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**EGO-DEPLETION & SELF-REGULATION  
STRATEGY IN LYDIA MILLET'S  
A CHILDREN'S BIBLE (2020)**

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# EGO-DEPLETION & SELF-REGULATION STRATEGY IN LYDIA MILLET'S A CHILDREN'S BIBLE (2020)

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## Abstract

This paper focusses on the way psychic malfunctioning influences man's cognitive mental powers putting much focus on the phenomenon of ego depletion, self-control fatigue and the way mental human resources could be rejuvenated. In doing so, it proposes a psychoanalytic standpoint that builds upon the theory of ego-depletion, Carl Jung's theory of collective unconscious and its related concern with myth and archetypes. In light of this, the paper proposes a plan of self-regulation that has four moderators: a specified standard of behavior, monitoring behavior, willpower and motivation. The paper argues that there is a significant link between ego-depletion, on the one hand, and myths and archetypes, on the other. Being responsible for inspiring man with patterns of human behavior as well as codes of ethics, myths and archetypes from the paper's perspective, can help rejuvenate man's depleted mental resources and maintain a state of self-regulation. However, the myths and archetypes of the past are no more adequate to provide the individual with patterns of behavior that help him function well and effect the required state of self-regulation in a highly technologically developed life. This brings to the fore the necessity of updating both myths and archetypes to provide patterns of human behavior that fit well in the age of AI and technology. In light of this, the paper proposes a meticulous reading of Lydia Millet's A Children's Bible with two ideas in mind: examining the efficacy of the therapeutic plan of self-regulation and highlighting the type of required myths.

**Keywords:** Ego-Depletion, self-regulation, collective unconscious, myth, archetypes, technology, AI

## ملخص البحث:

يركز البحث على الطريقة التي تؤثر بها المشاكل النفسية على القوى العقلية المعرفية للإنسان مع التركيز بشكل خاص على ظاهرة استنزاف الأنا والقدرة على ضبط النفس ووسيلة تجديد الموارد العقلية البشرية المستنزفة. ويتبع البحث نظرية استنزاف الأنا مع منهج التحليل النفسي منتقدا الفجوة في مناهج تعزيز قدرات الإنسان والتي تهتم بشكل أساسي بالقوى العقلية المعرفية للإنسان بغض النظر عن التعزيز الأخلاقي والنفسي. و يقدم البحث في ظل منهج التحليل النفسي خطة للتنظيم الذاتي تقوم على أربعة محاور وهي: النماذج المعيارية للسلوك، مراقبة السلوك الانساني، الإرادة والحافز. ويفترض البحث وجود صلة بين استنزاف الأنا، من ناحية، والأساطير والنماذج الأصلية، ولللاوعي الجماعي من ناحية أخرى. ويفترض عدم قدرة الأساطير الدارجة وكذلك الأنماط الأصلية وحدها على مواكبة عصر التكنولوجيا ويقترح ضرورة إيجاد أساطير بديلة من شأنها الربط بين الماضي والحاضر ومساعدة الأجيال السابقة في فهم متطلبات عصر التكنولوجيا وكذلك مساعدة الأجيال الجديدة في فهم أنماط السلوك التي تنتمي للماضي، ومن هذا المنطلق يقدم البحث استراتيجية للتنظيم الذاتي من شأنها تجديد قدرات الإنسان المستنزفة ومنها الإرادة والقدرة على كبح جماح النفس واتخاذ القرار ويحدد أنماط الأساطير التي تعد متطلب أساسي لعملية التنظيم الذاتي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** استنزاف الأنا-التنظيم الذاتي-اللاوعي الجماعي-الأسطورة-الأنماط الأصلية-التكنولوجيا والذكاء الاصطناعي

## Introduction

Human enhancement movements obviously reduce man to be a mortal physical being with a group of limited mental and cognitive capacities who needs to have better health, longer life span or rather to become an immortal being with higher mental capacities. This obviously disregards the psychic life of man that has both a conscious and unconscious aspects whose separation will always remain an everlasting turbulent trouble that requires much concern. Hence, out of a more comprehensive interdisciplinary viewpoint, the paper suggests that human enhancement plans should necessarily encompass further human aspects other than the mental, exemplified in man's psychic capacities and wellbeing. Pursuing this goal, the paper proposes the phenomenon of ego-depletion as a fundamental psychic one that seriously exhausts man's mental and cognitive capacities and inevitably hinders their enhancement. In doing so, it proposes a systematic plan of self-regulation, suggesting means of compensating for man's run out mental resources.

Ego-depletion has its roots in Freud's psychoanalysis that argues that repelling the much enthusiastic pressures of id and superego requires some amount of energy (Baumeister & Bratslavsky, 1998, p. 1253). According to ego-depletion theory, every individual possesses a supply of mental abilities that is responsible for self-regulation and self-control. However, once this supply is repeatedly and excessively consumed in responding to recurrent processes and situations that need self-control, it is inevitably used up so that further maintaining of satisfactory levels of self-control in subsequent tasks will be seriously hindered. At this specific stage, the individual is said to function under ego-depletion which means that he retains no capability of exercising the least degree of self-control or willpower and is therefore prone to breakdown and malfunctioning in different decisive situations. In such cases, man would prefer safe alternatives than risky ones (Unger & Stahlberg, 2011, p. 28).

Accordingly, politician and diplomat Patrick J. Hurley briefly refers to ego-depletion as a "type of cognitive fatigue" (2022, p. 2). Similarly, concerned social psychologists Roy Baumeister, Mark Muraven, Dianne Tice and Ellen Bratslavsky define it as "a temporary reduction in the self's capacity or willingness to engage in volitional action (including controlling the environment, controlling the self, making choices, and initiating action) caused by prior exercise of volition". (Baumeister & Bratslavsky 1998, p. 1253). Therefore, being under ego-depletion, the individual can neither make a choice nor take a decision; he gradually suffers from fatigue and exhaustion, loses self-control and will power (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, p.123). This highlights the twin mental capacities of self-control and willpower as closely related to ego-depletion (Sims, 2012, p.1).

According to theories of self-control, being the regulator and manipulator of human reactions, responses and behavior, self-control is defined as "the overriding or inhibiting of automatic, habitual, or innate behaviors, urges, emotions, or desires that would otherwise interfere with goal-directed behavior" (Muraven & Slessareva, 2003, p. 894). It refers to the individual's ability to adjust and manipulate dominant desires and inclinations as well as indeliberate manners like crying, thoughts and passions. This could be effected by arranging one's surrounding area, placing oneself in certain circumstances while escaping others or "disabling your internet connection to keep yourself from getting distracted while you work, placing your alarm clock on the other side of the room to help yourself get up in the morning, and avoiding situations that lead to temptation" (Sims, 2012, p. 5).

Like self-control, Willpower is a mental capacity and a deterring or stimulating power that positively holds one back from doing something he greatly desires or makes him do what is strictly undesired and inhibited by him (Sims, 2012, p.1). Identifying willpower with ego-depletion, self-control theories regard willpower as a muscle whose excessive employment and exercising necessitate specific physiological resources and cause a sort of fatigue that is known in social psychology as ego-depletion (Sims, 2012, p. 1). Thus, ego-depletion is significantly held responsible for the malfunctioning of self-control as well as the weakening of willpower the fact that is responsible for the individual's going beyond borders of ethical and social codes of behavior (Hurley, 2022, p.1).

This collapse in man's supply of self-control and willpower requires a self-regulation process that regulates motivational conflicts arising from clashes between natural and cultural demands that seek social acceptance. Self-regulation is fundamentally defined as one's ability to manipulate his responses and change them by restricting the undesired urges so as to alter the way he behaves in order to correspond with rules, standards and objectives. In other words, it is stopping "impulses from producing Behavior" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, pp. 116-119). This necessitates four moderators: a clear and specified standard of behavior, monitoring behavior, self-regulatory strength (willpower) and motivation, recommended by the paper as the most relevant remedy of ego-depletion (Muraven, pp. 894- 895). Stressing the

rejuvenating power of motivation, Roy F Baumeister & Vohs argue that "motivation (like cognition and perhaps emotion) can compensate for the reduced ability to self-regulate that ordinarily marks the depleted state" (2007, p. 124). Therefore, subjecting depleted people to witty issues, developing completion objectives and filling them with confidence that they can better perform and accomplish a task incite them to develop a controlled response (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, p. 124).

Having established the fact that a clear and specified standard of behavior is the first prerequisite of the recommended self-regulation process, the paper suggests a reconsideration of Jungian psychology's concepts of collective unconscious with its legacy of human archetypes. According to Jung, the collective unconscious is a part of the unconscious mind that is widely shared by all human beings and that comprises universal images or themes referred to by Jung as archetypes. Archetypes are simply the memories, symbols, and patterns of our predecessors that are widely reflected in dreams, myths, art and religion and that inspire the individuals with patterns of behavior that influence their behavior, beliefs, and instincts. Being totally the product of common repeated human experiences rather than individual ones, the collective unconscious 's archetypes keep a constant unconscious link between the individual's psych and that of all human beings everywhere (Drake, 1969. pp. 124-25). In light of this, the paper argues that archetypes can manage the way human beings behave and the way they view and respond to different situations that necessitate self-control and self-regulation. For example, some archetypes may encourage temptation than others, and thus are liable to cause ego depletion while others may be more resistant, and may, as a result, have more determination to overwhelm ego depletion (Kradin, 2009, p. 219).

Therefore, the paper suggests that mental resources can be rejuvenated by creating myths and tales that can safely reflect corresponding archetypes. Once archetypes are sensibly revealed to the human conscious and one becomes aware of them, they can themselves be modified and can help greatly enhance human beings. In this respect, Jung says, "The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear" (1981, p. 16). Hence, the same archetype may be received differently by different individuals. Consequently, the paper significantly recommends the creation of new provocative illuminating myths that help get man acquainted with patterns of human behavior by projecting the archetypes stored in the collective unconscious giving the individual a chance to add to it a new perspective. The first recommended myth is a new comprehensive one that unites archetypes, technology and AI.

In this respect, believing religion and cultural narration to be vessels wherein human beings project their collective self-archetype, Jung gives the priority to the creation of religious myths and stories (Kilhoffer, 2023, p.3). He regards religious myths as mental remedy for man's troubles and apprehension (Shelburne, 1976, p. 55). Myths and narration help connecting all human beings and keep them linked to the past and the present alike (Kradin, 2009, p. 219). Besides, they considerably help develop human psyche that is not the construct of the individual's present but is rather the cumulative construct of millions of past years (Shearer, 2004, p. 5). However, beside religious myths, Jung calls for the constant creation of further new updated myths that fit well in all times (Kradin, 2009, p. 219).

The second abovementioned moderator of self-regulation, monitoring behavior, suggests the necessity of moral enhancement through monitoring behavior and giving advices. This could be achieved by comparing man's behavior to standard patterns of human behavior "archetypes" and the bulk of both old and updated myths. To get technology and AI involved in the plan of self-regulation, a further suggested monitor of behavior could be provided in what Alexandre Erlar and Vincent C. Müller refer to as "moral AI advisor" (2021, p. 5). This

could be fulfilled through the use of AI applications and technology. The third moderator of self-regulation, willpower, could be therapeutically rejuvenated through what is known as “focus-training games” that can equally enhance “attention and emotional regulation” (Erler & Müller, 2021, p.6). The last and most important moderator of self-regulation, motivation, could be engendered through religion, the creation of motivation-inciting myths or rather through story-telling that have both cognition and emotion. In this concern, the paper highlights religious myths and stories as the most genuine and effective, believing that “some aspects of religious belief, behavior, and experience might foster self-control and self-regulation, whereas others might hinder them” (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009, p. 4). This refocuses the interest in the requirement of updated myths that can further facilitate the understanding of human heritage of spiritual beliefs and help give insight in God’s promises of salvation and immortality that are highly motivating.

Having established the concept of ego-depletion and the consequent necessity of the self-regulation process that has, as mentioned above, four significant moderators, the paper attempts a thorough reading of Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible* through the lens of ego-depletion and Jung’s theory of archetypes and myths. The paper, therefore traces the novel’s presentation of ego-depleted characters and the way they pursue self-regulation’s four moderators to have their depleted resources rejuvenated. A further interest is given to the type of myths recommended by the novel as subservient to human enhancement as well as self-regulation.

Lydia Millet’s *A Children’s Bible* is a climate fiction novel that tells the story of a group of twelve weird children including teenaged Evie, the narrator, and her little brother Jack who all undesirably spend the summer vacation in a lake mansion with their parents. The children first ramble all over nature, deliberately keeping away from their parents until they are all faced with a harsh hurricane that leaves everything in a deteriorated state (Millet, 2020, p. 9). Millet consequently puts in sharp contrast the way the children could wisely and sagaciously receive climate conversion while their parents show no comparable response. She depicts the two generations as two parallel lines that can never intersect or come to term with one another.

Millet has systematically arranged the actions of the novel so as to start with depicting both the disinterested parents and the children as acting under ego-depletion; she then highlights the development and steps taken by both parties to transcend their mental and psychic malfunctioning. From the very beginning, the ego-depleted parents are described as sitting “aimlessly, like robots with no programming” (Millet, 2020, p. 62). This is also deeply implied in their lack of self-control and willpower reflected in their carelessness, excessive pleasurable activities like drinking, overt practice of debauchery and lack of interest, an attitude that is contemptuously received by their children who refer to their indecent practices as “dark acts” (Millet, 2020, p. 7). The parents’ reckless and nonjudgmental behavior make the children constantly self-dependent. For example, when Jack suffered from poison ivy, he sought Evie’s help rather than his parent’s (Millet, 2020, p. 13).

Faced with the hurricane, a further challenging and depleting task, the already depleted irresponsible parents exert no effort to activate their run out self-control and willpower and are judged, as a result, by their children as apathetic. To attract their attention and provoke them to positively react, Sukey recommends the use of a rape whistle that is casually used by the parents to summon the children to dinner (Millet, 2020, p. 62). Being alerted by the rape whistle, Terry warns the parents asking them for an immediate leave since the house starts to be seriously damaged by the storm and the “vacation paradise had turned into hell” (Millet, 2020, p. 62). However, the parents take no sensible decision; they rather believe that leaving is not the wise choice for fear of the management company’s surcharge or penalty (Millet, 2020, p. 63).

Like the parents, exerting much effort to function without parental guidance in different situations and to keep self-controlled, the children become ego-depleted. This has been first manifested in their failure to guess the right parents in the guessing game. They also develop a reckless attitude exemplified in some hazardous or carelessly taken decisions such as going with James on his yacht, disrupting its navigation system, or following Burl after the storm to a farm where they meet further dangerous troubles. Their case was made worst by the parents who have unwisely disabled technology and stripped them off their phones and tablets. This consequently deprived the teens off the motivation, the required standard of behavior, the facilitating consults (the moral adviser) made available on the internet and as a result they feel ostracized. The children consequently take a hostile repulsive reaction, playing the guessing game that dissociates the link between them and their parents. In this concern, Evie says “Hadn’t they deprived us, for the whole summer, of our most dearly beloved playthings and lifelines? Hadn’t they confiscated our cell phones, our tablets, all of our screens and digital access to the outside?” (Millet, 2020, p. 14).

Having established ego-depletion as a common psychic phenomenon, Millet starts over the children’s systematic unconscious fourfold strategy of self-regulation whereas the parents on the other hand keep submissive and disinterested. This is initiated through Millet’s back-to-archetype call set forth in her symbolic allusion to archetypes through the word “molecules” that identifies man as a replicated version of his predecessors like Julius Caesar and Lincoln who pass their molecules (archetypes) on to consequent generations. In this concern, Evie says:

If you could be nothing, you could also be everything. Once my molecules had dispersed, I would be here forever. Free. Part of the timeless. The sky and the ocean would also be me. The Molecules never die, I thought. Hadn’t they told us that in chemistry? Hadn’t they said a molecule of Julius Caesar’s dying breath was, statistically speaking, in every breath we took? Same with Lincoln. Or our grandparents. Molecules exchanging and mingling, on and on. Particles that had once been others and now moved through us. (Millet, 2020, p. 27)

In this sense, the Bible given to Jack by one of the mothers symbolizes the common memory of human predecessors that, like molecules, is passed from one generation to another. This highlights the Bible as a provider of the four requirements of the self-regulation process. It gives the children guiding patterns of human behavior that they start to replicate in equivalent situations and when surrounded with corresponding hardships. Every single story of the Bible reflects a case of ego-depletion that carries deep down a divine comforting moral message (the moral adviser). Millet’s deliberate use of the double technique of resurrection and juxtaposition that puts every Biblical story and incident in parallel with a corresponding replicated real incidental experience of the children’s significantly puts the incidents of the novel into a Biblical context. The resurrection brings forth patterns of human behavior and the potential consequences of replicating Biblical models in relation to the consequent ups and downs in the degree of ego-depletion. This is evidentially reflected in the way the children wisely receive larger-than-childhood calamities and situations that resemble those faced by the Biblical figures.

Being inspired by the Bible, the children replicate Noah’s ship issue when the storm floods the estate and forces them to seek refuge on a boat. The story is also suggested in Jack’s worries about the animals and the suggestion that they are packed into the van they are leaving in (Millet, 2020, p. 61). Referring to Noah’s issue, Evie says to Jack, “We have to save the animals. Like Noah did” (Millet, 2020, p. 49). Consequently, the children confidently take the initiative and leave in the van driven by Burl with “their zoo in the back” (Millet, 2020, p. 63). This implies a comparable fate for both sides: the parents representing

disbelievers and the children representing Noah's followers who escape before the apocalypse, a fate that would be echoed at the end of the novel that ends with the parents' utter disappearance. This also implies developing an anti-anthropocentric attitude towards natural resources, animals, the fact that suggests a more perfect man-nature relationship inspired by the Bible.

Beside Noah's story, the novel refers to Moses's reflected in the issue of Burl, the small man the children find on a floating raft in the lake (Millet, 2020, p. 57). Identifying this incident with the equivalent Biblical story of Moses, Jack says "They found a guy in some reeds in my book! A baby, though. They brought him to the princess of Egypt" (Millet, 2020, p. 57). Helping the small man and allowing him to join them, the children replicate the Biblical incident with good effect as he becomes their guide who leads them out of the flooded land just as Moses was a guide to the Israelites out of Egypt. The children leave the parents behind following Burl's advice to move inland to be safe from the coming storms. Leading them to the farm house, Evie says:

We'd made it to the farm, and it was all because of Burl. Out there the roads had turned into dead ends. Without him we would have driven and driven and got nowhere. Only Burl, Burl and the spark of energy that was his knowledge, had found us a refuge (Millet, 2020, p. 69).

They finally arrive at a farm and stay in the barn where the owner agrees to let them stay there for a short period provided that they observe certain instructions. This parallels the major events of the Bible's book of Exodus.

Besides, the issue of Sukey's mother who was in labor and died, having giving birth to a baby girl in the barn suggests the birth of Jesus (Millet, 2020, p. 78). The children then continue to live on the farm, and they are joined by a small group of sociable, passing individuals who call themselves the Angels of Light who claim to conform to God's will. This seems to replicate the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah according to which two cities were destroyed by God for their wickedness and corruption. Finally, an anarchic militia of armed men came and threatens to kill the angels if the teens do not give up all of their food and goods (Millet, 2020, p. 102). The consequent sacrifice of a lamb to save the angels alludes to the story of Abraham and Isaac; this suggests the children's being introduced to the theological idea of sacrifice and the related concept of salvation. Giving up the lamb represents the rejuvenation of willpower that allow individuals to go against their own desires giving up their dear possessions. Jack says:

We're not supposed to sacrifice the animals. We're supposed to *save* them. I'd rather sacrifice *me*."

"But the soldiers don't *want* you," I said. "They don't eat little boys, you see." (Millet, 2020, p. 110).

The parents, who later arrive at the farm, are taken as captives. The militia individuals, who have gone against the restrictions of the farm's owner, eventually die some of them in a barn fire, and some in are killed by the police.

The fact that the children replicate Jack's Bible in every minute detail signifies that the Bible is meant to be an embedded alternative supportive ego that is the decision-making aspect of personality. Judgmentally comparing the children's behavior to patterns of behavior proposed by the Biblical stories tend to highlight the Biblical insertion as the monitor of behavior required for the self-regulation process. This monitoring process reveals that, inspired by the Bible, the children learn a lot from its implied attitudes, rituals and instructions; manage to make right decisions and could successfully deal with the challenges and hardships of adulthood. The children, for example, learn from Noah's story a different attitude towards nature other than the anthropocentric viewpoint. This is revealed in taking



good care of animals throughout the novel. Being acquainted with funeral rituals, they collect the dead fish's bodies in an enormous grave they dug and started to emulate a funeral service repeating "My peace I give you, Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not be afraid." (Millet, 2020, p. 57). Replicating Jesus's birth story, when Sukey's mother dies after giving birth to the baby in the barn, the children could manage the experience of having a motherless baby and the required burial rituals. They prepare a funeral fire and have the corpse burnt, following the Hindu tradition recommended by an angel as follows: "fire purifies and lets the soul the body" (Millet, 2020, p. 80).

The third moderator of self-regulation, willpower, is provided in the novel through the focus-training games that can reinforce willpower and train oneself to be a decision maker. Games have gradually managed to help the children develop considerable degrees of self-control, willpower, self-assurance and bravery that make them wisely take decisions and sensibly behave. This technique of focus-training games was first established as having the double function of estimating the children's ego-depletion degree as well as providing them with a training practice that rejuvenate their depleted mental abilities. The games range from the guessing game of parents-children identification, the spin-the-bottle game, the Minecraft frequently played by Jack on his tablet and the memorize-Shakespeare one that alludes to some Shakespearian plays, characters and situations. The Shakespearian game provides quotes from Henry IV as literary guidelines and patterns of human behavior such as "The better part of valor is discretion" (qtd.in Millet, 2020, p. 25). This implies that one has to be a decision maker which necessitates a supply of human mental resources.

Trying to get the parents involved, a further guessing game is played by both children and parents at the end of the novel according to which "One person thought of a word or phrase, and the other team had to guess it by asking a series of questions. The word could be a person, place, thing, or concept" (Millet, 2020, p. 141). But though the parents have first shown a considerable degree of involvement, they have gradually lost interest. A further significant intellectual single-player game is frequently played by Evie. For example, when Sukey's mother dies after delivering a baby, trying to sooth and distract her much disturbed consciousness, Evie resorts to a distracting practice or rather a self-regulating game that seeks to distract anxiety. She says:

I tried to calm myself by picturing everyday, organized systems: my room at home, chest of drawers, mirror, closet. The hangers in the closet, the sweaters folded in the drawers. I counted them and cataloged their different colors. I tried to remember how the periodic table went. They'd made us memorize it in chemistry, but that had been fall semester. (Millet, 2020, p. 79)

Facing further ego-depleting troubles, Evie repeatedly resorts to the game of distraction that distances her away from the present situation to the image of some individual objects or details that help her maintain a sensible degree of self-control. This is repeated when she was forced by one of the soldiers to lead him to the places of the hidden supply of their food. Recalling how she employs her distraction strategy; she describes the identification her mind could make between the pattern of the sticks she could recognize on the ground and the pies she used to eat at Thanksgiving. She says, "The pattern reminded me of pies we used to eat at Thanksgiving, each with a lattice of crust on top. What kind of pies had they been? Apple? Blueberry? I would love a pie right now, I thought" (Millet, 2020, p. 108).

Motivation as the fourth moderator of self-regulation is also provided in Millet's novel by the Biblical stories that have both cognition and emotion and always carry a motivating hope for salvation. The stories are examples of ego-depleting experiences and the way the Biblical figures could help themselves out, keep self-controlled and make sensible decisions. This provides the children with the required motivation necessary for the process of self-regulation

and the rejuvenation of the two damaged powers of self-control and willpower. Consequently, the children imitate Biblical patterns once they are filled with a sort of spiritual motivation and a belief that, like Biblical figures, they can better perform with good results. Similarly, inspired by the skillfully drawn patterns of human behavior provided by the memorize-Shakespeare game and the Shakespearian insight in human nature, the children are filled with a comparable sort of motivation. However, since no similar source of motivation is made available to the children, the parents could take no positive initiative and become rather further indulged in their ego-depletion with its offensive behavior that goes beyond codes of ethics and morality.

In line with the paper's plan of self-regulation, Millet suggests the creation of motivation-inciting myths that can enhance the self-regulation process. She first presents myths highlighting the catastrophic fate of ego-depleted individuals and suggests that they should be supplemented with motivational ones. Accordingly, Millet alludes to the "creation myth" and the fall of man due to Eve's going out of self-control and eating from the forbidden tree. Evie says, "The first story, Jack told me, had a talking snake in it and a lady who really liked fruit" (Millet, 2020, p. 32). The required alternative myth is one of obedience and compliance with God's word to be awarded with an everlasting heaven. This is consequently suggested in Evie's words, "if you have a nice garden to live in, then you should never leave it." (Millet, 2020, p. 32). The second myth the novel alludes to is that of Icarus that summons up the idea of over-ambition that inevitably causes ego-depletion and the necessity to make up for our depleted energies. The myth tells the story of Icarus who uses feather wings fixed with wax and flies near to the sun that melts the wax causing him to fall and die (Sails, 2016, p. 37). It significantly implies that acting under ego-depletion, the over ambitious Icarus loses self-control and goes beyond his father's advice of neither going too low nor too high. Referring to the myth, Terry says, "We should summon our courage! Our strength! Like Icarus, we should rise on feathered, shimmering wings and fly up, up, up toward the sun" (Millet, 2020, p. 18). The allusion to the myth of Icarus suggests the need to create a myth of complying with archetypes of human behavior deeply suggested in the father's advices. This is made clear in the following conversation among the kids about the myth: "His father was a genius engineer. He told him not to fly too high or low. Too hot up high, too wet down low. Those wings were baller, man. Icarus totally ignored the specs. Basically, the kid was a dick." (Millet, 2020, p. 18). A further suggested myth is that of a sensible controllable ambition that does not deplete the individual's self-control ability.

Millet has significantly echoed the paper's call for updating archetypes once they are moved to a conscious state by myths. Presenting two different generations of children and parents, she proposes the idea that a further requirement of self-regulation is to develop an understanding and an anti-prejudiced attitude towards other generations. The parents' displacement of technology (phones) to be replaced with a theological guide (children Bible) given to Jack by one of the mothers suggests the clash between the two generations and the parents' inability to understand the role of technology. It also suggests the children's lack of a theological background and the inability of the mentality of the age of AI and technology to easily comprehend spiritual issues and concepts like God and Jesus. Hence, Millet inherently calls for a reconciliation process through which the younger generation accept their predecessors' legacy and the older generations tolerate the younger generations' updated technological mentality and facilities of the age of technology. This could be effected by updating the source of standard behavior, archetypes, so as to provide universal comprehensive patterns of behavior that tolerate both present and past to be followed by both parties.

Focusing on the cut link between the children and the archetypes derived from their ancestors' religious experiences, Evie says, "For our parents' religious education wasn't a priority" (Millet, 2020, p. 31). In another situation, Jack asks "what the long plus sign meant" (Millet, 2020, pp. 31-32). Therefore, Millet suggests that Biblical stories should be made more comprehensible in the age of science and sustainability through the creation of simplifying myths. This is implied in the children's childish imaginations that try to render the two hard-to-conceive words (God and Jesus) into easier-to-conceive concepts like nature and science. Jack, for example, explains religion and spirituality in terms of science, equating Jesus's abilities with those of science. He says, "Like, for science to save us we have to believe in it. And same with Jesus. If you believe in Jesus he can save you." (Millet, 2020, p. 97). Equally, referring to the power and sacredness of nature, Shel believes that, according to old ancestors, God is nature. She says, "They say God but they mean *nature*." (Millet, 2020, p. 61) to which Jack responds, "And we believe in nature" (Millet, 2020, p. 61). The suggested myth here is one of God as nature and Jesus as science (Millet, 2020, p. 97). A further myth to be added, as implied in Jack's words, is a religious myth that about heaven that is "a good place for us all to live" (Millet, 2020, p. 98). In this respect, the Bible helps the younger generation to come to terms with the legacy of the past, a step that is required for self-regulation.

However, to help older generations to accept the implications of an age of AI and technology, Mellie suggests both the reconfiguration of old myths and the creation of new guiding ones. For example, the "shifting waves of light" that used to be explained in the past in terms of the phenomenon of *Aurora borealis*, are differently viewed by Millie's mind as "sparkling platforms in space, silver airships moving in front of the billions of stars". (Millet, 2020, p. 73). The idea suggests the creation of a myth of a parallel world of AI and technology in the space. In terms of AI, the word platform suggests a data storage area, the fact that tends to regard the word as an allusion to the collective unconscious as a corresponding storing place of digital archetypes. This further implies the creation of a myth of an AI collective unconscious (platform) where pattern of human behavior are digitally stored.

The novel's replication of the story of Cain and Abel in the issue of the IVF twin sisters Kay and Amy significantly suggests the creation of a myth of homogeneity between the past represented in the Biblical story and the present represented in the IVF medical technique (Millet, 2020, p. 37). Furthermore, in line with the paper's resolution of building a myth of identification between past and present, the character of the farm's owner, Millet suggests a myth of spirituality and Technology as two communicators of archetypes; the owner is both spiritually as well as technologically- minded. She postulates her moral restrictions and keeps secretly monitoring the children's behavior through technology and AI applications. Though the overtly suggested monitoring of the children's commitment to the restrictions is that of self-monitoring since the owner is not there to judge them, yet a further hidden suggestion of AI monitoring is implied in the existence of a "Cell tower on the ridge" near the farm house (Millet, 2020, p. 71). When she discovers that the SWAT guys go against her restrictions, she gives her resolution through her mobile phone (Millet 124). Meeting the fate awaited for those who go beyond the Old Testament's ten commandments, The SWAT guys burnt in a hell-like fire that bursts into the barn (Millet, 2020, p. 126).

The restrictions given to the children by the owner of the farm house obviously allude to the Old-testament's ten commandments. The owner's restrictions say: "respect your elders", "no breaking the law", "no sex" and don't "steal the neighbor's stuff" (Millet, 2020, p. 72). This tends to present the owner as a godlike figure that uses AI and technological apps to monitor the behavior of the children, the fact that suggests the creation of a myth of a moral

adviser or a godlike robot who monitor man's behavior and inflict punishments upon non-conformists. Such a myth can help provide a common area where younger generations can comprehend spiritual issues like religion and God and older generations understand AI and technological apps and facilities. It is a myth that blur the edge of the divide between religion and technology by creating a relation of collaboration between them. The myth is highly recommended in the fact that once the children restore back their phones and tablets and use them on the farm, they commit themselves more to the Biblical commandments, symbolized in the owner's restrictions, function more efficiently and show more signs of having their depleted powers rejuvenated.

Though the role of AI and technology is not given the larger space in the novel, this significantly suggests that Millet has inherently implied that a further required myth is one of a guiding self-regulating AI device that can benevolently manage ego-depletion by providing a moral adviser as well as "focus-training games". This is implied in the children's constant depending on AI and technology using phone applications, hashtags, selfies, Instagram, maps, phone camera, video games, etc. (Millet, 2020, p. 66). This could be highly sensed when the children regard being deprived of their technological aids like tablets and cell phones as "an analog prison" (Millet, 2020, p. 14).

Furthermore, when the children write the jobs of their parents in folded pieces of paper, Millet reflects man's different potentialities that ranges from being a therapist, a physician, an architect, a movie director, etc (Millet, 2020, p. 12). This inherently suggests that a further required myth is that of a man of varied diverse capacities and backgrounds who equally appreciates science, technology, nature, theology and who is a comprehensive receptive container that comprehends their diverse nature and creates a sort of intertextuality among them all. In this way, Millet seems to suggests a comprehensive myth that combines science, nature, religion, technology and AI. This is suggested in the children's identification of Jesus with science, God with nature and technology and AI with religion.

At the end of the novel, being rescued from the soldiers, the teens and parents move to a mansion owned by the parents of one of the teens. Monitoring the behavior of the once ego-depleted children throughout the novel, through the lens of the forementioned moderators of self-regulation, the children have considerably achieved the targeted goal, shrug off their ego-depletion and have their depleted resources rejuvenated as they manage to comply with the self-regulation system. They show manifestations of having reached a high satisfactory level of self-control and willpower implied in having an agenda for a new life style that is inspired by both the past and the present. The novel introduces examples of their consequent mature responses to different troubles and their constant attempts to survive amidst challenges, dangers and frustrating conditions. They start to have a systematic future strategy and a vision that try to make up for any deficiency caused by the isolation imposed upon them by the disturbing environmental conditions. For example, they put a plan to make their society self-sufficient, divide labor among themselves and think of growing their own food. Being afraid of having "their social and educational development" inhibited, they seek to develop their skills by devising their "prairie school" wherein they have classes of biology, poetry and history (Millet, 2020, p. 91). The choice of these three disciplines in particular is significant and comprehensive since history suggests archetypes, poetry suggests emotions and biology suggests life span.

Monitoring their parents' behavior, the children try to rank the parents' skills using schematics. This suggests submitting the parents to a self-regulation strategy. However, unlike the children, the parents grow more disinterested and show no signs out of ego-depletion and are not doing well psychologically (Millet, 2020, pp. 144-145). They become so exhausted and tranquil that one of them admits: "I hate to disappoint you, but we don't have

that much power" (Millet, 2020, p. 132). Blaming their parents for helplessly surrendering themselves to the state of ego-depletion, the children decide to manage the parents' life by following their self-regulation strategy. They say:

your fitness to maintain order has been undermined, . . . So from now until the day when your collective is restored to its baseline competency level, we'd like to take on more responsibility. We've drawn up a plan for the property's self-sufficiency, which is, of course, a work in progress. The situation and the availability of components are dynamic. We realize that. Your wealth will be of tremendous assistance, but resilience will be called for". (Millet, 2020, p. 145)

The children propose a self-regulation system to be applied on their parents; it depends upon a parent-children reverse role-play through which they use "a bit of the carrot and a bit of the stick" (Millet, 2020, p. 146), being sometimes firm and others rewarding them with more leisure time. However, this reversal of roles proves to be a collapsing devastating step. The parent's behavior deteriorated into what McCullough & Willoughby calls "many health-risk behaviors, including physical inactivity" (2009, p. 2). Their identities become faded, they turn to be highly apathetic, lethargic and disinterested, losing indulgence and interest in everything including food and their old past time activities like dancing and poker. There is a typical worsened state of ego-depletion reflected in being unable to control one's self or making volitional actions, a state described by Evie as she says, "We began to detect changes, subtle at first. You might call it weakness, but I'd say it was more like absence . . . , it wasn't an attitude we could change. It wasn't attitude at all. It was a mode of existence" (Millet, 2020, p. 148). Nothing can get them interested even adding to their self-regulation system physical fitness, music, the children's drill-sergeant approach and their obstacle course. The parents have finally disappeared with no trace leaving behind "their phones, their wallets, all their personal belongings" (Millet, 2020, pp. 148-150). This testifies their failure to come to terms with one of the major requirements of the self-regulation process: to understand and tolerate the younger generations' updated AI facilities and technology.

### **Conclusion**

The paper deals with the causes and manifestations of ego-depletion phenomenon and the consequent exhaustion of mental human abilities such as self-control, willpower and resolution. This helps establishing the fact that man's psychic malfunctioning seriously hinders human enhancement processes. Accordingly, the paper sets forth the fact that human enhancement plans should necessarily encompass both mental and psychic aspects. Hence, the paper sets forth its back-to-archetype call building upon Jung's concepts of collective unconscious, archetypes and myths. In Jungian terms, it suggests that archetypes are to be projected through myths, religion and art. Once they move to a conscious state, they could be modified so as to suit the requirement of the present. This suggests the need to create updated myths that can best reflect corresponding archetypes and that are motivating and inspiring.

In light of this, the paper proposes a therapeutic self-regulating plan that have four moderators: a clear and specified standard of behavior (provided by archetypes); monitoring behavior (a role played by religion and AI as moral advisors); willpower (developed through focus-training games) and motivation (offered by religious myths and narration). Applying this plan on Lydia Millet's *A Children's Bible* evidentially highlights the plan as highly beneficial and rejuvenating. The application reveals that the novel's ego-depleted characters (the children) who follow the recommended self-regulation strategy manage to have their depleted abilities rejuvenated; however, the parents who disinterestedly follow no equivalent strategy show no progress, indulge more in ego-depletion and have finally disappeared, a fate predicted by the novel's replication of the Biblical story of Noah. When the children's attempt

to submit their parents to a different plan of self-regulation that disregards the role of myths and archetypes and depends instead upon role-reversal, the results prove to be catastrophic as they become more self-depleted.

Hence, the application reveals that typical to the paper's psychoanalytic approach, Millet's novel sets forth a back-to- archetype call that stresses the inevitable requirement of coming to terms with the archetypes of the past while simultaneously accepting the implications of the present age of AI and technology. The novel focuses on the type of required myths highlighting the need to create a myth of a synchronization between the past and the present as well as between different generations. Blurring the edge of the divide between old archetypes on the one hand and AI and technology on the other proves to have a benevolent influence on the depleted children in Millet's novel.

The children accept the parents' initiative to introduce them to the archetypal experiences of their ancestors. In this sense, the Bible is no more different from a map app that is built of a number of guiding stories that show the children their way ahead. They strictly follow and imitate the examples made available to them through the Children's Bible while keeping hold of all AI and technological aids available to them. Being able to come to terms with the past's archetypes with their patterns of behavior as well as the present's, the children could successfully follow the fourfold strategy of self-regulation, transcend their ego-depletion and have their mental abilities rejuvenated. This is reflected in their restoration of self-control, decision making ability and in the fact that they gain much insight in man-nature and man-God relationships. However, the parents, on the other hand, renounce any initiative to bridge the gulf with AI and technology, the fact that leads them to submissively surrender themselves to an everlasting state of ego-depletion. This suggests the creation of myths that help narrowing the gap between the mentalities of both past and present. The novel, in addition, has finally suggested a comprehensive myth that combines science, nature, religion and technology. This is suggested in the children's identification of Jesus with science, God with nature and technology with religion.

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