

Matthieu Pageau's 'The Language of Creation'

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Date: 18 September 2018

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome back. Today I'm going to be discussing a book that I read recently called The Language of Creation, Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis by Mathieu Pajot.

Mathieu is the brother of Jonathan Pajot, who's the more famous of the two. He's known for his YouTube channel and his associations with Jordan Peaceton. He's well worth following. And those connections are one of the reasons why I first looked at this work. I found it fascinating that Jordan Peterson's readings of Genesis have had such resonance within the public conversation.

And it seems strange that people who aren't Christians at all are thinking about the meanings of Genesis. And it seems to me that Jonathan Pajot and his brother have something to do with that.

So reading Mathieu's book was a fascinating experience, as I presume that some of it is an influence upon Jordan Peterson.

But the book is worth looking at in its own right. It is a deeply stimulating and often brilliantly insightful book.

[1 : 0 9] But yet there are also parts that are perplexing and frustrating and at certain points completely unconvincing. Overall, however, I think it is a remarkably stimulating and thought provoking work.

There are points where I disagree, but in the main, I've not encountered much like this beyond the work of people like Jordan, like James Jordan and others like Meredith Klein, who really get into depth and the symbolism of scripture, although with slightly different emphases with which I'll get to that in a moment.

The book is an unusual one in the way that it is set out. First of all, it is self-published, which is usually not an auspicious sign. But in this case, look past that. It is worth reading. Well worth reading.

It is composed of a great many chapters, I think 80 some in all. And each chapter is fairly short, usually about two to four pages in length and with large print.

So it's an unusual book. It's not the typical book that you'd encounter. It has a lot of diagrams and these diagrams are often developed cumulatively, where they take a fundamental template and then develop that over a series of different connections and contexts and show that when you connect all these things together, there are fundamental principles that shed light upon them.

[2 : 4 3] And I think these diagrams are one of the highlights of the book. The book really emphasises its points effectively using these fundamental templates.

There's usually, I'd say about three or four diagrams in every single chapter. And the chapters are very small with large prints, so it's a very quick book to read, even though it's over 300 pages in length.

There is a fundamental concern of this book, and that's to get people thinking about symbolism, thinking about the world and cosmology differently.

Now, when we think about cosmology in our modern age, we think in terms of a very scientific perspective. And within that scientific perspective, we have matter, which is fairly fungible and exchangeable.

And then we have these universal laws that operate upon it. And we focus narrowly upon the questions of what is something made from and how does it work?

[3 : 44] By contrast, biblical cosmology describes reality at a very different sort of level. It's not focused upon the same sort of things that science is focused upon.

Rather, it's focused upon questions of meaning. And it operates very much at a level of deep human perception and engagement within the world. It's more attentive to questions of meaning, and it recognises deep analogies between levels of reality and connections between things.

And this is something that really comes out in Pajot's work. For the materialist perspective, the universe can often be a sort of impersonal machine that's composed of meaningless and exchangeable matter and of energy.

But for the spiritual or symbolic perspective, it's like a written language. And in a written language, you have the matter, but that matter is the bearer of spiritual meaning, of some meaning that is imposed upon matter, that is given to matter and can be perceived within it.

And so it's important for Pajot that we don't set facts and meaning at odds with each other, just in the same way as you don't set the lines on the page at odds with the meaning that they bear and they communicate.

[5 : 01] Biblical cosmology, Pajot argues, is dentro-centric. It's centred upon a tree-like vision of the world. So it's not heliocentric, centred upon the sun, nor is it centred upon the earth.

Rather, it's centred upon a rootedness within the earth. So groundedness, roots going down and the branches going up. And so it's a very different way of relating to time and space.

Earth is the lower half of the cosmos, and then the upper half are the heavens. And in terms of this is one of the things that Pajot constantly does, he constantly integrates his themes with these fundamental principles.

So the heaven and earth analogy is related to meaning and matter. So the earth provides the matter, and then the heaven imposes the meaning upon the matter. And that connection is then one that helps us to understand how language works.

Language is a union of heaven and earth. And so the matter of the earth is akin to the marks upon the page, and then the meaning of those words is like what is formed according to the heavenly meaning.

[6 : 19] And so symbolism is the union of abstract principle. So abstract principle up here and concrete examples down here. And symbolism is the mediating reality at the heart.

It's neither pure specialization, nor is it just abstract generalization. It's something that mediates between those two levels of reality and brings them together.

And so we see this in a number of points within scripture, that light and darkness, again, are related to these themes. Light is the central overarching principle that helps to illumine those things that are material beneath it.

And then the matter are those things that express and give power to that light. And so on the one hand, you can have the darkness of the earth that's unlit, and matter that's opaque and inscrutable.

But then you can also have the dazzling reality of the light, which is very hard to perceive either. And it's the bringing together of those things. Light, which is, doesn't have the same materiality and flesh and strength and force to it.

[7 : 36] And then the earth, which can be opaque and can be lacking in light, and bringing those things together brings illumination. Light can be dazzling and matter can be confounding, but the two come together in symbolism and bring understanding.

There are different levels of reality. So we have fire, air, water and earth, or fire with light. The association of fire with light is an important one.

Most of the things that bring light are associated with fire. And these go from the most pure and abstract to the most concrete, and are associated with relative levels of brightness and darkness.

And then this also is related to levels of spirituality. So there's the spiritual, and then there's the animal, and then the animal could be divided into the creatures of the air, the birds.

They're most related to spiritual beings. Then the creatures of the earth, the beasts, most related to the earth. And then creatures of the sea, like the fish.

[8 : 44] And each one of those things represent different levels of reality. Now we'd think in terms of different taxonomies, in terms of modern science. But the focus within scripture is upon meaning.

So it doesn't really matter so much that a whale is a mammal. That's not really the point. The point is that the whale is a creature that represents the realm of the water, is a beast of the water.

And that helps us to understand the meaning of that creature, and how it relates to us. And so you have spiritual, animal, vegetable, mineral.

And it's a descent down into different levels of reality. And humankind is both the offspring of, and the mediator of, heaven and earth. So the man is formed of breath and body, of air and earth.

The man is formed of the bringing together of the earth, the adamah, and the heavens as God breathes into the man, the breath of life. And so there's a union of heaven and earth.

[9 : 52] Mankind is the offspring of heaven and earth. But on the other hand, mankind is the mediator of heaven and earth, that brings those things together, even in very bodily processes.

So the process of breathing, taking in air, the higher level thing, and then nutrition, taking in the earth into ourselves. And so these different processes are relating us to different orders of reality.

And this is a very, again, this is a dentro-centric way of looking at the world. One that focuses upon our rootedness within reality, and the symbolism and the analogies that arise from that.

And this is the way that scripture works. And so you have, as a mediator of heaven and earth, mankind is supposed to bring heaven down to earth, and its patterns down to earth, bring heavenly meaning and oppose it upon the earth, and raise up the flesh of the earth, and direct it towards the heavens.

So for instance, we see mankind naming the animals. In naming the animals, mankind is bringing the heavenly order down upon the earth.

[11 : 02] And then in sacrificing animals, mankind is raising those animals up into the heavens. And so you see these different dynamics at play. Let's see if I can find some passages to read as examples of this.

That mankind taking in the earth into his body through nutrition, is taking as it were, like language takes the marks on a page, and brings them into the order of the body.

By staying alive, Adam is contributing to the greater goal of creation. Conversely, if Adam dies, a part of corporeal reality loses its higher spiritual purpose, and a part of spiritual reality loses its lower corporeal expression.

For humans, it is also important to remember that breathing involves the ability to speak, which makes it a vehicle of language and information. Thus, in the human microcosm, Adam's head represents the first principle, wisdom, as the source of meaning for the body.

The role of the head is to provide a unifying principle to answer the dark, subconscious enigmas of the flesh. In exchange, the body expresses and supports the head with the actions of the arms and the legs.

[12 : 18] Therefore, humanity's impetus in the universe can be adequately summed up as informing matter with meaning, and expressing meaning with matter. And so, Adam lowers meaning down into the world and raises matter up.

There's a downward movement of informing and an upward movement of expressing. Let's see if I can find another passage on that. Another important way to symbolise these relationships is through the interactions of a rider and a mount.

The rider informs the mount with direction and purpose, and the mount expresses that purpose with power and support. The mount extends the rider's body by increasing the power of his legs, and the rider extends the mount's spirit by increasing its wisdom.

The relationship between the rider and the mount is perfectly analogous to the relationship between Adam's own mind and body. In this case, the body is his animal component, and the mind is his spiritual component.

Thus, Adam's impetus in the universe may also be described as raising the animal and lowering the spiritual, both in himself and the world around him. And so, this can play out in many different ways, and again, one of the strengths of this book is the way it integrates its themes into these core principles and show how those, on the one hand, it gets the point of these really strongly across, and then it expresses how those distribute out.

[13 : 52] And so, you'll have many different examples to illustrate these fundamental principles. So, for instance, bread making is a materialization of fine principles, a bringing down into matter, and then cooking is a raising up of flesh.

Now, you may or not may not find that persuasive. I think there's something important there. But, what he does throughout the book is show how these principles can bring light to bear upon many different phenomena that we wouldn't give significance to.

And as a result, we wouldn't be attentive to. But throughout this book, there are many points where there are aha moments, because these fundamental principles really do shed a lot of light.

There are issues with them at points, but they are worth attending to. There's a lot going on there. And then he relates other things to this, such as male and female.

That's, in order to create Adam in his image, God made Adam a creator or reproducer of his own image. Only then was the microcosm truly complete, when the image contained its own image within itself.

[15 : 07] And then, the significance of, to truly grasp the significance of gender in the Bible, it's important to understand that Adam is the union of heaven and earth at the cosmic level, and that this union translates into a sexual union at the human level.

Thus, the male and female sides each represent one half of the equation. The male is responsible for materializing meaning into seed, and the female is responsible for refining matter into food.

On the one side of the equation, the father produces the seed that implicitly contains the essence of humanity. Therefore, the role of the male is directly connected to heaven and language. On the other side of the equation, like the earth itself, the mother provides sustenance in the form of food.

In particular, she raises food from her own body, first in the womb and then in the breast. And so, the mother is associated with giving flesh to the child.

The father gives the principle, the mother gives the flesh. Now, this, in part, is based upon a more primitive form of phenomenological cosmology.

[16 : 16] But there's truth to it, and it's important to understand how this plays out, and how this plays out in terms of the symbolism of heaven and earth. Within scripture, we see this fleshed out in other ways.

So, the man is born of the Adamah, which is associated with the woman. The woman is associated with the earth. The man is associated with the heavens, and the father figure of God who acts from the heavens.

And so, there is symbolism playing out within the text. Much of this is unwelcome within the current context. But it's important to recognize. It is there within Genesis, and it has great significance throughout the scriptures in various ways.

It's important to get back to this and see this. And I think that Pajot is very good on these sorts of points. Even though there are points where I disagree, he's got the fundamental principles right.

Because human beings can multiply, the body of humanity can extend out into the world as well. We're not just single individuals, but we can form the body as the social body, the wider body of the human society or the human race more generally.

[17 : 26] And so, there are nested microcosms. And so, we have a more general cosmic level reality with heaven and earth. Then we have the social level with the heaven and earth order, with the head of society and then the body of society and then we have it relating to sexual relations between the man and the woman.

And then we have it relating to the life of the human body itself and how we relate to our own bodies. And so, in each one of these levels we can see analogies flowing between them.

It's also connected to things like law and deed. The law is the principle that comes down and the deed is the body that expresses it. and then there are problems that can come when you just have the pure law, the dazzling light of the pure law which has not been expressed by matter.

And what you need is for the law to be made clear through many different cases and those cases make the situations clear by bringing the light to bear upon them. But they also enable us to see the light with more distinction because it's not just dazzling.

it enables us to see the specific case and how justice applies in this specific case and how that is an expression of the core light of the law but without being dazzled by that.

[18 : 46] So we do not know what shape it takes. And so the core principle is expressed through the case law like extending breath out into the body. There's a passage that I found helpful on this.

Laws bring light and meaning to human events and human questions or problems provide tangible expressions for God's spirit. And then this relate the law is analogous to a tree and it deeds to its fruit.

The fruits are the concrete facts that point to a higher identity or fruits with their seed in them. So you know the identity of the seed through the fruits. It's that core thing that is expressed through its material expressions.

that more abstract principle that fine principle that gets expressed in more concrete ways. The tabernacle again is another pattern here.

It's pattern and materials the heavenly pattern that is given on the mount. So go up receive the heavenly pattern from heaven and take that pattern down and then the earth provides support by giving materials raising up materials to provide for the pattern to be applied in reality.

[20 : 03] There's a forming pattern the forming of the order coming down and then a filling pattern the reality being supported by the earth as it gives forth material to uphold the pattern.

The tent is about the tabernacle is about the lowering of spirit and the altar associated with it is about the raising of matter. Now this is a very helpful way of thinking about it.

There's a lot more going on in the tabernacle but this is a very helpful core orientation to the sorts of things that are taking place there and then he also relates these sorts of things to other stories.

So we talked a few days ago about Cain and Abel and I found him very helpful on Padreau very helpful on the discussion of Cain and Abel that these are things that are found elsewhere but he treats them with a fairly sure hand.

He knows the key things that are taking place and this is something I've found on a number of occasions when reading through him that I've looked into more depth on some of these passages and I can see ways in which his reading makes sense in terms of the wider things that I know about the passages and the way these themes play out and so I could bolster a number of his arguments even though a number of them I find unconvincing.

[21 : 22] There is a fundamental core to his argument the very heart of his argument is very convincing and there's a lot more that could be said to support it and unfortunately for many readers they won't get this because many of the arguments that he makes are a bit beyond the level of people's initial perception.

It takes quite a while to get to the point where you would see these patterns in a helpful and sure-footed way but you can see them if you give enough time to them.

they are there and many of them I'd arrived at independently apart from him. Anyway, getting back to Cain and Abel he talks about for instance Cain related to the earth he doesn't mention his name I don't think but his name is related to the earth with the smith connection and Abel is related to the heavens again Abel's name related to pebble or vapour or breath and those connections are then played out in terms of one being a keeper of sheep and the other raising up food from the earth and then the relationship between them that is expressed in their sacrifices as well that express those two realities and he's very thought-provoking on a number of these things and so the breaking of the relationship between the two is significant once you've seen that particular connection and what they represent there is a breaking of the bond between heaven and earth as Cain takes the life of Abel and no longer

Cain is the one that should be empowering and giving power and strength to Abel and Abel is the one that should be acting in a priestly manner and giving that fundamental order and then he also points out the relationship between the sons of Noah and this is one area where very thought-provoking and perhaps a bit controversial so he talks about the northern heights of Japheth the southern depths of Ham and the realm in between of Shem and so as you read the story of Genesis in particular you descend into the south for sustenance you ascend to the north to get new seed and Jacob is also caught between Edom in the south and Laban in the north Edom is associated with the red of the earth and Laban with the whites of the north and the snowy peaks with the air and these sorts of things and these themes are actually there in Genesis to a degree that he doesn't fully flesh out and I'm sure he's aware of these but for instance the deception of Esau plays heavily upon the name

Edom he's given that name Edom immediately afterwards related to red and related also closely to the name of Adam and to the Adama he's red and he's deceived with the red red stuff on the other side the stew is described as red red stuff whereas Laban is described is tricked with white strips stripped from the white trees so that white shows again it's very much a play upon Laban's name and its association with white and so these themes are playing out within the story in ways that he's quite thought-provoking about and another example of this let's see if I can find a passage like Cain the descendants of Ham are kingly prototypes credited with building the first cities and ruling over powerful empires Nimrod is called a hunter which points to his ability to kill wild animals as opposed to pasturing domesticated animals this is an expression of power in contrast with authority an important pattern that is repeated in the relationship between Jacob and Esau these patterns are representations of the conflicted relationship between Cain and Abel which is itself a representation of the relationship between earth and heaven these reiterated patterns of earthly power versus heavenly authority are reflected in the geography of biblical narratives once these structures have been recognised many stories in the bible no longer appear as random events instead they are transformed into coherent narratives leading to the union of heaven and earth at the centre of creation and so he compares Esau as a nation of kings and Israel as a nation of priests there's some important things going on there and it's worth paying attention to some of the themes that he brings out here and then he also relates this to

[26 : 10] Joseph and Judah and the tensions between them Joseph as the hire of the two and Judah as the one that's related more to the earth and then Benjamin in the middle interesting and suggestive connections I'm not completely persuaded but there's something there and it's again in this book there are so many suggestive connections like that that if you pursue there might be something there something worth making something of at perhaps the heart of the book and one of the more questionable elements but also one of the more stimulating elements one that is at the same time a bit frustrating but also quite illuminating at points is his contrast between time and space and so time is the cause of change and transformation and space is the stabilizing force time is related to the flooded world and space to the dry land so when the world is flooded there's a everything's rendered opaque and things are rendered mysterious and it's not clear anymore the place is disordered and chaotic and there's not an integrating order where with dry land we have order created out of that disorder and there's an orienting center in the cosmic mountain within around which everything can find its bearings and this is a key theme at the heart of the book and so there's a distinction between formation which is when something produces more of itself and extends itself out into the world produces a firmer and surer order and arrives at a more integrated identity and then transformation which is its opposite where something becomes less of itself is recreated is transformed is changed into something else and so this is the difference between turning into something else and producing a greater version of oneself and so he relates this to God as the creator of heaven and earth and then God as the creator of time and space and according to that second pattern he writes God is the source of two very different influences one is a positive expression of God's identity and the other a negative retraction or concealment of God's identity God's influence as creator of space is analogous to the pillar of a house and God's influence as creator of time is analogous to the axle of a wheel the first is firmly attached to the positive foundation and the second is loosely attached to the empty hub of a wheel one is the power that builds a consistent and stable reality and the other is the mystery that subverts and overturns existing reality with inconsistency and confusion and so that is again one of those statements that

I would like to tweak that in a number of important ways it's getting at something and that's part of the frustration of it that it's definitely got its hand on something just not quite as surely as I would like it to be I think there's a lot of areas in which the language around this time space dichotomy could be tweaked and improved upon I don't think the dichotomy is quite as straightforward as he presents it to be however as he develops it it becomes clearer and many of the problems are dealt with that doesn't mean that it doesn't remain frustrating in certain ways but I think it isn't it is a principle that shows its worth on many fronts it's a distinction that is quite useful even though I would want to frame that in a somewhat different way and so going back to the issue of flooded land is associated with primitive uncertainty and the dominion of time and that's a realm of divination where you kind of this mysterious realm where you're just trying to work out through mysterious processes and chance and luck what reality is dry land is associated with the order of law and established knowledge so it's scientific order for instance is associated with the dry land and pillar and axel pillars associated with the dominion of space axel with the dominion of time and the revolution of time and it's change and associations again with the land when they are in the land there's stability and order and structure they're surrounded by the waters and the nations which are represented by the waters but the land itself is dry land is ordered space it has structure to it but when they're cast into the sea that's and they're wandering the wilderness that's the dominion of time when there is a transformation breaking down an overwhelming of space by this realm of disorder and chaos and transformation and so integration to the core principle is the drying out of the flooded land so the more that we bring things into integration with core principles which is what he's trying to do in this book in a number of different ways so for instance in your reading of the bible a lot of the drying out of the land you're reaching reading this text and a lot of it is mysterious and strange and then you start to find these principles that make sense of things so for instance the identities of priests king and prophets and how those different vocations relate to each other for me that was a very important principle that helped to dry out the land of scripture and to integrate it to a more central principle now there's much of that land that's still covered by water or pockets of it that are covered by water but that core principle establishes a dry order within that flooded land and it gradually dries it out and so when you come to different passages you have that integrating principle and it makes sense of things so you read those passages now and they're no longer strange in the same way because there's a core principle that can relate the concrete details and bring them into a larger symbolic structure and this is a lot of what he's doing within the book and then on the other hand you have a failure of integration leading to a flooding of the land and so when there's that point where the order breaks down where the order does not hold where some fact overwhelms things some stumbling stone that you trip upon then the order breaks down and the land is flooded and it's very hard to establish order again within that structure you've lost the order and so there must be some new integrating principle that must come along if you're going to re-establish that the purity system that we see within scripture is in

many respects an attempt to establish stability and order and remove elements that unsettle order and leave them as a remainder outside it's not a totalizing thing it recognizes remainder and those things outside the camp it's not an attempt to totalize an order but rather it's an attempt to have a realm within which order exists leaving space for remainder and not just doing away with any remainder recognizing that there are still areas that will be flooded there's still area of mystery and uncertainty there's still areas that are hebel vapor that we can't grasp and control but yet wisdom as the core principle brings light and it helps us to understand core realities around which we can make sense of things and the purity system is very much establishing that order within the life of israel there's leniency and there's rigor within god's ordering and so the leniency is allowing for the loosening of things by time and the rigor is establishing order and structure and the danger danger of going too far in one direction is in the direction of order it's a sort of tyranny that is a brittle tyranny that can easily be broken down by that remainder on the other hand and the element that won't fit in on the other hand where there's a looseness there's disorder and there's no consistency things don't hold things are constantly breaking down there's no consistency of the self there's no consistency of the social order etc and so it's establishing a balance between time and space that is very important within

Pajot's argument and that relationship between time and space is expressed in things like work and rest work is associated with space and structure and order and time time is associated with rest time is a sort of entropy and it's related also to waste or less left over it's a time it involves renewal and change and so time is a sort of recreation or recreation and there are associations of this with what he calls tools and instruments so the tool is that which can take an order and impose it upon reality it can take the point and distribute it upon reality or it can take the focus it can focus matter towards a point as well it can take the strength of matter and give it order and structure and direction and it can also distribute that point that order structure and direction upon reality so that it is expressed effectively whereas alongside that tool you also have the instrument musical instruments which are means of establishing play and rest and the loosening of bonds the rigorous bonds that would tie things together and so time is a cycle of recreation there's reason on the one hand the order of work and rationality and structure and tools and instruments and then there's the order of time the order of play of recreation the order of irrationality and absurdity it's the order of change and rest of sleep and it's if you just have cyclical time it's pointless change but if you have a positive form of time that's controlled and well contained within all a fundamentally ordered reality then it's renewing and refreshing it loosens overly tight bonds and it makes us whole again and so sabbath is a connection between time and space between natural change and artificial stability it's a it relates consistency and completeness completeness is associated with time just all that is whereas consistency is that which integrates all that it integrates things into a higher principle so that matter becomes a power that holds principle and bears principle and principle is expressed effectively in matter so it's a marriage of the two whereas time is a loosening all the all of that and so this subsuming time and space to a higher identity as well a crowning space with the mystery of time that he talks about the and he talks about the way that these things can be integrated talks about for instance the garment and the fringe so the garment has this tightly integrated structure which represents the core integration of work of structure of meaning of space and then there's time and disorder and um irrationality and absurdity and the exception and that's expressed in the fringes those things that are outside the order on the margins on the edges and this space made for that and so the order is not completely one of land but rather there's realm for sea as well there's realm for not everything is dried out land the principle is not fully expressed in matter yet and maybe this is related to the account in revelation of there being no more sea but that's a question I'm not sure where he'd fall upon and so within the garden many of these themes are expressed whether that's

dry land or covered water flooded land or the way that that is more structured with rivers going out and dividing out lands and the way that that is structured Adam in the garden establishes an order and a balance between heaven and earth and earth is associated with body and time is associated with blood that flow of blood and change and um it gives life and all these sorts of things and space is associated with bones those things that give structure and order and so the human body is a microcosm of all of these forces at work related to each other at work in relationship to each other we see this also and he gives lots of different examples which are loose analogies but which help us to flesh out the principles and see what's going on here so the left hand and the right hand the for those of us who are right-handed the right hand expresses the tight relationship between mind and body between matter and spirit between heaven and earth it's a very tight relationship that you're able to give structure and order work with it and bring things into integration tight integration whereas the left hand does not have that same tight integration it's looser and weaker and that looser and weaker connection is also important it is a recognition of the fact that we cannot fully integrate this order there is room for weakness and the play and rest and um all these things that represent a break within this order and the fact that it does not control everything so one is for work and the less dominant hand is more for play and for assistance and these sorts of things and that relationship between tighter and looser integration of body and spirit is important the heart is the point where everything comes together it's the point where the head the place where principles and spirit are at work and body where strength and matter and power are all at work the heart is the place where those things come together or the chest these are the meeting points of head and body where those principles are related to each other and then he talks in fascinating ways about and things like dreaming dreaming is associated with the axis of time it's a time of loosening of the connection between head and body and the body becomes weak and the head wanders in sleep there's a loosening of that connection so that we might be flooded we're flooded by thoughts we're flooded by the mindlessness of sleep by the forgetfulness and it's a refreshing thing that renews us so that when we wake up we can work and establish structure and order and being awake asleep and awake is like the evening and the morning within the human self there's a loss of the human self there's a loss of the hierarchical relationship between head and body in rest and then it's also related to nakedness and dress we remove our clothes in sleep when we go to sleep there's a recognition that we are unclothed we the body is no longer clothed with the order of the mind the body is unclothed and it's weak and our mind is wandering and so death is also related to this death is a descent of the body as the body is no longer informed by the spirit and it becomes a corpse now adam failed to failed to name the animal and keep the law so that's a failed failure to inform the material with the spirit in the right way he also wrongly took the fruit into himself and so that's taking in poison and wrongful integration

[43 : 24] and wrongful taking up of flesh and wrongful taking up of flesh the snake is associated with time and the tree is associated with space and order and structure and these themes at points are unpersuasive but at other points i think more generally he's on to something very important here these themes are deep within the text and they're worth paying attention to some of the more controversial points but which again fit in strongly with some biblical themes are the male association with space construction formation and the imposition of reason and the female association with time renewal and transformation we see these expressions more generally the man being more associated with the sun the woman with the moon the woman is associated particularly with the earth as well the earth and then the man is associated more with the heaven and its order menstruation and the way that that's associated the significance of blood and the tides and the moon and the seasons and then the way that the man gives the body of the earth and the way that the man gives order to the body of the earth and the way that the man establishes the order of the the seed that gives life to the child that is given matter by the body of the woman and so these are themes that play out in important ways within genesis particularly within the first three chapters and to understand the view of male and to understand the view of male and female within scripture it's important to understand some of these dynamics because they play out in a great many ways and it's one of the reasons why we see the association of women closely with the death and resurrection of christ or why there is such a focus upon women at the dawn of the narratives it's worth thinking about the deeper symbolism of human existence and the ways that these play out in all levels of reality where we experience the world at a deep level in these ways our body creates a template for understanding the world and these other things are at play when we experience reality so for instance right hand and left or the way that we think of up representing things that are higher in principle and things that are down associated with death or lower in principle and these basic ways in which we order the world around our body and around certain patterns and the world being understood from a rooted situation within it this dentro-centric understanding of reality it's very important for understanding scripture it's quite alien to us in a society that's focused narrowly upon science but it's very important for understanding what's going on in the biblical text and this leads to some interesting connections as well that help us to read certain stories so for instance the association in the story of solomon of the king of tyre was six days of work he helps building the temple and the queen of sheba with the seventh day of rest now it's interesting i mean what are we supposed to make of that the king of tyre from the north and the queen of sheba from the south these connections are not actually alien to scripture the more you look into these texts there are things that back up some of the connections that he's drawing and so it's worth tarrying with some of these things even if you're not finally persuaded by them he's on to something and he's near nearer to the truth than those who reject this sort of symbolism outright would appreciate those who reject this sort of symbolism just do not have the first beginnings of how to understand the biblical cosmology there's so much going on in the biblical cosmology that requires a deep rootedness in this symbolic way of viewing the world

and so extreme time and extreme space also lead to judgment the establishment of this radical disorder and breaking of boundaries and then on the other hand an establishment of extreme integration a false integration for instance the tower of babel would be an example of this and the establishment of the radical confusion would be an example of the sons of men with the daughters of women prior to the flood and both of these are examples of a breaking apart of the proper order between the dry land and the waters within this more general symbolic paradigm that Pajot is presenting then there are points where he makes some very controversial claims so I think one of the most controversial one that's worth thinking about and not dismissing thoughtlessly there's something more to it he talks about like the concepts of grace and the sabbath the rainbow symbolizes the elevation of space by the realization that God is the principle of time and space straight and crooked familiar and foreign rational and irrational revealed and hidden true and false good and bad the realization quoted above implies that evil in inverted commas is inherently part of humanity actually the quote is

I will no longer curse the ground for humanity's sake nor will I destroy everything alive again for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth the realization quoted above implies that evil is inherently part of humanity which means a certain degree of inverted commas wrong must be acknowledged for its perfection more precisely there exists a higher reality a meta space in which a certain degree of again in inverted commas lower evil can be transmuted into a again in inverted commas higher good for the knowledge of God this is the spiritual truth that Adam and Eve were not equipped to handle in the garden of Eden which led to their death this meta truth is also what the biblical story of Job reveals in that context Job's excessive righteousness forced him to realize that God was ultimately the cause of his downfall and evil plight shall we accept the good at the hand of God but not the bad the story of Job concludes that righteousness is incomplete because God legitimately created both in inverted commas good and in inverted commas bad as part of the human experience in other words some degree of exile and death is required for the perfection of Adam and the knowledge of God now I think that's quite infelicitously expressed but I think there's something there and I think it's important to recognize the element of truth that is there that there are these principles that we'd often see as purely negative principles as evil principles and principles associated with things like death principles associated with things like decay and the danger and animality and bestiality of the human being we'd associate those with evil and the passions these sorts of things these things that can be assigned to evil are not necessarily straightforwardly evil they can be very important for establishing an order that exceeds the good of pure of pure rationality there's something there that needs to be integrated into a higher order and part of the danger of the human being there's an appropriate danger and animality and bestiality that should be retained in the same way there's a degree of death that is needed in order to allow for the processes of life and so the question of death as just a purely negative force something that's purely consigned to the category of evil there are problems with doing that because death is often that which clears the way for life new life to arise and death is part of the processes of renewal in certain places it's death that must precede resurrection unless a seed falls into the ground and dies it abides alone but if it dies it produces much fruit and so these

I think that's what he's trying to get at I don't think he expresses it in a way that is the best I think it provokes more concerns than it actually gives illumination at this point but I think he's getting at something that is important and I'd want to express it that way I'm not sure if that's what he's trying to say but that's how I would express a point similar and then he talks about things like bread and wine in this context bread is associated with materialisation of order and that core principle and it's associated with work that work gives or bread gives strength to mankind the strength to the heart of man and wine makes the heart of man glad and so there's this work and rest associated with bread and wine bread is what you eat at the beginning of the day of work wine is what you drink at the end when you've done the work and you're refreshed and then he associates grapes and wine with blood in this connection which is again very illuminating he draws attention to the fact that we first see the drinking of wine after the prohibition on the drinking of blood again what do we make of that

I'm not sure but it's a very interesting connection and there's almost certainly something there to be picked out blood or grapes are those things that and wine it loosens the connection between the head and the body it allows for us to be refreshed it's associated with sleep and it's associated with refreshment and rest and yet the leavening or leavening of bread is a sort of union of time and space a union of the process of fermentation and the processes of order and these sorts of connections again they're very stimulating they're interesting symbolic connections how much weight we put on each one of them is uncertain but together I think they present a very compelling and thought provoking picture and I highly recommend people read this book for that reason there's lots to disagree with and particularly I think in his readings of particular passages at points they're deeply stimulating and there are all sorts of interesting thoughts that he brings out at other points they're less persuasive a lot of what he has to say upon Ezekiel's chariot vision is unpersuasive to me

[54 : 45] I don't think that he gets into the particularity of that story well enough at certain points it's helpful but much of the time it isn't and I think part of this is the danger of his symbolic structure of trying to find this underlying order and pattern to reality often it can strip away the particularity and you're constantly returning to these fundamental templates and structures and losing the significance of the variations and so I've argued that scripture is musical and part of the significance of musical patterns is that it's not just a fundamental template that's lying behind all these different expressions of a theme it's not that you have to get to that underlying theme and sweep away the particularities as remainder rather the significance is found in the variations and the union and so it's the way in which there is this significant variation it's the fundamental order of the type or the symbol that enables us to see the significance of the variation because the significant variation is that which plays with the fundamental order and construes it in a particular way that it's a particular conjugation of that underlying pattern and I think that's one of the areas where he's weaker again the particularity of these stories is often lost you're often returning to these fundamental principles of heaven and earth time and space and seeing all these fundamental axes at play but in the process missing the significance of specific figures of Adam and Eve of Cain and Abel of of Israel and the different figures within its history now he pays attention to them in some ways but often in a way that is at risk of reducing them to what they symbolise now I think if he was maybe engaged in a different sort of biblical interpretation speaking upon a particular passage he would speak about this in a different way so I don't know maybe I'm being unfair in my criticisms here but this was one of my concerns about the book

I thought that it was it failed to get at the particularity of these symbols in quite the way that someone like James Jordan really gets at the particularities of the symbols so what's the difference between the cypress tree and the olive tree or the vine that is not the sort of question that Pajot is going to answer that well within this book rather that's the sort of thing that James Jordan gets at he really is alert to that or the difference between the sin offering and the memorial sacrifice Pajot will have helpful comments to say about that but James Jordan will get into far more depth on those particular sorts of questions but there is a complementary value to what both of them are saying here and I would recommend reading both of them alongside each other for seeing different aspects of biblical symbolism and typology the space and time dichotomy is perhaps one of the areas where

I really think things could be expressed in a slightly different way that would be somewhat better but at heart I think it gets at something important and be patient with that sort of thing because there is something there and there are certain connections again which might seem to be negative and people can often react against so for instance the connection between male and female and some of these themes but tarry with those be patient with them because there is something there and it's very hard to understand scripture without being alert to those sorts of themes and so I highly commend this book to you I think it's worth it's worth getting your teeth into there's a lot that can be said within it about it and there's a lot more within it that I don't mention and so the book is The Language of Creation!

and Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis by Mathieu Pajot if you have any further questions for me please leave them on my Curious Cat account if you would like to support this and further videos please do so using my Patreon account the links for both of those are below and Lord willing I'll be back again tomorrow with a question and answer God bless and thank you very much for listening