

Nancy Swift Furlotti – ***Eternal Echoes: Erich Neumann's Timeless Relevance to Consciousness, Creativity, and Evil*** – Zurich Lecture Series in Analytical Psychology, ISAP Zurich, Volume 10. (Ashville, NC: Chiron Publications, 2023)

By Tom Elsner and Monika Wikman

In her recent book, *Eternal Echoes: Erich Neumann's Timeless Relevance to Consciousness, Creativity, and Evil* (2023), Jungian analyst Nancy Swift Furlotti has created a significant offering for all those eager to find – or re-find – an entry into Neumann's life and writings. Neumann was one of the genius members of Jung's circle, perhaps his greatest student, and one of the very few persons who Jung felt truly understood by. Neumann was also one of the very few who, in Jung's own estimation, extended Jung's work. His two most famous books, *The Origins and History of Consciousness* and *The Great Mother* are examples.

Neumann was born in Germany in 1905 and died in Tel Aviv in 1960. After his father was murdered in an interrogation by the Nazis, Neumann left Berlin in 1934 with his family to travel first to Switzerland and then onto Palestine. There he began an analysis with Jung at the age of 28. But it was not until the age of 31, Furlotti reports, that Neumann truly began his journey into the depths. Before the war, while in Palestine, Neumann, a secular Jew, began his work on *The Roots of Jewish Consciousness Vol. 1 Revelation and Apocalypse* and *Vol 2 Hasidism* as a way to find his own Jewish roots in his Jewish land. Struggling to understand the Nazi movement and the concept of evil, how this horror could have taken over the German psyche, he wrote his book, *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic*. This book was published in 1949 in German but much later in English. It proved challenging, even to Jungians, for multiple reasons; first, it argued that historical Judeo-Christian morals are no longer useful, second, the Jungian community felt threatened by this book because they believed that in writing it Neumann sought to eclipse Jung.

One unique dimension of Furlotti's work is that it includes amazing, never-before seen in print, color reproductions of nineteen of Neumann's original paintings. The striking imagery in these paintings reveal Neumann's spirit as an artist and Furlotti's commentary leads us towards an understanding of how Neumann's art plays a major role in his psychological and literary process. While Neumann, Furlotti says, never thought of himself as an artist (and was never accused of being one), he did consider his paintings to be living psychological creations, an expression in symbols of the inner world and thus a type of active imagination. His paintings are raw, filled with feeling. In them, Furlotti writes, "Neumann seemed to give free reign to his emotion." (7) In this respect Furlotti notes some interesting differences with Jung's paintings in the *Red Book*. First, Neumann paints in watercolor, not gouache as Jung did, which perhaps mirrors the emphasis on feeling in his work. Second, Jung has 3 paintings containing women in the *Red Book* while there are 30 paintings containing women in Neumann's collection and 14 paintings that contain snakes, while Jung has just 5. Furlotti suggests to us that Neumann's emphasis on feeling and the personal dimension of the psyche fills in a gap that one notices in Jung's archetypal/symbolic project.

While it might seem that Neumann's work is grounded in thinking and the intellect, she suggests that Neumann's books and articles are born from that same dimension of the living psyche that one finds in his paintings. Furlotti quotes Gerhard Adler, who was close to both men, in this respect. "Neumann built a bridge between the personalistic genetic view and the transpersonal archetypal aspects of the psyche ... his work did not spring from his intellect but from a deep and living contact with the unconscious sources of creativity." (pg. 155)

One of the most amazing and unique qualities of *Eternal Echoes*, apart from Furlotti's loving and critical examination of Neumann's life, is the way she tells the story of the relationship between Neumann and Jung, where they both did and did not agree, and how they held the complexity of the opposites constellated in their relationship. Furlotti brings the human and theoretical to light in this respect. As an example, in Chapter Two, "Analysis of the Jung-Neumann Correspondence," Furlotti notes that the two men had no correspondence from 1940-1945 but that after the war they renewed their relationship and wrote an amazing series of letters trying to get back to the ideas of analytical psychology—they were both overwhelmed by what had happened during the war. They have long discussions on Neumann's understanding of the new ethic of depth psychology. These actually had a huge impact on Jung's later book, *Answer to Job*. In reading Furlotti's analysis of this fascinating dialogue we discover the humanity of these two men, their limits and blind spots, as they wrestle with the meaning – as well as the cause – of the problem of evil. Furlotti's holding of the back and forth between these two visionaries and brilliant analysts with respect to a topic that confronts us continuously today, is extremely valuable. The problem of evil is a red thread woven throughout this book.

The relevance in their dialog for our current times is potent, for example:
"When evil breaks at any point into the order of things, our whole order of psychic protection is broken. *There is an Epidemic of insanity...* the irruption of the unconscious into what seemed to be tolerably well-ordered world." p. 76 (emphasis added)

Eternal Echoes then continues with an introduction to, and summary of, Neumann's most significant writings – *The Roots of Jewish Consciousness, Volumes One and Two, The Origins and History of Consciousness*, "Mass Man and the Phenomena of Recollectivization," "Narcissism," *The Great Mother, Amor and Psyche, The Nature and Source of Creativity: Creative Man, Art and the Creative Unconscious, The Place of Creation*, and "Mystical Man."

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Neumann's influences extend beyond the field of Jungian psychology. He has made his way into the arts, literature, and the academy in ways that elude even Jung's reach today. For example, in her 2006 essay, "Erich Neuman: Theorist of the Great Mother" (Arion 13:3 Winter 2006) the renowned literary critic and iconic bridge between academia and pop culture, Camille Pagila, wrote the following.¹

I would propose that Erich Neumann is the key for a future incorporation of Jung with academic feminism. But gender inquiry is only one aspect of Neumann's work. I regard him as an accomplished culture critic whose synthesis of art, history, and psychology offers a more promising direction for culture studies than the current approved academic models, which are mainly derived from British or German Marxism (such as the Frankfurt School). Authentic cultural criticism requires saturation in scholarship as well as a power of sympathetic imagination. Neumann's manipulation of material is improvisational rather than schematic, though he does draft illustrative psychic graphs that will inevitably seem quirky or bogus to the non-Jungian. But there is neither moralism nor a political agenda operating in his work (10-11).

In other words, in Paglia's opinion, if Neumann, along with Eliade and Jung, were front and center in the academy today, as opposed to the Marxist and deconstructionist models offered by Derrida and Foucault, the academic world would be better off. The academy would be saturated in "a power of sympathetic imagination" instead of its drowning in moralism and political ideology.

For Paglia, Neumann's scholarship is itself a form of art.

Neumann's scholarship is an art form partly because it emanates from his deep knowledge of and intimacy with the arts. He is the supreme exemplar of the Jungian flair for the visual image. (12)

Neumann's "superb essay," "Art and Time," Paglia continues, especially displays his scope and quality of mind. Paglia picks out the following passage from this essay as an example.

How can the individual, how can our culture, integrate Christianity and antiquity, China and India, the primitive and the modern, the prophet and the atomic physicist, into one humanity? Yet that is just what the individual and our culture must do. Though wars rage and peoples exterminate one another in our atavistic world, the reality living within us tends, whether we know it or not, whether we wish to admit it or not, toward a universal humanism.

¹ Camille Paglia (b. 1947) is an American academic, social critic, and **feminist**. Paglia was a professor at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia from 1984 until the university's closure in 2024. Educated at Yale, her influences include Harold Bloom, Sigmund Freud, Marshall McLuhan, James George Frazer, and Jane Ellen Harrison.

“This is,” Paglia concludes, “a stirring manifesto for a new, comprehensive scholarship, a marriage of art and science as well as an enlightened multiculturalism.”(14)

We both come away from reading Furlotti’s well-researched, clear, and lovingly presented book with a hope that Neumann’s vision, building on Jung’s, will not be lost to history but extend its reach into contemporary consciousness as well as the field of psychology and the academy. By introducing all of us readers to Erich Neumann, or reintroducing us, *Eternal Echoes* makes a significant contribution to those who value not only the survival but the continuing evolution of Western civilization.

Furlotti illuminates Neumann’s vision that challenges humanity, to become conscious of the underlying fear of the feminine, of the unconscious, that creates in fact madness. “Neumann looking at stages of development in collective consciousness, tracks that with matricide, the masculine attitude of turning away from the unconscious (the place of all peril, the seat of instincts, affects and transpersonal powers) the old patriarchal reality takes over with its old moral code. Psyche of a person and/or a culture then will organize around “the split personality determined by the ego ideal and the super-ego.”
Eternal Echoes by Nancy Furlotti
p. 95.

A culture organizing around the split personality run by ego ideals and the super ego? This is a current collective reality, along with being a problem at the individual level.

To highlight this theme in Furlotti’s book, we turn briefly to the words of Jung and Nathan Schwartz Salant:

Jung’s remark that “the world hangs on a thin thread, and that thread is the psyche of man” should be a compulsory meditation, like musing on the mystery of a Zen koan, for all of us—especially the titans of industry and government, and the entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley. Nathan Schwartz Salant, *The Order-Disorder Paradox*, p. 64.

Eternal Echoes is full of gems that assist the reader with this “compulsory meditation” about the thin thread upon which the world hangs, as the psyche of man. So before closing this review, speaking of the potential for the evolution of Western civilization, and the thin thread upon which things hang, and gems in Furlotti’s book that compel meditation...there is one last central gem that we ‘d like to highlight.

There is a key vision Neumann had which Furlotti shares that is deeply provocative, illuminating the nature of the seed inherent in the evolution of consciousness. Although it is Neumann’s vision, it also resounds with collective relevance, illuminating the challenge for humanity in relationship with the depths of the psyche and its initiating forces in our times. Here is the vision:

I seemed to be commissioned to kill the apeman in the profound primal hole. As I approached him, he was hanging, by night, sleeping on the cross above the abyss,

but his—crooked—single eye was staring into the depths of this abyss. While it at first seemed that I was supposed to blind him, I all of a sudden grasped his ‘innocence,’ his dependence on the single eye of the godhead, which was experiencing the depths through him, which was a human eye. Then, very abridged, I sank down opposite this single eye, jumped into the abyss, but was caught by the Godhead, which carried me on the ‘wings of his heart.’ After that, this single eye opposite the apeman closed and it opened on my forehead. (Bit difficult to write this, but what should one do). (2015, p. 331)

Furlotti goes on to say, “In his vision, he jumped into the abyss, rather than falling. He was held by something greater in all his actions, both good and bad.” Musing on this with Furlotti, we see that Neumann in the vision is held by the something greater, and the something greater is developing itself. The leap into the void appears to stimulate the field, with that ‘not knowing, total surrender.’ *Presence* appears, Godhead’s winged heart activates and makes its presence known and catches and carries Neumann along. A new transmutation is happening.

This is such a lively archetypal example of the transcendent function at work. The leap into the unknown, the activation of the field in the dark, the winged heart of the Divine rising up to meet and to carry along the human being, and third eye vision awakening. To see from the third eye is to see beyond duality, to be in direct communication and co-creation with a greater plane of existence that links the spiritual and physical.

Neumann’s vision saw how dependent our species is on this development of relationship with the living imagination. Neumann encounters the primal innocent beginning in nature at the bottom of humanity, whose animal eye is a centrally important part of the alchemy of transmutations and transformation of consciousness all levels.

For to see from third eye consciousness one becomes open to experience the realms of the subtle bodies, where the union of psyche and matter reveals itself, and compassion for all sentient beings reigns. Here we develop the subtle body states of consciousness that create healing, vision and well-being; and it is the development of these states that sees us through, (like amniotic fluid nourishing, informing and upholding us), through our own death. Teachings from ancient spiritual traditions around the world are devoted to the awakening of consciousness in each chakra. The mystical traditions behind each world religion have had access to these states of being. (Sufism, Kabbalistic traditions, Christian mystics.) And we have the teaching from Jesus, “when thine eye is made single, thy body is full of light.” The evolution of consciousness includes the third eye and crown chakras awakening for human being... It is the awakening burgeoning from the depths.

Furlotti brings alive Neumann’s sense of the need for this vision at the collective level:

Only if a single eye of humanity could be formed from the immense number of human individualities, in their endlessly varied capacity for experience, might that unified eye alone recognize the hidden light of the world diamond. Only such a unified humanity would be the partner for a self-revealing world. (Neumann, 2019b, p.16)

We can imagine Neumann aching through the years of horror of Nazi Germany for the way for humanity through the madness. Furlotti goes on to say, “It is interesting that Neumann, in this quote, referred to the single eye of humanity, similar to the single eye of God that opened in his forehead in his vision of the ape-man. He is processing this material deeply. This description leads to the concept of the “actualizing of messianism” (Neumann, 2019b, p. 18) which refers to the turning away from the future to the present, from the outside to the inside where messianism is a stage in the individual’s development—to realize one’s Elijah soul. Everything relies on human choice. The key here is that everyone, collective humanity, must reach this stage, not just a few.”

Furlotti’s work leaves us so much to meditate upon; this was only one vision and Furlotti’s work with it that we brought forward from the many meditative gems to help give you a sense of the visionary depths Furlotti is tracking in Neumann’s life and work.

Drawn to his work and teaching from it for decades, along with republishing his work in various forms, Furlotti’s labor of love is clear. In Eternal Echoes Furlotti coalesces these decades of deep study and brings forth the life, the paintings and the work of Neumann and his relationship with Jung with her grappling questions and reflections, which are so pertinent to our times. We may, as readers and ponderers of Furlotti’s offering in Eternal Echoes, become in some way more enlivened ‘partners for the self-revealing world,’ as Neumann said it, in these times of great chaos and disorder.