

# Creative Chaos

The surprising mystery of time, self, and meaning.

ANDRE RABE

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To put one's intuitions into words is a most rewarding exercise but also unexpectedly difficult. Subtle contradictions and inconsistencies only come to light when we try to find language for these impressions. But new insights and greater clarity are rewards that are out of all proportion to the difficulty of this process. In this way, our narratives are not simply reflections of reality but movements that create new meaning. Much of my writing starts with conversation. What a rare gift it is to find a person as passionate and intrigued by the same themes that intrigue oneself. Some find such a conversationist among their professional colleagues. I am so thankful that I have found this friend in my wife, Mary-Anne.

It is not the absence of influences that define new meaning and unique concepts but, rather, the unique combination and reconfiguration of existing concepts. As such, if there is anything fresh or unique in the ideas presented here, I am deeply indebted to the many influences and conversations I have had over the years with friends, students, and books. There is no way I can mention them all by name. Our online students at *mimesis.academy* engage us weekly with the most beautiful questions and insights.

There are, however, a few I can and must mention by name. They are the brave ones, who offered to review some of the earlier manuscripts. Thank you, Harry Haver and Tonya Stanfield for your patience and encouragement. In my desire to connect the big ideas and clarify the big picture, I often failed to see the detail - such as the finer points of grammar! Thankfully, grammar is a big deal to some of our friends. So I want to especially thank Kathryn Hannula, who has read and reread the manuscript numerous times and offered many helpful nuances. If any errors remain,

it's because of my stubbornness to ignore her suggestions. But more than her keen eye for detail, it is her passion for this message that has been an inspiration throughout.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Different translations of the Bible are used throughout and indicated with the usual abbreviations. The following two are new and therefore get special mention here:

- DBH      The New Testament: A Translation by David Bentley Hart
- RA        The Hebrew Bible: A Translation by Robert Alter

## REVIEWS

In reading *Creative Chaos* by Andre Rabe, I discovered to my joy that theology can still be both intellectually profound and profoundly moving. Rarely in recent years have I come across such an excitingly transformative reflection on the hidden meaning of Christianity. Informed not only by biblical scholarship but also by the sciences and an awareness of the brutal history of human violence, this succinct work digs deep beneath conventional Christian thought in search of enlivening currents of meaning crusted over by centuries of dubious religious assumptions. Readers will find in this surprising text that both Christian teachers and their sophisticated opponents have too often blunted rather than exposing the meaning of divine creation, redemption, the crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. I strongly recommend this book as one not only to be read but also reread.

- **John Haught**, Distinguished Research Professor in the Department of Theology at Georgetown University.

Andre Rabe's latest work is his essential re-imagining of the Christian meta-story. With easy, deft hand and keen theological instincts, he guides us through Scripture, Genesis in particular. Understanding the first book of the Bible as a back-and-forth of the unconscious and conscious selves, he demonstrates how the God of creation is seeking continually to tease human beings forward, to the depth of relationship which is love. The anthropology of Rene' Girard forms a leitmotif, revealing how humanity began on the wrong footing of violence and rivalry, and yet in Christ a new-and-true way of being human is offered, one of nonviolence and forgiveness. Christ thus "re-sets the trajectory of the human story." The outcome is a holistic, healing narrative of seduction to love, so different from the divided, unhappy legacy of the old reading,



with its damaging binaries of paradise/fall, heaven/earth, perfection/sin, grace/law. Rabe's work represents an epochal moment of fresh reading, one that is happening in many ways throughout Christianity but is given here what could very well be its classic presentation. This book overcomes violence not simply in the obvious, physical sense, but as the very key to existence which has framed everything for human beings, including the interpretation of the Christian message itself. According to Rabe, it is exactly all this which God in Christ is saving us from.

- **Anthony Bartlett** Ph.D. Theologian and author, including *Seven Stories*

Andre says, "You cannot be certain and astonished at the same time." In *Creative Chaos*, he expertly walks through the origin stories, archetypes, and symbolism gently challenging traditional certainties that may hold us back from new possibilities. Humanity has been unconsciously shaped by narratives. The ideas presented here push the narrative forward in thought-provoking ways, challenging us to ask entirely new questions. *Creative Chaos* invites us into a chaos that is not evil, but the deep waters over which the Spirit hovers and creates new life. Jesus is presented as a model of how to live in a posture of openness to a God that will continually surprise. It's a challenging, refreshing perspective which opens doors you may not even know were shut. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is up for a fresh take on what they've held as certain or who desires a new adventure in their spiritual journey.

- **Tonya Stanfield**, Masters in Christian Spiritual Formation and Discipleship. Author of *Traffick Proof - A Counter-Human Trafficking Tool*.

God is not a rival, vying for control of your life. Turns out, control is not the goal. This book is a summons to set out on the adventure of maturity; through myth, rabbinic midrash, patristic thought, psychological insight, Girardian anthropology and Biblical contemplation to new possibilities for life. Beyond the lack within, beyond a blueprint from above, beyond being a spectator on the sidelines, beyond chaos being met with coercion, the Spirit beckons you to a beauty unimagined in the depths we fear.

- **Jarrod McKenna**, award winning nonviolence educator and host of the popular InVerse Podcast.