

Field Theory, Intercorporeality, and the Sámi Underworld

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Abstract: Field theory as a concept entered scientific discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. Yet the essential features of a field long predate discoveries about the physical properties and behavior of matter. The paper briefly describes ancient esoteric precursors to scientific field theory, including the Hermetic tradition and archetypal astrology, before turning to twentieth-century sociological field theories and their elemental idea of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Jungian psychology *is* a field theory, expanding the limits of sociology in important ways. The paper adopts a somatic archetypal perspective to argue that intersubjectivity, the basis of sociological and psychological field theories, is inadequate. Instead, depth psychologists should embrace *intercorporeality*, the more embodied, holistic field theory originating in the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. The paper concludes with a discussion of nekyia to illustrate how an intercorporeal field theory can include the underworld in world mythologies. The inverted cosmic geography of one tradition, the Sámi, gives new meaning to numinous encounters with one's ancestors and spirit guides. Such encounters intertwine the subtle energy bodies of the personal and transpersonal worlds, a meeting one can imagine as soul to sole, not just soul to soul.

Keywords: scientific field theory, Hermeticism, astrology, archetype, Jung, Lewin, intersubjectivity, intercorporeality, somatics, nekyia, Sámi, transpersonal.

Every so often, given time and quiet and darkness, the mind's native poetry commences. Jung (1956/1967) referred to this poetry as associative thinking and contrasted it with directed thinking. Directed thinking is linear and logical, aimed by the rational ego towards a specific end. To describe directed thinking, Jung used the metaphor of train travel and since he lived and worked in Zurich, it is easy to see why. Swiss trains run precisely on time, which suggests two other attributes of directed thinking: efficiency and economy. In contrast, the mind's poetic associative thinking is altogether nonlinear, unpredictable, and undirected. Or, rather, it is not directed by the ego. Jung intimated that associative thinking is directed by the psyche (if *direct* is the appropriate verb at all), and the psyche is an inexhaustible supply of images arising from the collective unconscious. Considering the

lively, peripatetic, and autonomous nature of images, perhaps the psyche is not so much a director as a choreographer.

The theme of the 2024 volume of the journal, science and the numinous, directed me to scientific field theory, a product of the European Enlightenment. In the early days of the research, the central guiding question was *Where does field theory begin?* As in many inquiries into the origin of important ideas, scholars often designate a moment that has linguistic meaning. Moreover, because science has been the dominant paradigm describing reality for the last 400 years, scholars tend to seek origins from within the scientific tradition. Yet as this essay demonstrates, scientific field theory is only one expression of a far older and more comprehensive cosmic field theory—of ontology and epistemology that long predates the Enlightenment. Cosmic field theory is grounded in ancient spiritual, mythological, and philosophical traditions. Scientific field theory, both in its classical and postmodern formulations, is a recovery of these ancient traditions as much as it is a discovery about the properties of perceptible matter.

This essay begins with a brief description of the development of scientific field theories up to the present moment's conversation about complex adaptive systems (CAS). It then describes two examples of ancient field theories, Hermeticism and archetypal astrology, before moving to a discussion of field phenomena as they feature in Jungian thought and clinical practice. It asserts that subjectivity and intersubjectivity—key ideas across multiple social science disciplines, including psychology—bear the imprint of Cartesian dualism. The paper suggests depth psychotherapists should embrace the somatic emphasis in the mid-century phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, substituting *intercorporeality* for intersubjectivity. Intercorporeality fundamentally asserts that “the most primary form of social understanding is to directly grasp another's actions through one's own body and find one's own possibility of actions in another's body” (Tanaka, 2015, p. 463). One gains immediate kinesthetic knowledge of the other because the two bodies share a field; empathy, insight, intuition, and understanding are somatic and enactive. From a somatic Jungian perspective, the shared field is transpersonal: those present may be human and more-than-human, and they may be physical or spiritual. Finally, to offer readers an embodied felt sense of one indigenous tradition that dramatizes transpersonal field theory, the paper describes the relationship between denizens of the Sámi underworld and living humans. The geography of the Sámi cosmos gives new, potent meaning to the Jungian idea of soulful relationship with one's ancestors and guides.

Classical scientific field theory

According to Stoeger (2003), most historians look to the nineteenth century as the origin of scientific field theory, identifying the groundbreaking work of Michael Faraday in 1831 and the extension of Faraday's work by James Clerk Maxwell three decades later in 1864. Certainly the year 1831 is linguistically and conceptually important to the history of science. It was the first time the term *field* was used to describe the physical properties of matter, from the very large to the very small, and from the visible to the invisible. Over time, *field* began to designate “a variety of different, closely related concepts in mathematics and physics that have been carried over into everyday language to designate a context or region of influence” (p. 332).

By defining a field as a region of influence, one can make a strong case that scientific field theory begins more than a century before Faraday's work. That is, it begins

with Newton's law of universal gravitation published in his 1687 treatise *Principia Mathematica*. Newton's law asserted that every particle in the universe attracts every other particle with a force that is proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between their centers. It became known as the "first great unification," uniting gravitational "law" on Earth with known astronomical behaviors. Newton did not use the concept of fields in his formulation. Instead, the *Principia Mathematica* described the force of gravity as "action at a distance." Nonetheless, Newton's theory is fundamentally relational and cosmological, a significant theme in field theory across multiple disciplines, a point I will return to shortly. For now, it is enough to say that every body on earth is subject to Newton's law. So are the stars.

For 150 years following the publication of Newton's *Principia*, scientists imagined electricity and magnetism as separate unrelated phenomenon. Over time, they realized that they are two parts of a greater whole, an electromagnetic field. With the development of electromagnetism by Michael Faraday beginning in 1831, the term *field* formally entered scientific discourse. As Cambray (2009) explained, Faraday rejected the Newtonian view of space as empty. Instead Faraday "envisioned the space around electric and magnetic phenomena as permeated, even composed of lines of electromagnetic force, and in a great intuitive leap he suggested that these lines of force could carry 'the ray vibrations of light'" (pp. 39–40). Faraday's field theory asserts that properties of space have physical effects even when that space is devoid of matter. Instead of Newton's concept of action at a distance, invisible lines of force explained interactions between objects.

In 1864, Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism completed Faraday's work. His equations described the relationship between electric fields, magnetic fields, electric current, and electric charge. They implied the existence of electromagnetic waves that propagate from one spatial point to another at the speed of light. Once Maxwell formulated his theory, "he and other physicists began to interpret these [electromagnetic] fields as a form of matter, so much so that matter in the usual sense gradually came to be looked upon in terms of fields, rather than vice versa" (Stoeger, 2003, p. 331). In the poetic language of Martinez and Schweber (2005), physicists now perceive electricity and magnetism as "linked in a mutual embrace" (p. 831).

Early twentieth-century developments in field theory

Nineteenth century scientific field theory remained committed to a view of the universe as mechanistic. It became known as *classical* field theory within a few short decades—in part because the classical mechanistic account of reality was challenged by Einstein's special and general theories of relativity. According to physicist David Bohm (1983), "the theory of relativity was the first significant indication in physics of the need to question the mechanistic order" (p. 173). Its implications were radical. Relativity "implied that no coherent concept of an independently existent particle is possible, neither one in which the particle would be an extended body, nor one in which it would be a dimensionless point" (p. 173).

Einstein regarded physical reality "from the very beginning as constituted of fields" yet his field concept "still retains the essential features of a mechanistic order" (Bohm, 1983, p. 174). Nonetheless, his groundbreaking theories of relativity fundamentally altered the prevailing view of physical reality. Before Einstein's work fully permeated twentieth-century scientific thought, physicists believed that the world was composed of two very

different ingredients: material particles (such as electrons) and quantum fields (such as photons). Eventually, physicists began viewing material particles as excited states of quantum fields. Given enough energy, it would now be possible to create material particles. In the end, Einstein's theories of Special and General Relativity "strongly reinforced the usefulness and strength of the field-theory perspective, and even the realistic physical interpretations given to fields" (Stoeger, 2003, p. 331). But that was only the beginning. Within a decade, a quantum view of the cosmos, based on discoveries by Werner Heisenberg, Erwin Schrödinger, Max Born, and others, suggested the possibility of describing all phenomena in terms of elementary particles, namely electrons, protons, and photons (Martinez and Schweber, 2005, p. 832).

Throughout the twentieth century, the concerted and occasionally contentious efforts of a small group of brilliant physicists continued to refine and develop quantum field theory. It continues to combine classical field theory, quantum mechanics, and Special Relativity to assert a strange new view of the so-called material world. As Capra (1991) explains, "at the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities, and these patterns, ultimately, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections" (p. 68).

From field theory to systems theory

In the last five decades a new transdisciplinary paradigm, complexity science, has been used to explain "the intricate inter-twining or inter-connectivity of elements within a system and between a system and its environment" (Chan, 2001, p. 1). Complexity science, complexity theory, and the more general study of complex adaptive systems, are "umbrella terms for a wide variety of studies on pattern formation" (Gregerson, 2003, p. 151). As a result, "complexity research consistently crosses the boundaries between the inorganic and the organic, the natural and the cultural" (p. 151). According to CAS, developmental change within a system is an emergent phenomenon arising from "the cooperation of many individual parts" (Thelen & Smith, 1994, p. xiii). It is "messy, fluid, context-sensitive" (p. xvi).

Three people among many who have ignited the public's interest in systems thinking and paved the way for the popularity of complexity science are Capra, mentioned earlier, Brian Swimme, and Ervin Laszlo. (I also direct the interested reader to Ken Wilbur, perhaps beginning with his 1997 book *The marriage of sense and soul*.) For example, Laszlo introduced his 2006 book *Science and the Re-enchantment of the Cosmos* with the statement, "At the cutting edge of contemporary science, a remarkable insight is surfacing: the universe, with all things in it, is a quasi-living, coherent whole" (p. 1). He goes on to add that matter is not what we think it is. "The belief that when we know how matter behaves we know everything—a belief shared by classical physics and Marxist theory [and, I would add, behavioral psychology]—is but sophistry" (p. 1).

Laszlo made the same point that this essay asserts: the so-called new view of the universe described by complexity theory is not new at all. It is also inspiring and comforting, offering humankind a sense of belonging to the cosmos. Swimme (1996), for instance, spoke as a poet when he described humanity's fundamental connectedness to our local star system:

For four million years, humans have been feasting on the Sun's energy stored in the form of wheat or maize or reindeer as each day the Sun dies as

Sun and is reborn as the vitality of Earth.... [Human beings] “are able to think only because coursing through their blood lines are molecules energized by the Sun ... If we burn brightly today it is only because this same energy was burning brightly as the Sun a month ago. Even as we take a single breath our energy dissipates and we need to be replenished all over again by the Sun’s gift of fire. (pp. 42–43)

Whether we think in terms of fire or any of the other elements, a systems view of the cosmos grants humanity a place in an intricate, complex, and interconnected web of life. And while our place in the cosmos conveys a sense of belonging, it simultaneously carries the ethical obligation of stewardship. The climate emergency is evidence that we have been very poor stewards.

Complexity theory foregrounds an important dimension to the systems view of the cosmos. It shows that “many phenomena that are a part of our daily lives,” which may appear orderly and predictable, are, in fact, “lived far from the stasis of equilibrium” (Cambray, 2002, p. 413). Though complex dynamic systems appear to be chaotic, they show a proclivity for self-organization. New order, difficult to recognize immediately *as* order, “can arise spontaneously out of chaotic conditions” (p. 413). That is, complex adaptive systems are characterized by *autopoiesis*. Autopoiesis, from the original Greek for “self-making,” refers to the self-reproducing nature of living systems, which move from disorder to order by “exchanging energy with their external environments” (Dembski, 2003, p. 218). Thus, at the heart of autopoiesis is a paradoxical truth: permeability can produce new order *and* new integrity.

Field theory beyond science

“During the period from the 1870s well into the twentieth century, field theories were defining the *Zeitgeist*, especially in the physical sciences,” said Cambray (2009, p. 42). Today, most classical and quantum physical phenomena are fundamentally described and explained in terms of fields. As a result, the term *field* in science designates a variety of different, closely related concepts in mathematics and physics: there are scientific field theories, not one field theory. Other disciplines reflected the scientific *zeitgeist*, too. For example, field theories “were being imported into psychology by notable figures such as William James” (p. 42) who described “fields of consciousness” in his 1901–1902 Gifford lectures (the basis of James’s book *The Varieties of Religious Experience*). Understandably, the scientific *zeitgeist* was also permeating depth psychology, which attempted to position itself as science. Psychoanalysis, said Freud (1933/1965), “is quite unfit to construct a *Weltanschauung* of its own: it must accept the scientific one” (pp. 158–59). Even if psychology could not be expressed with the exactitude of a differential equation, it could aspire to empirical precision. That is, psychology could follow the method of the natural sciences by organizing complex and subtle phenomena into a taxonomy (Jung, 1951/1969b pp. 182–183).

Psychology’s attempt to be scientific reveals an inherent epistemological tension between general theories—that is, expressions of the analytical-creative impulse to formulate broad understanding—and particular experiences discovered in personal stories and precise symptoms, which are unique expressions of soul. A field-theory view of psychology, however, may succeed in embracing both the general and the particular, most especially when psychology includes the religious instinct and respects spiritual

phenomena as does the Jungian tradition. Or, to borrow language from James (1902/1994), a psychologist, “the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe” and an “inner communion” exists in which “spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world” (p. 528). Psycho-spiritual field theories, like field theories in general, express a holistic and relational systems perspective. They “generally are derived from studying interactions; whatever discipline uses such a theory, its application focuses on manifestations or expressions of an underlying connecting principle” (Cambray, 2009, p. 42).

Few Jungians, I imagine, can do the math or understand the intricate equations describing classical or quantum theory. Integral calculus is a language many of us never learned or once knew but have since forgotten. However, it is possible to read the verbal explanations of the theories slowly, absorbing and responding to the words and phrases like a poet. That is, we might read about field theories as images of the soul. Perhaps the most poetical idea, for me, is this: Rather than representing objects or particles, scientific theory posited fields as *areas of influence* that an object *experiences in space-time* as a *mutual embrace*. As an embodied human being who cherishes her home and circle of family, friends, and colleagues, who moves fluidly among a variety of social contexts and social roles, each one an area of influence with a distinct sensorium, I can imagine myself as part of a field and as a particle of the cosmos—a bit of star stuff.

Elemental qualities of field theory

After this very brief survey of scientific field theory, one may ask a more fundamental question: Assuming that it is possible to speak of field theory in a general transdisciplinary sense, what exactly is it? This question, of course, is a characteristically Jungian move. Archetypal thinkers transgress disciplinary boundaries to seek the universal in the particular.

Let us begin with the fact that field theories, regardless of discipline, make specific assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology). Because of the crucial significance of our language and the ideas they express, every theory is already an action, acting on us and shaping how we act in the world, as Hillman (1992) explained:

Ideas are inseparable from practical actions, and theory itself is practice; there is nothing more practical than forming ideas and becoming aware of them in their psychological effects. Every theory we hold practices upon us in one way or another, so that ideas are always in practice and do not really need to be put there. (p. 123)

As a perspective, field theory reveals embedded values (axiology) and ways of knowing (epistemology). Although much more could be said, three distinctive attributes of fields and field theory are relevant to this essay. Field theories illuminate the holistic, dynamic, and interdependent nature of reality.

First, field theory is holistic in that it moves away from atomism. As a perspective, field theory attempts to embrace the whole environment as a meaningful unit of contemplation and inquiry. Even though one cannot simultaneously pay attention to everything in the field due to individual embodied perceptual limitations, one can acknowledge the existence of the whole field and attempt to imagine it. Second, people who understand field theory note the dynamic movement of entities or actors. They are

fascinated by the way moving entities in the area of influence affect each other. Field theorists are process-oriented, attending to continual transformation. Third, through paying keen attention to movement, field theory assumes that the entities or actors in the environment are interdependent—related to one another or relating with one another—regardless of the size of the movement (macro or micro) or speed (swift or slow).

Holistic, dynamic, interdependent. In what other knowledge traditions does this group of attributes surface, in what other knowledge traditions? Such a question is an invitation to the associative processes characteristic of the poetic imagination, a quality of time in Jungian scholarly research sometimes described as reverie, reflection, or musing. Moreover, the question calls forth what Hillman (2022) referred to as the archetypal eye, which “needs training through profound appreciation of history and biography, of the arts, of ideas and culture” (p. 16). Archetypal psychologists dwell with the object of interest and use amplification as “a method of soul-making by finding the cultural in the psyche and thereby giving culture to the soul” (p. 16). They seek patterns in history, arts, and culture, finding resemblances to a new idea (such as scientific field theory) among ancient traditions.

Archetypal investigation is a search for roots based in an appreciation for origins and the value of growing down to become well rooted. Those who develop an archetypal sensibility—because it is much more than a visual image; it is also a smell, a sound, a taste, and a feeling—know that the first answer to any really good question is inadequate. Archetypal thinkers are terminally dissatisfied with the superficial.

The Hermetic tradition, a cosmological field theory

Before there were scientific field theories, there were ancient tales recognizable as field theories—though few people think of them this way. For example, the phrase “As above, so below” is familiar to students of esoteric traditions. It is the sound bite summarizing the longer and poetic verse from the Emerald Tablet (*Tabula Smaragdina*), which asserted the doctrine of cosmic sympathy. According to the doctrine, there is a sympathetic (or resonant) correspondence between the macrocosm, the universe as a great living being, and the microcosm, the individual person, who was imagined as a miniature universe. Although Hermes Trismegistus is the supposed author of the work, Yates (1964) pointed out that “these writings are really by different unknown authors and no doubt of considerably varying dates” (p. 21), and consist of philosophical treatises as well as astrological, alchemical, and magical literature (p. 44).

When the *Corpus Hermeticum* arrived in Renaissance Italy in 1463, “Trismegistus seemed like an Egyptian Moses” (Yates, 1964, p. 26). Author and text profoundly impressed Marsilio Ficino, the first translator of the work, granting Trismegistus “an odour of sanctity” as “the author of the Egyptian genesis, who is so like Moses, who prophesies Christianity, and who teaches a devout way of life in loving devotion to God the Father” (p. 27). Ficino, already at work translating Plato for his patron Cosimo de’ Medici, was commanded to put it aside and quickly get to work on the *Corpus Hermeticum*. He completed the translation shortly before Cosimo’s death in 1464.

Within 150 years of Ficino’s translation, scholars learned to their surprise that Hermes Trismegistus was no Egyptian Moses, a revered ancient theologian, and that the *Corpus Hermetica* postdated the Hebrew Bible by centuries. In fact, Thrice Great Hermes is a syncretic combination of the Greek god of travel and communication, Hermes, and the

Egyptian god of wisdom and writing, Thoth (Wilkinson, 2003, p. 216). The syncretism is understandable in light of the fact that, during the reign of the Ptolemies (300 BCE to 30 CE), there was frequent cultural, social, and political contact between the Greco Roman and Egyptian worlds, which passes into and forms Hellenism. Jung referred to Hermes as “the wily god of revelation” (1946/1982a, p. 188) who also figures as the Spiritus Mercurius in medieval alchemy. Hermes “traverses the paths from heaven to earth and to the underworld and back again, a messenger with no fixed abode” (Greene & Sasportas, 1992, p. 46). Thoth, a lunar deity and inventor of writing, “often acted as a messenger, intercessor, and conciliator between the gods” (Wilkinson, 2003, p. 215). Like Hermes, Thoth traveled freely between worlds. Both gods, and their syncretic avatar Hermes Trismegistus, made it their business to know that which is above and that which is below.

Astrology as field theory

The central thesis of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the doctrine of correspondence between macrocosm and microcosm, has achieved widespread appeal in contemporary astrology. Astrology, too, is a field theory. The natal or birth chart is a snapshot of the heavens from the perspective of the infant who is born in a particular place at a specific time. In calculating the birth chart, timing and location are everything. The chart establishes the relationship between the incarnation of one’s unique being—tiny, vulnerable, and insignificant—and the immense stuff of the cosmos, the planets or luminaries moving within and against a vast black sky. Astrology aligns with the hermetic idea of cosmic sympathy, asserting the relatedness of the very small and the very large. Tarnas (2006) amply demonstrated that the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm is as true on the collective level as it is for individuals.

Astrology is particularly rich as a psychological field theory since the chart “portrays symbolically how an individual’s drives and urges are apt to express themselves. Like the seed of a plant or a tree, it contains a blueprint of what the fully developed person could grow into or become” (Sasportas, 1989, p. 107). Moreover, working with an expert to read the birth chart often confirms inchoate knowledge. “Somewhere deep within us there is a primordial knowledge or preconscious perception of our true nature, our destiny, our abilities, and our ‘calling’ in life” (p. 16). The language of archetypal astrology not only illuminates the whole of the field but also identifies tensions within the person’s life and insights into their individuation. Thus psychological astrologers agree with Jungian theory: “Not only do we have a particular path to follow, but on some instinctive level, we know what that is” (p. 16).

“Through an astrological consciousness,” said Moore (1982), “we may recognize the polycentric nature of the psyche and become aware of the impact of even minor objects and events on the spiritual life of the soul.” For Moore, “the planets, signs, houses, and aspects of technical astrology are only a means for imagining the multiple facets of psyche” (p. 50). Astrological consciousness helps one imagine “patterns of significance” that appeal to the soul far more than any “undifferentiated, linear, and literal sequence of events” preferred by a tidy, rational mind (p. 124).

All elements of the natal chart and their relationships to one another can be a rich source of archetypal inspiration. One feature, the nodes of the moon, can helpfully illustrate astrology’s archetypal insights. There are two nodes of the moon in every natal chart, a south node and a north node. They are 180 degrees opposite one another, forming a nodal

axis. A useful image for the nodal axis is a straight train track running across the circular natal chart. The train enters at the placement of the south node and travels toward the north node. Interpreting the nodes assumes belief in reincarnation, the classical notion found in Plato's Tale of Er (*Republic*, Book X). One enters this life with a previous story, partly symbolized by the south node. Equally important, one has a purpose, calling, or *telos*, symbolized by the north node. The tension between the south and north nodes suggests one's purpose in this lifetime in a relatively straightforward manner, answering some of "the most difficult questions in life: Who am I? Why am I here? What am I meant to be doing?" (Jones, 2012, p. 13).

Speaking personally, I continue to feel the tension of the opposite nodes in my natal chart, south and north, and continue to reflect upon its relationship to my original fate and my unfolding destiny. I have added a gesture to my morning meditation practice that expresses the holism, dynamism, and relational nature of the cosmic field within which all of us live. I trace two large "figure eights" in the air in front of me, one horizontal as though I were drawing the shape on a tabletop, and one vertical, stretching my arm above my head and down to my pelvis. As I slowly trace the figure eights, I say softly, "As without, so within. As above, so below." The gesture inscribes what I think of as spherical consciousness, the multi-dimensional archetypal field within which all of my creativity unfolds: every significant decision, all ideas and insights. For me, the gesture honors the presence of the psyche, the *anima mundi*, soul in all things and all things within soul. As a daily embodied ritual, it reminds me that I am a small but necessary particle in a vast cosmological field. No math is required.

There is a further reason to contemplate the nodes of the moon as prominent elements of the psychological field symbolized by the birth chart: The nodes suggest the journey of individuation, although individuation rarely if ever proceeds along a straight path. Like anything psychic, it "is Janus-faced—it looks both backwards and forwards" (Jung, 1971, p. 431). One looks backward toward the south node, which astrologically speaking is a place of comfort and familiarity since it suggests styles of thought and behavior toward which one regresses. One looks forwards toward the north node, symbolizing nascent capacities that sketch the uncomfortable horizon of growth. Taken together, the nodal axis is an image of "the purposive nature of the psyche" (p. 431) embedded within the holistic field of the birth chart. Wholeness is never achieved, but Jungian psychology and archetypal astrology encourage individuals to embody more of their distinct potentialities by awakening to the transpersonal dimension of psyche ("As above"), following the impulses of the Self (the *imago dei*), and aligning with it ("so below"). The psychological process of becoming an individual "must lead to more intense and broader collective relationships and not to isolation" (p. 448) not only in a social, inter-psyche sense but also in an archetypal, intra-psyche sense. One grows towards the north node over time, such that in Jungian individuation and in archetypal astrology, "we could almost speak of a psychology of life's morning and a psychology of its afternoon" (1931/1982b, p. 39).

Field theory in the human sciences

The human science tradition, including disciplines such as sociology, psychology, organizational behavior, and leadership studies, uses its own set of field theories that share common features. All draw from scientific theory to define a field as an area of influence;

in essence, an observable social context consisting of multiple actors in dynamic interaction with one another. In human science field theory the area of influence includes, at a minimum, the individual people in a location (the material environment) in the present moment—hence, space-time—and the ways each person understands and influences everyone else.

The number of arenas in which field theory applies to human activity can be multiplied easily, and all are worthy of additional description and exploration. Each one is founded in the social science field theory developed by Lewin (1951) in the first half of the 20th century, which was situated within, and inspired by, the *gestalt* perspective articulated by a group of German psychologists at the beginning of the century. Although *gestalt* is difficult to translate precisely from the German, it generally refers to a coherent whole (with specific, identifiable properties) that is always more than the sum of its individual parts. One might say a gestalt is the phenomenological perception of a total context. The experience of waking up each morning in one's bedroom—with its familiar sights, sounds, textures, and scents—is a gestalt.

One of Lewin's important theoretical contributions, inspired by the gestalt perspective, is *life space*, the "totality of all psychological facts and social forces that influence an individual at a given time and place" (Pratkanis & Turner, 2005, p. 344). For example, psychologists and sociologists endeavor to understand the life space of their clients: the current situation, the forces maintaining its equilibrium, or the forces that might threaten the equilibrium or destroy it altogether.

Sociological field theory emphasizes the persons' subjective perspective, which includes everything that is meaningful to them in the moment, taken as a whole, such as desires, needs, impulses, and ideas. As the actors in the field and the total environment change, what is meaningful changes: Meaning arises from the *gestalt*.

From flat field theory to spherical field theory

Most Jungian thinkers recognize Lewin's (1951) theory of the life space as socially contextual rather than depth psychological. By foregrounding human actors and their material environments, social science field theory accounts for ordinary environmental details such as smell, temperature, sound, light, and movement (of themselves, of another, or the setting). It does a very good job of accounting for intricacies in human relationship within an environment, yet one might say that it is a flat field theory. That is, social science generally overlooks the vertical dimension of human experience—the heights of spirit and the depths of soul—especially when it does not manifest in visible behaviors or speech, the objective data valued (and valuable) in mainstream research. The vertical dimension, which is transpersonal, non-ordinary, and unique, is often described with reluctance or trepidation when it can be described at all. Jungian theory, as a psycho-spiritual approach to meaning and purpose, not only includes spirit and soul in a well-rounded life space but also emphasizes them. Unlike flat sociological field theories, Jungian field theory is spherical.

While it is true that people generally respond to (and report) what is visible and measurable in the field, others detect non-ordinary, extra-sensory, transpersonal elements that enter their awareness in a variety of ways. For instance, some carry a vivid, persistent image from dream into the daytime as a mood, an idea, or a question. Others have a felt sense of something or someone nearby who is not "really" there through somatic cues such as energy rippling up and down the spine or tingling in the hands. More rarely, some

suddenly stop whatever they are doing or they feel themselves stopped—for no apparent reason. (Appearances can be deceiving; non-appearances rarely are.) From a Jungian perspective, an adequate field theory must account for such non-ordinary transpersonal elements because they are phenomenologically real: *invisible, non-material, and potent elements exist in the lived experience of persons*. Acknowledging the transpersonal dimension of the field challenges mainstream Euro-American ontologies and epistemologies intimated by the phrase “human science tradition.”

The highly attentive person is likely aware of much of the field, including some of its subtle aspects, especially when prompted to describe it. Even people with no explicit awareness of subtle encounters in the field, however, may possess implicit knowledge—that is, knowledge that does not rise to the level of consciousness and cannot be expressed verbally. In fact, much of human “thinking” occurs implicitly and unconsciously, at the level of the body (Marks-Tarlow, 2012; van der Kolk, 2014). It is sometimes referred to as *paralinguistic* since it accompanies verbal language but does not replace it. Among neuroscientists and psychologists there is growing recognition of the significance of the implicit paralinguistic realm. “Throughout the life span, meaning is conveyed in the form of nonverbal information that is sent and picked up by the body,” says Marks-Tarlow (2012, p. 32). “Tone, pitch, pace, and volume of voice; facial expressions; and body gestures are all paralinguistic cues” that help people monitor “the feelings, motivations, intentions, fantasies, and expectations of others” (p. 32).

So long as we are alive, we are always creatures in a field, continually perceiving the living environment that surrounds us implicitly and holistically, through somatic paralinguistic cues and explicitly via the words we use to describe it. Implicit awareness “is more holistic partly through remaining fully immersed in context,” a field that includes “our own bodies, which are themselves submerged in an emotional, relational context” (Marks-Tarlow, 2012, p. 37), a point I will return to later in the essay. For now, the key idea is that implicit somatic awareness comes first, verbal language second. “One cannot unfold something and make it explicit (Latin, *ex*, out; *plicare*, fold), unless it is already folded. The roots of explicitness lie in the implicit” (McGilchrist, 2009, p. 179).

Depth field theories

To summarize the foregoing argument: Sociological field theory attends to conscious and observable actions in a shared public environment. A depth field theory, in contrast, attempts to account for private, personal, unreported (and possibly unconscious) desire, thought, belief, and behavior. It also accounts for a person’s unique experiences of spirit and soul, including transformative and possibly numinous encounters with non-ordinary beings. Finally, a depth field theory must embrace every collective expression of human creativity in the history of the species, including its relationships with all other life forms in the biosphere. Clearly, according to this description, Jung’s collective unconscious is a field theory, one that consists of persistent ideas, images, stories, and patterns of behavior over millennia, the ancient heritage of life on our planet (and beyond it) that influences contemporary culture. Like the two esoteric field theories previously discussed, the Hermetic tradition and psychological astrology, the theory of a collective unconscious is founded upon a capacious “sphere of influence” that includes transpersonal or cosmological elements.

There are other similarly capacious field theories in the Jungian tradition, each of which makes room for spirit and soul. They include archetypal field theory and alchemy, both of which reflect the cosmic sympathy found in Hermeticism; field theory in psyche-centered scholarly research, which intentionally embraces the inner allies who inspire the topic; and expressive arts modalities such as Sandtray, Authentic Movement, and BodySoul Rhythms. Much more could be said about each of these as field theories, and the list is incomplete. Here I will offer only brief comments on archetypal psychology and alchemy as a prelude to the final section of the paper on intercorporeality, nekyia, and the Sámi underworld.

Archetypal psychology as a field theory

Jung did not explicitly refer to fields in his theory of archetypes. However, some of the images he used to describe archetypes fits the idea of a field very well. For example, in Jung's (1928/1969a) essay on psychic energy he stated that "our inheritance consists of physiological pathways" traced by the mental processes of our ancestors (p. 53). Although these processes "appear as individual acquisitions," they are "nevertheless pre-existent pathways which are merely 'filled out' by individual experience. Probably every 'impressive' experience is just such a break-through into an old, previously unconscious river-bed" (pp. 53–54). Just as a dry river-bed is the vestige of an old waterway, a feature carved into the landscape through which new rainfall will be channeled, mental processes follow ancient pathways in some manner that is not traceable to an organic, material form. Perhaps the archetypal field in Jungian theory is analogous to the lines of force in scientific field theories: invisible yet influential, nonexistent yet emergent.

The possible similarities between scientific field theory and archetypal field theory appears in the work of Van Eenwyk (1997). He used elements of chaos mathematics and dynamic systems theory to describe archetypal patterns, and he explicitly referred to the gravitational field to explain archetypes. "Like magnets whose fields are invisible until they take shape in a substance that reveals their character, archetypes arrange psychic energy into patterns through which their character becomes discernable" (p. 28). The power of the archetype is felt within a field of influence and "is revealed by what is 'caught' in it" (p. 29). Whether the object is a magnet or an archetype, what gets caught in the field is important.

Cambray (2009) stated that "Jung does not explicitly refer to his model of the psyche as a form of field theory," yet it "clearly owes much to this formulation" (pp. 42–43). Jung tended toward classical mechanistic field theories, which is unsurprising considering his nineteenth-century European education. Yet he was drawn forward to "relativistic vistas" of the twentieth century through his relationships with Pauli and Einstein (p. 109). Jung also seems to have anticipated the prevalence of network imagery in twenty-first century science, philosophy, and technology. There are many hints in Jung's conception of the multiple, relational psyche to suggest strong similarities between interconnected archetypal images and interdependent nodes within a network. Cambray suggests that "moving to a field model" helps us reimagine the archetypes of the collective unconscious as a multi-nodal network as tiny as a microchip and as vast as the cosmos. "Each archetype can be seen as a node embedded within the larger context of a polycentric whole, with sets of links or connections weaving the archetypes into a network that ... has scale-free properties" (p. 43). This perspective invites Jungians (and others) to follow the

psyche's natural rhythms, moving between the parts that make up the whole and the whole made up of the parts.

Alchemy as a field theory

Schwartz-Salant, who introduces *Jung on Alchemy* (1997), makes an important point germane to my argument that the alchemical worldview aligns with the Hermetic tradition, which is itself a reflection of more ancient belief about the interrelatedness of everything. The cosmos was once viewed as a vast and living organism that united spirit and matter. Indeed, for ancient thinkers, there was little or no distinction between them. It is this perspective within which alchemists expressed their devotion to the opus. Schwartz-Salant said:

The early fourteenth- and fifteenth-century practitioners of alchemy lived in a world that was entirely animated, one in which matter was not dead or chaotic but had a living soul. This kind of consciousness sees relationships between all levels of existence, animate and inanimate, spiritual and profane, but it does not deal with distinctness and separable entities within a causal process. It was an approach to the world that gave priority to a background sense of oneness. (p. 4)

Schwartz-Salant, like other Jungian scholars, argued for the relevance of alchemical thinking today. It “holds out a way of return to wholeness without abandoning separation and distinctness of process” (p. 4). Indeed, one of the valuable contributions of the alchemical perspective is its recognition of distinct phases or moments within a continually evolving process that is taking place within a dynamic field of activity, as well as the suggestion of wholeness as its telos. The alchemical opus is both a holistic process and one that aims toward wholeness without ever achieving it. As Jung reminds us, “The goal is important only as an idea; the essential thing is the opus which leads to the goal: *that* is the goal of a lifetime” (1946/1982a, p. 200).

Many Jungian scholars, like medieval alchemists, are also engaged in profoundly transformative psychological processes. Devoted to the opus of their research, they dwell with the unknown well beyond the personal unconscious. Many of them acknowledge and court the active shaping presence of something non-material, something distinctively other—a *who*, not a *what*—which is seeking their attention. My graduate students in depth psychology “enter into profound relationship with an archetypal image who becomes a companion and guide” in their dissertation research (Nelson, 2013, p. 326). “Without the companionship of an archetypal image, research may devolve into an egoic effort that reflects the spirit of the times but not the spirit of the depths” (p. 326). In my experience in such moments, the atmosphere of the field grows thick. It is often quiet, or there may be an ambient susurrations similar to the sound of a calm ocean. The field is sometimes heavy or full and, for one unaccustomed to atmospheric alterations, can feel eerie, spooky, or haunted. The field, in fact, includes the presence of material elements—laptop, books, pens and pencils, a cup of coffee, the chair one is sitting in—and non-material elements and transpersonal entities, archetypal companions guiding the process.

The eerie felt sense of the field reported by Jungian researchers is not, however, limited to traditional methods of scholarship. Jungian artists, writers, musicians, poets, and choreographers, among others, also develop a keen sense of the lively archetypal field, and

acknowledge the presence of numinous images and figures. Novelists who would not necessarily identify as depth psychologists, or even as psychological, typically welcome the liveliness of the field. In one memorable passage in King's (2000) book on writing, he evoked Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein. A modern Prometheus*:

Words create sentences; sentences create paragraphs; sometimes paragraphs quicken and begin to breathe. Imagine, if you like, Frankenstein's monster on its slab. Here comes lightning, not from the sky but from a humble paragraph of English words. Maybe it's the first really good paragraph you ever wrote, something so fragile and yet full of possibility that you are frightened. You feel as Victor Frankenstein must have when the dead conglomeration of sewn-together spare parts suddenly opened its watery yellow eyes. Oh my God, it's breathing, you realize. Maybe it's even thinking. What in hell's name do I do next? (pp. 135–136)

Indeed, what does the writer do next? In such moments, Jung's method of active imagination is very helpful. "Give it your special attention, concentrate on it, and observe its alterations objectively," Jung advised. "Devote yourself to this task, follow the subsequent transformations of the spontaneous fantasy attentively and carefully. Above all, don't let anything from outside, that does not belong, get into it, for the fantasy image has 'everything it needs'" (1955–56/1970, p. 526).

I imagine King wholeheartedly embracing Jung's reverence for fantasy. After all, King did admit, "I've never held much of a brief for reality, at least in my written work. All too often it is to the imagination what ash stakes are to vampires" (1993, p. 3).

From intersubjectivity to intercorporeality

Due to the evolution of classical Freudian theory toward relational psychoanalysis (Mitchell, 1988; Winnicott, 1965), the majority of post-Freudian clinicians base their perceptions of their patients on the information arising moment-by-moment in an intersubjective field. The field is "an unconscious intersubjective construction generated by the analytic pair," which Ogden (1997) viewed as "aspects of a single-interest subjective totality experienced by analyst and analysand" (p. 25). Jungian analysts similarly describe the intersubjective relationship between therapist and patient in terms of fields. In clinical work, this relationship is known as transference and countertransference or, simply, the transference field (Jung, 1946/1982a; Weiner, 2004). For Jung, the transference is

the projection of archaic, infantile fantasies which were originally vested in members of the patient's own family and which, because of their positive or negative fascination, attach him to parents, brothers, and sisters. The transference of these fantasies to the doctor draws him into the atmosphere of family intimacy, and although this is the last thing he wants, it nevertheless provided a workable *prima materia*. (1946/1982a, p. 218)

Projection and introjection—the fantasy activities forming the *prima materia*—are core concepts used to describe a depth-therapeutic relationship. In Jungian therapy, the analyst knows that only some of the *prima materia* arises to awareness.

The clinical concepts of projection, introjection, and the transference are depth psychological refinements of the basic human scientific notion of intersubjectivity. "Intersubjectivity implies that knowing or understanding is not an individual endeavor but

rather is socially situated; knowing cannot exist in a vacuum or a cognitive abstract system” (Anderson, 2008, p. 468). In apt language for this paper, Roger (2013) defines intersubjectivity as “an interdisciplinary concept that refers to *the field of interaction* between the self and other” (p. 500; emphasis added). Intersubjectivity rejects the Cartesian notion that consciousness is private and isolated. “From an intersubjective perspective, human beings exist not in isolation but in a world with others” (p. 500). They share many dimensions of lived experience, include ideas, beliefs, emotion, and action, rendering the field a dynamic arena of reciprocal influence.

Psychologists of all stripe actively attempt to understand their clients and the world they inhabit. They begin with the known, the flat social science field data of the life space often captured in intake forms and other clinical reports required by agencies and insurance companies. Some approaches to therapy end there. Depth therapists, by contrast, acknowledge the dynamic influence of what is not yet known (the personal unconscious) and what may never be known (contents of the collective unconscious or objective psyche). Like the creative process in painting, poetry, or choreography, depth therapy is a discovery process. Skilled therapists develop a keen awareness of non-cognitive, unnamed, and barely perceptible qualities of the present moment as each present moment unfolds in space-time. Awareness is an embodied felt sense for what is going on in the co-created field between therapist and client that frequently includes the heights and depths of human experience: close encounters with the transpersonal world.

The emphasis on present-moment awareness in depth psychotherapy clearly draws from the tradition of phenomenology, which pays keen attention to multiple dimensions of the life-world, including soul and spirit. Two phenomenologists, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, made a distinctive contribution to phenomenology by emphasizing the importance of embodied perception in the creation of the intersubjective field. Merleau-Ponty’s late work, “The philosopher and his shadow” (Moran, 2017) introduced a word that foregrounds the role of the body in social interaction: *intercorporeality*. Perceptions always arise from our bodily presence in a shared field; our being-in-the-world is produced by moving around in a world.

Tanaka (2015) explained that intercorporeality “refers, first of all, to the reciprocity of one’s own body and that of another. The other’s body appears to the self not as a mere object (Körper) but as the living body in action (Lieb)” (p. 467) We do not perceive another person as having an inner and an outer dimension as models of intersubjectivity based in Theory of Mind suggest. Instead, we experience the person as whole, alive, and moving, someone engaged in “a concrete action in a shared context. ... a living body embedded in the world” (p. 460). As a result, “intercorporeality suggests an immediate and direct understanding of the other person. At the fundamental of social understanding lie embodied interactions between the self and the other, through which various impersonal emotional states are created” (p. 468).

Moran (2017) pointed out that Merleau-Ponty’s notion of intercorporeality owes much to the work of Edmund Husserl. “For Husserl, the intertwining and overlapping of sensory modalities in the embodied subject give us the place to start reflecting on the experience of otherness and especially the other’s lived body” (p. 30). Both phenomenologists asserted that embodiment is source of empathy. It is also the stable foundation for our understanding of the world. “The world has a stability, materiality, and ‘thereness’ precisely because of my embodied experience” (p. 43). That is, our interactions

are actions: they constitute “the fully concrete and lived and share cultural lifeworld that we inhabit” (pp. 39–40).

Neurophenomenology builds upon the mid-century work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to give a particular somatic and relational emphasis to the concept of the field. “The guiding hypothesis is that through our mutual interactions with others our living and lived bodies become inextricably intertwined in a dynamical whole, thus forming an ‘extended body’ by which we enact and encounter the world together” (Froese & Fuchs, 2012, p. 211). The lifeworld, the context within which we think, feel, understand, and act, is a field constituted of perceiving bodies, not just perceiving minds. The intersubjective field is the intercorporeal field, an embodied, enactive gestalt of myself and others and the environment we share.

The intercorporeal field, nekyia, and the Sámi underworld

Jungian psychology, which takes seriously the collective and cultural lineage of cosmological field theories, is well positioned to make a unique contribution to intercorporeality. We can extend the idea of *others* to include ancestors who inhabit what we might generally call the realm of Spirit.

“Narrations of or by people who travelled to a world beyond our own are numerous, popular, and ancient: it appears to be a deeply ingrained cultural constant that one imagines another world, following different laws” (Graf, 2018, p. 11). Ancient myths from many traditions are first-person accounts of a traveler, human or divine, who descends into a world entirely different from their native habitat. We might call such stories spiritual field theories since something, or someone, draws the traveler away from their familiar surround. Accounts of descent inform us that denizens of the underworld seek us, whether we call that place the otherworld, the beyond, or the Great Below, and there are many other names for the same idea in cosmic geography. There, the living commune with the dead and the lysis of the story nearly always include profound transformation. That is, stories of descent/nekyia, “do not cater to pure curiosity, as do other travelers’ reports already in antiquity. Rather, the gaze on the other world usually has the aim to change our life in this world” (p. 32).

I developed an entirely new somatic feel for the ancestors and spirit guides a few years ago, as I was reading Bradley’s (2000) book *The Archeology of Natural Places*. It described the sacred geography of the Sámi, indigenous inhabitants of present-day Sweden, Finland, Norway and the Russian Kola Peninsula. Unlike other ancient western peoples (Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Sumerian), the Sámi did not construct large sacred monuments to symbolize their relationship with the spirit world. Instead of building temples, they centered their ritual practices on natural features of the land such as distinctive rock formations and entrances to caves.

One sentence in Bradley’s book stopped me in my tracks. I read it once, then again, and then one more time. I would describe it as a numinous encounter with a text. “The underworld was sometimes seen as the mirror image of the mundane world,” said Bradley, and “thus the feet of the dead, who must walk upside down, touch those of the living, who stand upright” (2000, p. 12). I followed Bradley to his source, a 1986 work by Ingold, in which he described the Sámi cosmos. “The upper layer is the sky, frequently divided into several storeys” (p. 246). The lower layer of the cosmos, “is the inverted world of the dead

whose feet, since they walk upside down, are sometimes thought (as by the Lapps [the Sámi]) to touch the soles of the living who walk upright” (p. 246).

I invite readers to contemplate the image of an inverted underworld for a moment, where only a thin membrane separates the living from an ancestor or spirit guide who is matching their stride sole to sole. Perhaps it astonishes readers as it does me, or perhaps not. I will return to this image shortly, but before I do, it is important to establish a context by briefly describing some elements of Sámi culture.

The spiritual practices, beliefs, and traditional ways of Sámi life were nearly obliterated by the missionary zeal of Christians, who migrated to northern Europe as early as the thirteenth century to save the souls of the heathens (Kent, 2018). Such assaults, as is well known, were perpetrated countless times throughout the indigenous world. Economic, political, and cultural colonization went hand in hand with ontological and epistemological colonization (Maldonado-Torres, 2017); the surest way to destroy a way of life is to undermine the foundational view of reality, knowledge, and learning that supports it. According to Rydving (1993), “the violence directed against the Sámi was organized and systematic” (p. 61). As a result, few Sámi stories exist today, yet scholars have pieced together enough of Sámi cosmology to back up the statements by Bradley (2000) and Ingold (1986). The Sámi did, indeed, view the underworld as inverted mirror image of ordinary waking reality.

A description of Sámi cosmology might profitably begin with a description of Sámi cosmography, their structural vision of the whole. The Sámi divided the cosmos into three realms, the upper world of the gods, the middle world inhabited by humans and their animal kin, and the underworld of the ancestors. “This tripartite structure of the universe is one of the oldest north Eurasian folk beliefs” (Pentikäinen, 2005, p. 3104). The Sámi, like other indigenous peoples, “incorporated a cult of the dead into various aspects of their daily life, for which it had crucial significance” (Kent, 2018, p. 81). The underworld was an important part of their lived experience and their life space. It was the foundation of their intercorporeal field.

Navigating the three realms was delegated to the shaman, who acted as a mediator between them. Sámi indigenous religion, more accurately described as a way of life, interwove animism, shamanism, and polytheism. “Sámi animism is manifested in the Sámi’s belief that all significant natural objects (such as animals, plants, rocks, etc.) possess a soul, and furthermore, are cognizant of their surroundings” since they “lost their powers of speech only recently” (Holloway, 2024, para 1). The Sámi shaman, or *noaidi*, was a cultural hero, a charismatic leader among the people, who possessed the unique ability “to orient himself and move around in the space of the Sami universe” (Terebikhin, 1993, p. 3).

The *noaidi*’s prize possession was a drum, which he used in sacred ritual. Few drums remain in existence. Most were seized and destroyed by Christian missionaries who believed the drums to be implements of witchcraft—though for the Sámi, they were an important tool for survival and helped protect the community. One of the few surviving drums on display at the British Museum (2003, n.p.) is accompanied by a poignant text:

Some Sámi added Christian imagery to their drums in an unsuccessful attempt to make them acceptable. Others continued to use drums in secret at great personal risk. By 1700 most surviving Sámi had been converted and almost all Sámi magic drums had been destroyed.

The drums the Christians destroyed did not just protect the Sámi community. They protected the Sámi view of the world, the Sámi's place within it, and the Sámi relationship with the spirits. It is a world that has barely survived.

Terebikhin (1993) stated that the map of the Sámi cosmos painted on the shaman's drum showed "the upper realm of the heavenly deities, the middle human realm and the lower realm, *Jabmeaivo* or the world upside-down" (p. 4). He cited a number of scholars from various disciplines to account for the inverted lower realm of Sámi cosmography. "The motif of the earth turned upside down by god is reflected in a number of central images of the Sami world model, particularly in the image of the world tree which grows with its roots upwards" (p. 13). Norwegian ethnographer Vorren (1985) observed that wooden idols (*vearromuorrot*) at sacrificial sites were always placed upside-down, with the root turned upwards (p. 13). Terebikhin (1993) retold a traditional story cited by Čarnoluskij (1972) that suggested the meaningfulness of the inversion.

A young man [turns into] to a salmon. A girl rescued him out of gail [*sic*] and the salmon pulled out the biggest and the nicest pine tree that grew near the house, turned it with roots upwards and the branches downwards, and stuck it into the earth to mark a great friendship with the girl. (p. 13)

Terebikhin pointed out that the "tree of friendship" between the girl and the salmon symbolizes "connecting, binding functions" (p. 13). One might ask, connecting and binding what? Based on Sámi animism, it is unsurprising that the story tells of a natural bond between creatures—human girl and enchanted salmon. It also depicts the natural bond of friendship between Sámi people and any denizens of the Sámi underworld no matter what form they take.

In every account of the underworld I know, not once was the land of the dead described as the inverse of the land of the living. Journeying to the underworld is frequently strange and disorienting since all familiar touchstones to assist the traveler are absent, regardless of whether she is divine, semi-divine, or closely guided by a divine mentor. Sámi cosmography, however, gives new and literal meaning to *disorientation*. The underland, the habitation of the dead and the habitat of spirits, is upside down. Or perhaps we are.

As I imagined the dead living upside-down, they moved with the ease and grace enjoyed by only some of the living. Their movements had an odd, weightless sort of feel. It was simultaneously stately, self-possessed, and playful. The next image quickly followed the first. I imagined one of my spirit guides, a magnificent aging lioness I met in the South African bush, walking with me in a particularly intimate and connected way. I could feel the bare soles of my feet matching her huge, soft lion paws. My body, upright, walking on the earth, connected with the lioness sole-to-sole—a meeting that gives deeper meaning to the casual phrase *soul mates*. We feel the ancestor, the soul mate, through the skin of the feet touching the skin of the earth, touching the skin of their soles and soul. The ancestor's presence is as intimate as flesh.

A conclusion, for now

Field theory is ancient and new, an archetypal pattern discovered, described, lived and then forgotten – only to be rediscovered, described again, and lived again. Jungian thought is itself a field theory that succeeds in greatly expanding the social sciences, including mainstream psychology, primarily because it affirms the lived experience of spiritual

beings in transpersonal realms. Yet to the extent that Jungian therapy still relies on intersubjectivity, the basis of sociological field theory, it, too, is an inadequate account of the subtle aspects of our interconnected cosmos. It is more than time to adopt the more holistic and somatic field theory of intercorporeality, which originated in the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Intercorporeality enlarges our imagination of relationship *with* others by enlarging our imagination *of* others: who they are, where they are, what they are.

I invite readers to bring to mind an ancestor or spirit guide. I invite you to imagine your feet touching theirs through the membrane that separates those in one part of the field, whom we might call the living, from those who live in another part of the field, who might be the dead. I invite you to imagine the continuous gravitational pull of a numinous other with whom you walk sole to sole. How does this shift how you walk in the world?

Walking sole-to-sole also expands and flips the Christian idea of “walking with God.” Baptist minister Dr. Paul Chappell explained the meaning of the phrase:

[Walking] is interacting with God throughout the course of a day, feeling His presence and power, and receiving His strength and guidance. Your spiritual growth is directly related to your walk with God. Walking is a step by step process, and, similarly, the Christian life is a day by day process. (2024, n.p.)

Chappell quoted Colossians 2:6 as the New Testament source for the practice of walking with God: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.” Walking with god is a metaphor for “continually keeping the divine presence near, to understand his plan for your life and to follow that plan as devoutly as possible.”

Confirmed archetypal psychologist that I am, it bothered me not at all to hear the phrase “to walk with my god” as I imagined walking with the lioness. No, she is not my god. She is not even *a* god. But she does remind me to live in my body in a potent way at a potent time.

I mention timing because it is important. When I first glimpsed the lioness, she was frail and elderly, moving slowing across the scrubby land. At one point, she needed to rest, so I watched her lower herself awkwardly onto chest and belly, knowing what it is like when joints lack strength and suppleness and the ache goes all the way to the bone.

To walk with the lioness, slowly, cautiously, is to walk toward my elder years. They are upon me.

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