

Demon Possession: Symbolic Language and the Psychic Fact

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The concept of demon possession fell out of scientific favor with the rise of modern and post-modern philosophies. These ways of thinking, however, have failed to adequately describe the phenomena of demonic possession. They have likewise been unsuccessful in developing an appropriate treatment method for those experiencing the signs and symptoms of classical possession. Though belief in possession has been rejected as superstition, the phenomenon of demonic possession is a psychic fact and necessarily should be approached as such. Re-appropriating a pre-modern philosophy and using an understanding of symbolic language, this article offers a renewed method of understanding the possession state.

Keywords: possession, psychic reality, demonic

Mark Crooks' paper is a study defending the traditional use of a demonological paradigm for understanding the phenomena of demonic possession. He suggests that demonic possession should once again be viewed as a valid phenomenon and commences his argument by pointing out that denial — by merely changing our philosophical paradigm — does not negate the reality of an event. Rather, he contends that when comparing the explanations of the modern interpretations versus the traditional paradigm of demonology that the traditional is more credible than the recently adopted models of the naturalistic sciences.

Using what he calls a “post-anecdotal” method Crooks proceeds to show that the ancient system of demonology is not only just as adequate as the modern medical model but is even more efficient in describing the phenomena of possession states. His approach is similar to the oft-used Jungian method of observing the psyche through the lens of myth and fairytale. This “post-anecdotal” method is analogous to the establishing of mythological contents of the psyche as “psychic facts.” The use of demonology to describe psychic facts is similar to Jung's utilizing alchemical symbolism to do the same.

Psychic facts are just that: reality as it is encountered within the psyche. A psychic fact carries as much weight in the life of the individual as does the supposed “fact” of the external world; it is as influential to the behavior and personality as is an external, environmental factor. It may actually carry more weight and have more substance because, as the mediator of perceptions, the psychic is all that is “real.” We must not lose sight of the old Latin proverb: “That which is received is received in the manner of the receiver,” meaning that even what we think of as external reality is filtered always through the psyche. Whether that reality is experienced as a mythological symbol or put into modern terms such as sensory gateways or confirmation bias, it is always within the psyche that a perception is processed, and an interpretation provided. To make what originated from within the psyche of less reality than what the psyche receives from the physical environment is merely a modern and post-modern — i.e., materialistic — bias. Such a bias is a new hypothesis to be tested, not a definition of truth. While speaking of the need to accept psychic facts, Jung (1959, para. 44) once stated, “To psychologize this reality out of existence either is ineffectual, or else merely increases the inflation of the ego. One cannot dispose of facts by declaring them unreal.” Of course, one must first realize that there is such thing as the psyche, which is often difficult to establish in the minds of many post-modern thinkers who psychologize and continue to de-mythologize the psyche out of existence. Crooks’ “Occam’s razor” argument that demonology is the simplest and best explanation of the phenomena associated with demon possession goes beyond this subject to add more credence to reestablishing the traditional, pre-modern, view of reality in general.

One difficulty with Crooks’ paper is his attempt to work within the confines of an acceptable academic argument. Today such arguments demand a premise founded in post-modern thinking. Crooks’ effort to work within this framework is admirable; however, it is virtually impossible. The narrow and often irrational nature of the post-modern framework has no room for what Peter Kreeft refers to as the *moreness* of existence.

Kreeft (2018) has outlined three philosophies that have guided much of our thinking over the past two thousand years: these are traditionalism (or pre-modernism), modernism (or rationalism), and postmodernism (or what he calls irrationalism). In more descriptive language he calls these the philosophies of *moreness*, *sameness*, and *lessness*. In relation to our understanding of life, *moreness* could also be called mysticism; that is, there is more to the world than is seen, or as he quotes Shakespeare “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” *Sameness* is a rationalism (modernism) that conceives that all things are identical, or the same, to what we think they are. “[A]s Hegel put it, ‘that which is real is rational and that which is rational is real.’ In other words, he says, we are know-it-alls: what is inside our mind and what is outside match pretty perfectly. To believe that, you have to be either a genius,

or very arrogant, or both (like Hegel)” [Kreeft, 2018, p. 9]. This is where much of the twentieth century was stuck. Finally, there is the philosophy of *lessness*, or reductionism, which dominates much thinking at this moment. You can observe it in medicine and psychology where all behaviors and experiences are presently reduced to neurological functioning and brain structures. Obviously, these three philosophies diverge on how one understands the universe surrounding them.

Traditionalism had almost completely fallen out of vogue by the middle of the nineteenth century, and modernism and post-modernism have dominated intellectual thought since then. Biblical and theological studies had been significantly infected by them, leading to the mid-twentieth century’s move to demythologize the Bible. Such a move spelled doom for any objective conceptualizing of angels, demons, and a spiritual reality, they being relegated to the junk heap of history or completely psychologized. All that was left was a moral and ethical religion that needed to reach out to perceived societal needs, since these were the true rational realities that touched us.

Since then, such stories as Jesus contending with the Devil in the wilderness have been interpreted as merely him confronting social problems and personal interior psychological complexes, the Devil being reduced to a concept merely signifying such evils. The confrontation of Jesus with the Gerasene demoniac in the modern and post-modern views is merely illustrative of either dealing with a severe psychopathology or as a coded story speaking about some form of societal abuse and rejection of the Gospel message for economic reasons. The idea that Jesus was confronting a real Devil and a real demon-possessed man was discarded as superstitious to the rational and reductionist mind of the modern reader. The Lord’s Prayer, which in the Greek contains a statement more appropriately translated “deliver us from the Evil One,” is most often translated with the impersonal “deliver us from evil.” However, the current reading of these stories and the Lord’s Prayer has done little to help us to understand the evils of genocides and degrading abuse; of terrorists, or of people possessed. Evil has not been better understood by our modern outlook; in our intentional arrogance and ignorance it has exponentially multiplied.

Kreeft has called for us to return to the pre-modern, traditionalist philosophy of life in hope that we might once again truly embrace reality and faith, and understand what it means to deal with existential, objective evil both in society and within the individual. I would say it is not so much that we return to the past understanding as that we begin to embrace the earlier philosophy in a new, grander, more conscious, and more mature fashion. This is a return to the wisdom of the Zen master who was once asked about his understanding of life after attaining enlightenment. He looked up and answered, “When I was young, the mountains were the mountains, the rivers were the rivers, and the sky was the sky. Then as I grew, the mountains were no longer the mountains, the rivers no

longer the rivers, and the sky no longer the sky. Now that I am older the mountains are the mountains, the rivers the rivers, and the sky the sky." He had made his own progression from materialistic traditionalism through philosophies of *sameness* and *lessness* to a mature reengagement with a reality of *moreness*. It was the same reality he once knew, engaged in a new manner.

To adequately work toward the healing of persons dealing with the demonic, it is desirable that we embrace reality as did this wise man. To do this we take our traditional understanding of the cosmos and of the human being and look at them with new eyes, seeing through a renewed mythology into these original events. My contribution will be to supplement Crooks' efforts, taking up the pre-modern mythological understanding as often used in Jungian circles, applying an updated mythology that may again describe the psyche in such a manner that possession by demons is no longer odd but reasonable.

The pre-modern philosophies were in near-complete agreement that the cosmos was comprised of three layers. These were the underworld, the middle world of earth, and the upper world of heaven. This is similarly reflected in the book of Genesis when we read that God created the heavens and the earth and then divided the waters of the heaven above from those beneath by means of a firmament called the sky. We had the three layers of waters beneath, waters above, and a dry earth in-between. Then, with the discoveries of Kepler and Galileo this cosmology began to erode. With present-day astronomical equipment and the advent of space travel the idea that we are in some sort of terrarium with holes poked in the roof to allow the light of heaven above to shine through (stars) and the waters above to drop (rain) is completely discredited in the minds of every modern person. So, the contemporary ear is attuned to the modern and post-modern philosophies.

Interestingly though, a desire for the traditional understanding intuitively remains. This is possibly due to the fact that the ancient mythology (as with all enduring mythologies) was speaking of a truth that was to be comprehended symbolically rather than literally. So, the rejection of a concrete understanding of Genesis is merely the rejection of a materialistic error and need not be the rejection of the traditional cosmology when taken symbolically or mythologically. Materialism, and modernism, believe that if something cannot be measured then that something has no reality. Story, as experienced through mythology, is the manner of gauging the reality of that which is beyond what can be measured physically. It is the language of *moreness*.

For us to once again grasp the reality of the actual Devil, objective demons, real angels, and a cosmos that contains them we need to look at the old story and see how we can incorporate them into a now more matured understanding; to look at the old mythology with a renewed vision. The story of Genesis goes something like this. In the beginning God is in his heaven of heavens, the abode of his unchangeable essence. From there he speaks issuing forth his manifest energies

and created the heavens and the earth; however, the earth is still waiting in potential, for it is void and without form. Later, the earth will arise within the midst of the waters of a lower heaven, but first God divides the waters of the upper heavens from that of the lower by placing an extended solid surface between them, which is translated in the King James version of the Bible as a firmament. Then God speaks and withdraws the lower waters creating dry ground: the earth. At this point there is no mention of an underworld, but this will later be associated with the waters under the earth. So, we have a conceptualization of creation which is in accord with the mythologies of the world. There is an upper world of numerous heavens, an underworld, and in between we find the earth. And, above it all is the heaven of heavens where is to be found (if such a term may be used with the unknowable infinite) the essence of God.

As is now obvious, this conceptualization would erode with the examination of the skies by astronomers and the final death knell would come with the experiences of astronauts traveling beyond the atmosphere. With these testimonies, no reasonable person could believe that the sky above us is a solid sheet, implying that we live in some sort of terrestrial terrarium. The outer atmosphere is porous and actually thins rather than thickens at its outermost edge. Even if we transfer the reading of the firmament to the outer edges of the universe, this too is unacceptable to our calculations and to our sense of rational belief. The simple explanation has then been that we have proven that heaven does not exist. However, this has been equally as materialistic an error as believing that the sky is literally solid, since we rely on a materialistic philosophy to “prove” either point.

However, if we take this mythology as we should, seeing it as describing a reality that is beyond the boundaries of rational analysis, we can then place it in a renewed context. Rather than conceive of heaven, earth, and hell as geographical locations, today it is more appropriate to see them as states of being; even as dimensions. This is how St. John Paul, echoing many before him in both the Eastern and Western Church, posited it. In this case the situation would appear as such.

God in his essence sends forth his energy and forms creation. Creation consists of both heaven and earth, though initially only heaven is fully manifested. What actually is the substance of heaven is not described, so, if you wish, you may imagine a vast dimension of heavenly energy. Then, in the midst of this grand dimension, a separation occurs so that within the compass of the grand heavenly another heavenly dimension is delineated. Later we will find that populating these heavenly dimensions are the angels of various species.

Next, within the midst of the second, inner heavenly dimension another dimension forms which is known as earth: the dry land. Creation appears to take on the appearance of the ancient celestial maps; however, rather than concrete spheres ruled by the planets within each sphere, here we have dimensions of reality — states of being — each governed by its own natural laws with the laws of the grander subsuming and transcending those of the lesser, since the lesser was

formed within the grander. The innermost dimension, known Biblically as earth, is our familiar physical universe where $e = mc^2$ is a basic principle. Here is the state of being now being described by string theory, quantum mechanics, and the possible ten-dimensional universe. Overlapping this physical universe is that of an inner heaven. This is the realm of psyche with its own laws and functioning. Whereas space–time dominates the physical realm of earth, or physis, it is often apparent that space does not work the same in the dimension of psyche and so therefore neither does time as we know it. Overlapping the dimensions of physis and psyche is another which traditionally has been referred to as the dimension of spirit, the outer heaven or heavens. And finally, overlapping these, but beyond all, is the Heaven of heavens.

This conception is not novel, it is presaged in other pre-modern understandings; however it does not rely on a materialistic or a geographic concept which defy today's reasonable understanding of the physical universe. The Celts and many others held similar dimensional understandings as they conceived of thin places — liminal spaces — that separated one state of being from the other.

After the creation of this cosmos we read in Genesis about the creation of the beings that populated the material aspect. In the first chapters of Genesis there is no mention of angels, however these species of the heavens are assumed to have been created prior to the formation of the earth, or the material dimension of being. This is posited in early Hebrew thought, articulated clearly in the Book of Enoch, and later expanded upon during the period of intertestamental apocalyptic literature. The early Christians of the apostolic and post-apostolic ages knew and incorporated this literature and gave us our conception of angels. As they would articulate, just as there are creatures of earth over which Adam was given authority (an aspect of his naming them) — these creatures are various in number and function — so we are led to believe that the creatures of the heavenly dimension are various. St. John Damascene and Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite are best known for taking the literature and belief in angels and categorizing them according to species and function. Here we are exploring and utilizing the story of Genesis and Judeo–Christian scriptures. If time allowed we could compare these stories with the Bardo worlds of Tibetan Buddhism and the conceptual landscapes of shamanism. For now we will focus on Hebraic conceptualization.

The implications of this are many. First, since the psychic dimension formed within the midst of the first heavenly condition — the abode of the angels — this psychic dimension would be easily influenced by the angels. Further, since the material dimension formed in the midst of the immaterial or psychic realm, the angels and demons are then able to manipulate and effect the material condition. This is important, for it informs our understanding of how demons may affect our thoughts as well as act upon the environment of a place with infestations. It speaks to how the incredible, and seemingly unbelievable, events such as the manifestation and disappearance of material items may occur during exorcisms; as well as

how demons may influence and even possess humans. With this understanding as a foundation we can begin to examine how possessions occur within the psyche.

A common misconception presented in many descriptions and teachings is that the person is comprised of a body within which is found a soul and deep within at the center is the human spirit. Graphically this is illustrated by a bullseye or target. One can draw an outer circle designating the body. Within the first circle, a second is drawn designating the soul, and within that (the bullseye) is a circle of the human spirit. The problem is that, even though this may be a provocative illustration, it is fundamentally wrong in its comprehension of the human being. It is an anthropology of the human being turned upside down.

Dante illustrated our convoluted perceptions best in his description of the Devil and of Hell. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante and his guide Virgil descend through the rings of Hell starting in a Dark Wood until finally, at the very bottom, they encounter Dis — the Devil — trapped from waist upward in a frozen lake. It is then that Virgil demands that they do a very odd thing. He grabs hold of the hairs on the body of Dis and proceeds to climb headfirst further down the torso. Using Dis' hips and legs as a ladder they descend only to find in a disconcerting manner that now they are ascending up the legs of Lucifer. There above them is Purgatory and Paradise. It is only then that Dante realizes that when he thought he was descending the rings of Hell he was actually ascending. What all thought was down, was up, and up, down. Satan had been cast out of Paradise and, in a spiritual swan dive, was trapped head down in the frozen lake of Hell. We need to join Dante and reverse our common perceptions and turn our thinking right side up.

The more appropriate manner by which to view the human being is as a spirit which has a soul and body; the spirit in this sense being the sum total substance of the person transcendent of the function of either of the parts. Here spirit has the meaning of essence or substance. What we are substantially is comprised of soul and body: we are spirit. In modern language we might refer to it differently and refer to the human spirit as the true self.

To understand a map of the psyche, imagine it in this way: it is as if our souls (the invisible part of ourselves) are a gigantic ocean. Within that ocean swims a tiny little fish, one that we have named the ego, our conscious identity. Within this fish (the ego) is a brain, and here resides rationality and will, which we moderns call our mind. So, you already begin to see that the rational mind that we value so highly is actually a very small — even though vital — aspect of this ocean of the true self.

The fish and its brain are quite important, but certainly not as grand as the ocean. However, this fish — the ego — likes to conceive of the ocean as *its* ocean. It likes to believe that the waters around it are all relative to it, possibly even created by it. To a large degree, this is how Freud saw things, and how most people still view the inner world. Humility demands otherwise. Humility compels the

fish to realize that the ocean is not a part of it, but that it is a part of the ocean; that the ego is a part of the soul, the soul is not a product of the ego. In other words, we do not have an unconscious, an unconscious has us. With this realization the fish (the ego) takes the inner life (the remainder of the ocean) seriously as the grander, more real aspect of life. This image will assist us in further understanding both psychopathology and demonic possession.

Within this ocean of the true self there is also a multitude of other “fish,” other personalities or complexes. These are the other voices we hear in our head; the conflicting parts of the fullness of our self. The ego is a very important fish in this picture, because, even though it is not the center of the true self, it is the center of consciousness. The ego is like a flashlight in a dark room.

If we look at all of this in another manner, we can imagine that for a number of reasons our ocean has become rather dark and obscure. As a matter of practical experience, the ocean is essentially unseen, and so we call it the unconscious. Because it is unobserved, and the ego is at least partially experienced, identity is associated with the ego and from that vantage point we talk about “our” unconscious, as if it in some manner belongs to the ego. A great deal of today’s psychological theory is based upon this limited and limiting thought: that the ego is central and the unconscious in some manner either belongs to it or is an artifact of it. This is essentially saying that the ocean belongs to the fish, rather than the little fish is merely a creature of the ocean.

God created this metaphorical ocean with fish in it. Our problem has been that the true self, this image of God that was supposed to be lit up to fullness, became darkness leaving only a speck of light shining: the ego. That speck of light, unaware of the vastness of the life of the soul around it, has taken the flashlight of awareness and turned it to shine only on itself. It is like a person in a dark room who has forgotten to explore the room only to turn the light on his own face, satisfied that illuminating himself is quite good enough. Is it then any wonder that we are so self-centered? So the ego is to take its flashlight of consciousness and shine it into the ocean of the soul. As it does so, the inner life is painted with the light of consciousness until the soul is illuminated with light. With these metaphors in mind let us now turn to understand the dynamics of psychopathology and of demonic possession.

Viewing ourselves as a whole populated by various internal personalities and an ego (or identity personality) we can conceptualize the general characteristics of the neuroses and the psychoses. Neurotic disorders¹ — such as obsessive-compulsive disorders, mood disorders, and the like — can be seen as the result of the

¹ Even though the categorization of neurotic disorders has been removed from the recent Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals, I do not believe that their explanatory value has been diminished as a generalized description of those dysfunctional ego states that are differentiated from conditions in the psychotic range of functioning.

ego building a seemingly firm wall around itself. This is the experience of the average person.

Most of us do not recognize the inner personalities as even existing. We do not remember our dreams where these personalities are most often met. We think the internal conflicts we experience when we have an inner argument are the result of a confused, possibly indecisive, state of mind rather than the result of a disagreement amongst the deeper, independent, parts of the self. However, these confusions are often the result of one part — one or more fish in the ocean of the self — demanding that its desires be met by an otherwise rejecting ego. For the most part the ego is able to fend off the energy of these inner parts, an action we often refer to as denial and repression, and at best suppression. However, some of the energy does get through from stronger inner parts and overwhelms the ego with its energy and its desires. So, it is that St. Paul will say, “that which I would do I do not, and that which I would not do I do” (Romans 7:19).

For example, one of these inner personalities may be focused on sexual behavior and desires. We might call it Eros. When this inner personality is in concert with others such as caring and affiliation and with the virtues acquired by the ego, then this inner personality of Eros will be manifest in marriage as wholesome sexual (erotic) love. When this inner personality is shoved into the unconscious by denial or repression, it can arise and unconsciously assault the ego with all of the feelings and thoughts associated with lust. It may then be seen and experienced as a sexual compulsion or even deviancy.

Another inner personality may be concerned with power. The power to live free as oneself is a God-given gift, and so it is inherent in each psyche. When this power is rightly recognized and lived in concert with caring and love as well as with the ego-acquired virtues of justice and humility, this personality is seen as righteous. We would view that Mother Teresa standing before the Nobel Prize committee and advocating respect for the unborn as a righteous and humble use of power. But if that same desire to manifest power is denied or repressed then it may come out as an unconsciously originated neurosis of a domineering attitude with controlling behaviors and may play a part in the constitution of a narcissistic personality. Keep these interactions amongst the inner personalities and the ego in mind for they will play a significant part in understanding the dynamics of how demons can control the body in the case of a full possession.

Where the ego built a wall of denial and repression in the case of the neuroses, it is just the opposite in the case of the psychoses. In this situation, the ego's attempt at building the wall was faulty and because of this the inner personalities are free-wheeling in their dealings with the ego. The ego is unable to distinguish between forces that are within the vastness of the soul and forces that are completely outside. The individual then has trouble telling the difference between the voice of an inner personality and one that comes from the outer environment;

the person hears voices. The psychotic has difficulty distinguishing between the images of the imagination and those in the outer world and may experience hallucinations and delusions. If neurological issues are also involved the situation becomes even more confusing and complicated.

Using an oversimplification for the purpose of illustration: if the sexual inner personality, or Eros, begins to speak to the ego of the psychotic, the afflicted individual may not be able to distinguish between an inner desire and an outer situation. In that case he may project that inner voice on to another person and then believe that the sexual energy that is actually within his own psyche is coming from another person. We might then have a man (this also could be a woman) who is stalking a famous woman with the sincere belief that she is in love with him. This is a paranoid fantasy — a projection — but the psychotic will experience it as exceptionally real, for the voice and feelings are real. The psychotic is hearing *something*; it is the attributed origin of that *something* that is false.

Most neuroses are not mistaken as having a demonic component, but many psychoses are. Since the individual actually believes that he or she is hearing true outer voices, truly seeing things, and is experiencing things in his or her body that do not have an organic origin, these can easily be mistaken as the activity of demons. The way to distinguish these mental illnesses from demonic activity will be by viewing the whole spectrum of symptoms exhibited. What we have found is that demonic possession is a unique syndrome comprised of signs and symptoms that are different from the signs and symptoms that constitute any of the psychotic syndromes (Isaacs, 2009, 2018).

Even as we distinguish demonic possession from mere demonic activity we recognize that the influence of the demonic in an individual's life is, unfortunately, a given. The story goes, that in much the same way there is an angelic presence in each life, there is also an accompanying demonic element. This assumption is the underlying foundation of C.S. Lewis' wonderful book, *The Screwtape Letters*. How the demonic interacts with our psyches and our physical bodies determines whether we would classify the influence as temptation, obsession (or oppression), or full possession. Using our understanding of the psyche that we employed to comprehend psychopathology we can see the manner by which demons may gain influence.

Demons rarely interact directly with the ego. To do so would be to bring themselves into awareness which is fraught with the possibility of resistance by the individual. It is much more effective to work through a person's unconscious complexes or inner personalities. Being unconscious, the ego is unaware that it is under the influence of a complex that is energized by the demonic.

A demon does not literally, or concretely, enter a psyche but rather influences it from without. It is much more like having a bad friend. The demon will attempt to influence the unconscious aspect of the psyche and energize it to sway the ego and so control the body. If the person is often inhibited and controlled by his or her

fears, then the demon may figuratively “speak” to a fearful inner personality (or complex) which the ego will then experience as potentially debilitating anxiety. If that person is given to lust, then the demon may energize that sexual part of the soul which then would raise sexual images to mind and promote sexual feelings. It is the soul that is producing the images and the feelings, prompted by the demon but not directly produced by the demon. There is a necessary interaction between the demon and the inner aspects of the soul, without which the demon has no power. It is for this reason that there can be no deliverance without inner healing and often inner healing is inhibited without deliverance. It is why consciousness and self-examination are effective tools in dealing with these situations. Likewise, if the ego is fortified by virtues then there are fewer doorways by which demonic influence can control behavior.

Again, we imagine the demon to be like a bad friend. Using lust as an illustration: if that bad friend offers a lustful thought, but you have developed the virtues of fortitude and love, then the thought is barely experienced; if at all. If the bad friend offers the thought and energizes a split-off, sexualized part of the soul, then the ego may experience it as a temptation. If that temptation is strengthened by the ego having acted on it before, then the offer may be experienced more as an obsession or oppression. The psychic complex may be energized, but not to such a degree that the demonic suggestion is yet strong enough to compel action. However, it is strong enough to begin to erode a weakened will within the ego. If given into action enough times, the demon’s influence on that part of the psyche may grow to such a degree that, between the demon’s energy and the inner personality’s energy, the ego is overwhelmed and a full-fledged possession is experienced.

Healing therefore is accomplished in a dual manner. First, the demon’s access to the patient’s soul needs to be cut off; much as we may ask an addict that is attempting sobriety to avoid their old crowd of drug and alcohol using friends. This severing of the relationship is what is accomplished in exorcism. The second manner is then within the soul, dealing with the inner aspect that the demon is accessing and addressing. This is accomplished through deep spiritual direction and psychotherapy.

Mark Crooks’ paper was presented to address the issue as to whether demonic possession is best described by modern naturalistic sciences or by traditional demonology. What he presented was a defense of the use of tradition in understanding that possession does exist. The problem is not whether possession is real or not but is an issue of perspective. The doubt about the demonic is that demons are rarely seen and the possession phenomena appears produced by the afflicted person. Even for the person who accepts a view that demons may exist, the question remains: How are we ever to truly know that what was observed and experienced was demonic and not merely psychic? Is the experience, the loss of volition, the odd perception being influenced by a demon from without, or were these stimulated from an inner source? This is the problem tied up with

the old Latin saying referenced earlier, “That which is received is received in the manner of the receiver.” Since all experiences are processed through the psyche, and are therefore a part of the psyche, the differentiation of the source of the image, thought, feeling, or other experience is made difficult because they all have a common recipient and route by which to travel into consciousness: the psyche.

Our conscious interpretation of experiences is like a television. You may receive many channels, many inputs, but all are filtered through the same processor and projected on the same screen. All you really know is that something is on the screen. The source (the channel) is only recognized when it is displayed. Therefore, a psychiatrist that says what she is seeing is psychic is just as correct as the person who says that it may also be demonic. It is merely that the psychiatrist is not looking beyond the psyche to discern another influence at work; primarily because that psychiatrist likely does not believe in the existence of a spiritual world and so halts the search for a cause at the psychic and organic levels neglecting what may be beyond. Hopefully, as scientific knowledge expands and as we listen to Peter Kreeft’s call to return to a more reasonable philosophy of *moreness*, then the spiritual and the psychological explanations will no longer be in conflict, but will be viewed as two aspects of one unified reality.

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