAOS, FORMLESSNESS, AND EMERGENCE

Chora/tehom is further intensified by another Hebrew term*, tohu vabohu*, which may be translated as "formlessness" and/or "normlessness." *Tohu vabohu* is *tehom's* linguistic "near neighbor" in the opening verses of Genesis: "the earth was a *formless void,"* the text tells us, "and darkness covered *the face of the deep."* *Tohu vabohu*, much like chora, is a womb-like space for becoming; a kind of *prima materia*, or base element for the making of a prized substance.

The idea of a formless, normless, fluid chaos—a kind of "nothing-some-thing"—has worked its way into the language of science, primarily through chaos theory and the generative/emergence theories.[38] Such constructs provide alternate accounts of the ordering of chaos. They see order as that which arises spontane-

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34   Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 210.

35   Catherine Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

36   Gen1:1–2.

37   Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 166.

38   Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 186.

ously out of chaos. Processes of self-regulation and self-organization preside over such an ordering process. Physicists Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, for example, claim that processes of self-organization in conditions characterized by heightened disequilibrium evoke a subtle interplay between chance and necessity, random fluctuations and deterministic physical laws.[39] Fluctuation indicates both the repetitive and transgressive, processes that comprise chaos and those which generate order.[40]

Emergence theory is one way of accounting for novelty, a newness that cannot be predicted by or reduced to its constituent elements.[41] Such novelty is dependent on otherness and beyondness. As a descriptor of the deep structure of imagination, emergence functions as a third term that transcends both the *given* (depth) and *the made* (surface).

Deep Structure, Imagination, and the Self

Some contemporary psychoanalytic theories of imagination, which attempt to explore its creative function, offer a partial grounding for my claim. Any study of fantasy must attempt to address the extent to which fantasies contribute to our construction of reality.[42] Imagination appears to be both a product of reality as well as have far-reaching consequences for what will become reality.[43] Assuming such consequences, what are the implications for imagination for the ways we shape reality, including the reality some persist in calling the self? If we regard the self as a kind of imaginative construct, what becomes of our notions of selfhood and identity that depend upon certain notions of creation or givenness?

In considering such fundamental questions concerning the relationship between fantasy and the self's emergence, I return to the hermeneutic of transgression used to illuminate the concept of deep structure. Making use of this hermeneutic, I allow the several tropes of the deep structure to co-exist. Taken together, these several tropes—both mimetic (receptive) and productive (generative) in form—point toward an element of otherness; to a certain "beyondness;" to a mystery that pervades our *figura* of things, including the construct of the self. Recalling Kearney's empathic imagination, I acknowledge that some dimension of otherness always transcends whatever narrative the imagination chooses; whatever image it constructs.[44]

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39   Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos* (New York: Bantom, 1984), 176.

40   My (playful) allusion, here, is to Deleuze's assertion that "In every respect, repetition is a form of transgression." See *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3.

41   Colman, "Symbolic Conceptions," 566.

42   Knafo and Feiner, *Unconscious Fantasies*, 4.

43   Ghent, "Credo," 199.

44   Kearney, *Wake*, 396.

Theological anthropology, having entered a constructive dialogue with postmodern theory, must demonstrate how human existence lodges in the space between creation and construction.[45] The task of theology is to interpret the world and the contemporary situation from a point of view that says there is more to life than arbitrary and social construction. *Something given* grounds any human construction, something that expresses itself as creation.[46]

By the emergence of the self, I acknowledge both the reality and ubiquity of human construction and honor an otherness that resides simultaneously *within* and *beyond* the confines of such construction. Even if we could finally deconstruct the self by stripping away the various discourses and discursive practices that have produced our identities, we would still encounter a certain givenness—traces of *creation*. When the various components of selfhood are gathered and assembled, the sense that there is *something more* persists.

This *something more* is the *Other*.

Even that which appears as an otherwise arbitrary human construction can, itself, be expressive of creation—of something given. The Other announces itself through the very confines of human construction. Theologically, the divine Other responds to our imaginings and constructions. God is even revealed in them and often embodies them.[47] Such is the Eucharistic presence of Christ in bread and wine, elements made by human labor.

The emergence of the self, then, evokes a sense of the self as, itself, an emergent phenomenon, something that cannot be predicted by or reduced to its constituent elements. Despite the differences in terminology, the following words of Jung come to mind. "Personality," he writes, "is the supreme realization of the innate idiosyncrasy of a living being. It is an act of high courage flung in the face of life, the absolute affirmation of all that constitutes the individual, the most successful adaptation to the universal conditions of existence coupled with the greatest possible freedom for self-determination."[48]

When we view the self as an emergent, we glimpse a structure that transcends the "given" (inherited) and the "made" (constructed), and our greatest possible freedom for self-determination becomes its own *poesis*. It is in the potential space between the symbol and the symbolized that a subjectivity, itself, comes to be.[49] And it is in the *chora* between the symbol and the symbolized that an imaginative and imagining self comes into being.

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45   Jan-Olav Henriksen, "Creation and Construction: On the Theological Appropriation of Postmodern Theory," *Modern Theology* 18, no. 2 (April 2002): 167.

46   Ibid., 157–58.

47   Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 12.

48   Carl G. Jung, *The Development of Personality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 171.

49   Thomas Ogden, *The Primitive Edge of Experience* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1989), 12.

Imagining Theory, Imagining Theology

In *Faith and the Play of Imagination*, theologian David Bryant attends to the complexities of the relationship between "creation" and "construction" and to the space between the symbol and the symbolized. Ultimately, he develops what I characterize as an inter-subjective theology of the imagination. "Before we begin in a conscious way to conceive the world imaginatively, he writes, "we are already rooted in an imaginative world of meaning through which the world is mediated to us. And what is thereby opened to us is pivotal for all our more conscious imaginative efforts. Hence, even our creative efforts are not altogether our own personal construction but arise out of the creative power of the tradition to which we belong."[50] He regards the imagination as something that is personal, but also transpersonal. "[To] the degree that conceptual frameworks uncover a world, and are not just the subjective creations of communities or individuals, the imagination is not merely a human power of construction or projection. It could . . . be defined in this case as a power of attunement that is finally located in neither subject nor subject matter but in the play between them."[51]

Embedded in Bryant's provocative prose are several interwoven threads of meaning that, taken together, undergird a non-reductive approach to what it means to imagine theology and imagine theory. What Bryant highlights here is our dependence on images. Such imaginal dependence paradoxically both precedes and promotes our imaginal capacity. Dependence links with our relationship to tradition, to that which is there, awaiting our discovery. So, while I might properly designate my imagination as mine, something which I possess and something out of which I create, it really is not simply my own.

Winnicott articulated a similar notion from a psychological point of view. Potential space, beyond infancy, becomes the area we link with culture. Winnicott claimed that with any cultural endeavor, originality necessarily makes use of tradition.[52] In any imaginative act, the line between what is "me," as in "my idea" and "not-me," or "another's idea" is blurry. As Winnicott put it, "the interplay between originality and the acceptance of tradition as the basis for inventiveness seems to me to be just one more example . . . of the interplay between separateness and union."[53] The interplay of the one and the many thus underlies our very capacity for imagining.

Related to this notion of a personal imagination being already rooted in tradition is the concept of mediation. Ideas and concepts lead to the uncovering of bigger worlds. Images are not ultimately self-referential. They lead us somewhere, beyond themselves, and toward a larger horizon of meaning. Otherness is bound

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50 David Bryant, *Faith and the Play of Imagination: On the Role of Imagination in Religion* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1987), 104.

51 Ibid.

52 Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 101.

53 Ibid.

up with images—an otherness that calls into question any attempt at subjective reductionism. This otherness also offers us ways of conceptualizing the empathic imagination—an imagination that admits that meaning does not emerge merely within the echo chambers of its own subjective experience. It originates just as much from its response to the Other's evocation.[54]

Imagination is not reality's opposite, but rather the organ with which we perceive the many and various frameworks of reality and illusion alike.[55] The truth the deep structure of imagination yields is not merely subjective, reducible to transient human fantasies and constructs. Not when we respond to the otherness that is both within us and and beyond us. Imagining empathically, our reach always exceeds our grasp, and we encounter the ineffable.

Deep Structure, the Unconscious, and God

How then do we accomplish an imaginative transcendence of the postmodern binary: *the given* (origins in [sacred] depth] versus *the made* (beginnings in [secular] surface)? In spite of the postmodern suspicion of both depth and structure, we have conceived of a kind of deep structure that can encompass both the given (creation) and the made (construction). Instead of a vacuous abyss, this *chora* depth is a generative space; a matrix for emergence and becoming; a place in which we may encounter something ineffable and ultimate, a numinous and sacred presence.

Kearney observes that, before the advent of the postmodern parodic circle—a kind of "open-ended play of signifiers" where images are no longer regarded as referring to some original, "real" (external) meaning—thinking about the imagination always included the notion of origination, that our images derive from some original presence.[56] In the paradigm of the *mimetic imagination*, dominant in the biblical, classical, and medieval eras, this original presence is understood as being located outside the human subject. By contrast, in the paradigm of the *productive imagination*, heralded by modern philosophies of idealism and existentialism, the location of creative origination was situated *within* the human subject.[57]

We have met with this original presence in terms of givenness, beyondness, and otherness. This otherness simultaneously resides both beyond and within, yet performs its transgressive work in the potential, in-between space. There it crisscrosses the boundaries between the unreal and the real, inner and outer, subject and object, me and not-me. But what is the relationship of this "original presence"—within, beyond, in-between—with the presence of the sacred? Michelan-

54 Kearney, *Wake*, 387.

55 Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper, 1989), 81.

56 Kearney, *Wake*, 253.

57 Ibid.

gelo's "The Creation of Adam" helps. This image portrays God and Adam reaching toward one another, their fingers almost touching, but not quite. The gap between creature and Creator, the space between them, is the focal point of the painting. It is this gap—this *space*—that suggests both an overlapping desire for contact and intimacy and the fact of difference, for unity and separateness.

This space is the space of imagination, the space of commerce between the human and divine realms. In *Imagining God*, Graham Green says that this space of commerce, this point of contact, permits us to admit the priority of God's grace in the divine-human re-encounter, while simultaneously allowing the dynamics of grace to be described as a religious phenomenon.[58] Such descriptive processes imply a reciprocity between divine disclosure and human experience, including that experience which transpires in the unconscious depths. *"One deep calls to another in the noise of your cataracts;"* the psalmist writes; *"all your rapids and floods have gone over me."*[59] The ineffable approaches us, draws near to us, as "transcendence in the midst."[60]

Deep structure, the unconscious, and God converge in this space of commerce between the human and the divine. But they also diverge there. The seventeenth-century mystic Angelus Silesius intimates the play of convergence and divergence: *The abyss that is my soul invokes unceasingly / The abyss that is my God. Which may the deeper be?*[61] The call of voices, deep to deep, is a "tehomic liturgy" marking the depth at which we imagine the self's bottoming-out. Catherine Keller describes Silesius' tehomic liturgy, as "an ambiguous, far-from-equilibrium self-similarity: the interfluency of 'my soul' and 'my God,' in their utter difference and mirror-play."[62]

Within the *chora* we hear an "abyssal echo" of refrain and response and encounter, there, the play of sameness and difference, of unity and multiplicity. "Khora is neither identical with God nor incompatible with God," Kearney suggest, "but marks an open site where the divine may dwell and heal."[63] Here

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58   Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper, 1989), 4.

59   Psalm 42:9.

60   Green, *Imagining God*, 8.

61   Angelus Silesius, *The Cherubinic Wanderer* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist, 1986), 42.

62   Keller, *Face*, 216.

63   Kearney, *Strangers*, 194. Kearney's distinct "take" on *chora* follows from his exploration and critique of the "exfoliation of metaphors" used to illuminate it (in philosophical, theological, psychoanalytic literature). He writes: "There appear to be three ways in which *khora* may be related to God: (1) as undecidable and neutral quasi-condition of both theism and atheism; (2) as the atheistic 'real' which is pre-originary and prior to theistic figuration; and (3) as proto-theistic quasi-condition of faith in messianic justice and a kingdom of democracy to come. The three readings might be summarized as *khora-open-to-God* (neither for not against); *khora-against-God* and *khora-for-God*." (See note 21, p. 283).

we observe the "abyssal movement" of convergence and divergence: of the *Deus absconditus,* the God hidden within and, yet, beyond the depths of the psyche. The *ruach* of the infinite breathes its deep sighs through the deep structure of those imaginative constructs we call theory and theology.

As we listen to its murmurings, we may hear that which addresses us from beyond.