

POSTCRITICAL RELIGION AND THE LATENT FREUD

by *R. Melvin Keiser*

Abstract. Although Freud launches a devastating critique of religion, he makes significant contributions to religious maturity. On the “manifest” level, he attacks religion as illusion; on the “latent” level, however, he is preoccupied with religion as mystery deep in the psyche. This difference is between religion as “critical” or as “postcritical” (Polanyi)—as dualistically split from, or emergent within, the psyche. Postcritical religion appears in Freud as mystery, unity, feeling, meaning, and creative agency. We see why, for Freud, the mother as matrix keeps disappearing and what religious maturity is for “honest smallholders on this earth” who live within matrix as mystery.

Keywords: postcritical religion; psychology; Freud; feminism; mystery; maturity.

Freud makes significant contributions to our religious existence by recovering meaning and desire, so pervasive in our unconscious depths, and also by criticizing religion as conceived and practiced by many people. Most theologians and philosophers have sought to ignore this devastating critique, but a few outstanding thinkers, such as Tillich, Ricoeur, and Küng, have engaged it. However, their intimate involvement with it ends by reaching beyond the psyche to a separate, transcendent realm of grace. They have therefore only found in Freud the reasons to criticize, but not to reconstruct, religion.

While Freud intends to demolish all religion, he is preoccupied with it. Moreover, his preoccupation persists because the religion he attacks is different from the religion he continues to explore. To appropriate Freud’s own terms: beneath his critique of “manifest”

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religion are “latent” resources for a fruitful conception of religion.

The nature of these two types of religion is illuminated by Michael Polanyi’s postcritical perspective. Polanyi would see manifest religion as objectified and “critical,” latent religion as personal and “postcritical.” In *Personal Knowledge: Towards A Post-Critical Philosophy*, Polanyi speaks of our modern age as “critical,” initiated by Descartes and epitomized by Kant’s critical philosophy, in which mind is separated from body so that all true knowing is conceived as detached from commitment and passion, and all knowns are seen as objects existing independently of the knower’s personal involvement and interrelations. As the beginning of a new “postcritical” age, Polanyi proposes that all knowing be recognized for what it is, personal—that is, dependent upon unconscious trust, passion, and creativity, which he calls “tacit commitment” and “tacit knowing.” Freud’s manifest religion is critical, therefore: he conceives God as an object known apart from our “tacit dimension,” even though an object that is in fact a mere projection and hence an illusion in which people seek consolation. But his latent religion is postcritical as he affirms a tacit dimension of mystery that reaches down to the ultimate depths of existing selves (Polanyi 1958, 199, 264–72, 283, 300–303; 1967, 22–25; 1975, 146–48).

To explore this postcritical perspective can be fruitful for theological reflection on the relation between psychology and religion. Rather than seeing the religious as separate from the psyche, the religious appears as a dimension emerging within the psyche. Within this latent matrix is rich soil for developing a postcritical theology of culture. In transcending the dualistic perspective characteristic of Western patriarchalism, it is also fertile soil for developing the feminist potential in postcritical thinking.

I. THE RELIGIOUS IN LATENT FREUD

The manifest religion that Freud attacks is all too familiar: a projected and illusory God, external to the self, who functions morally as a prohibitive and protective father, resolving guilt and helplessness, in whom we believe on external authority rather than experience—basically, a manifestation of the superego. His solution is to renounce all illusion and consolation, withdrawing expectations from another world, in order to be educated to reality so as to be liberated to pour our energies into “life on earth” (Freud 1961a, 50). This is clearly a masculine solution: a stiff upper lip, hard work, focused on the task at hand and relying on no other strength than one’s own, facing the harsh realities of a motherless world, where the

father's protection, even divinized, is inadequate, because there is no consolation.

a) *The Religious as Mystery* While Freud seeks to demolish objective religion, he is captivated by nonobjective religious elements in his own experience, which he would not, of course, call religious. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* he speaks of a fundamental mystery that underlies every dream: "There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable—a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown" (Freud 1971, 143, n. 2). *Navel* is an interesting word, for it has not only a biological but a mythological meaning, as the place of origin. Mythologically, the navel is the world's center, where the cosmogonic event occurs at least yearly at spring festival time. Freud's word choice suggests, therefore, not only that the unknowable underlies each dream but that it is the place of origin for what is known.

Navel is mentioned twice in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, first in the footnote quoted above and again in the text toward the end, where he links this term directly with *mycelium*:

There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unravelled and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown. The dream-thoughts to which we are led by interpretation cannot, from the nature of things, have any definite endings; they are bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of our world of thought. It is at some point where this meshwork is particularly close that the dream-wish grows up, like a mushroom out of its mycelium [Freud 1971, 564].

These metaphors of mycelium and navel suggest an unknowable reality underlying disparate dreams in three ways. First, the mycelium as a whole is unknowable because it is endless and undifferentiated. It branches out in every direction, emerging into the network of conscious thought, yet has no definite endings. This fits the dictionary definition of *mycelium* as an underground, undifferentiated network of filaments, the source and connectedness of apparently separate fungi such as mushrooms. Interpretation grasps dream-thoughts, but they connect with the entire web beyond our knowing. Just as the discrete form of mushrooms emerges from undifferentiated filaments, so our dream-thoughts, and presumably rational thoughts, arise from this web of infinite interconnections.

Second, parts of the mycelium are particularly dense and cannot

be unraveled by thought because they are not objectifiable content. This place in a dream he calls "the navel." Third, as the point of origin in a dream, the navel reaches down from its mycelial web to "the unknown" ("*Unerkannten*"), which is "unplumbable" ("*unergründlich*"). To use navel and mycelium together is to affirm that our knowable psychic life originates in and is founded upon an undifferentiated matrix of unfathomable mystery.

Mystery is recognized as fundamentally religious by historians of religion, such as Rudolf Otto and Mircea Eliade, and by religious philosophers such as Tillich and Gabriel Marcel. Here, then, is a religious element which is not a part of Freud's objective definition of religion, but is rather a part of experience, something underlying our psychic creations. Freud's attitude toward it here is positive. "We have been obliged," he writes, "to build our way out into the dark," and he hopes that "the time may then come when we shall find ourselves more at home in it" (Freud 1971, 588).

To be at home in mystery brings to mind Freud's essay "The Uncanny," where he plays with the etymology of *unheimlich* as "not at home." The uncanny is the not-at-home, which was the familiar place where everyone once dwelt. Through extensive etymological reflections, connecting the uncanny with the mystical and divine, he ends identifying it with the mother's womb (Freud 1958, 153). Now in 1919, in a less-than-positive manner, he speaks of it as bearing the terrors of "being buried alive" (Freud 1958, 151). The uterine quality of the uncanny makes explicit the feminine character of mystery. Mystery is matrix, the context of our origins and continued existence. It is not a discrete object of a patriarchal perspective but rather the undifferentiated mycelium underlying our consciously discriminated living. And there is something divine about it—not as projected object, the idea of God, but as experiential matrix.

b) *The Religious as Original Unity* We have already embarked upon a second aspect of Freud's latent religion. He not only affirms underlying mystery but original unity out of which diversity of the world has come—a significant religious element for many primitive and Eastern cosmogonic myths, as well as for Jacob Boehme and his diverse followers, such as Hegel, Schelling, and Blake. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud distinguishes two types of identification that occur in the id. The first is a relation to objects, father and mother, which is set up in the id as the ego ideal. The second preexists any object relations; it is a pre-object and, therefore, pre-Oedipal relation to father and mother.

This leads us back to the origin of the ego ideal; for behind it there lies hidden an individual's first and most important identification, his identification with the father in his own personal prehistory. This is apparently not in the first instance the consequence or outcome of an object-cathexis; it is a direct and immediate identification and takes place earlier than any object-cathexis [Freud 1960, 21].

In a fascinating footnote he acknowledges that in this unmediated unity a child cannot yet differentiate father from mother:

Perhaps it would be safer to say "with the parents"; for before a child has arrived at definite knowledge of the difference between the sexes, the lack of a penis, it does not distinguish in value between its father and its mother. . . . In order to simplify my presentation I shall discuss only identification with the father [Freud 1960, 21, n. 1].

Curiously, he has made equal room for mother but prefers "to simplify" his account to speak only of father. In this momentary glimpse of mother and then her disappearance, we can see that there are two ways of relating to mother (or father): as object and as unity. Perhaps she disappears because unity with her, participating in mother as matrix, may feel like "being buried alive."

Out of this original, undifferentiated unity come the different functions of culture—including religion, without negative comment: "Religion, morality, and a social sense—the chief elements in the higher side of man (I am at the moment putting science and art on one side)—were originally one and the same thing" (Freud 1960, 27). The id as this undifferentiated unity, prior to any distinction between subject and object, is a later way of speaking of the mycelial mystery and navel, the place of origin from which spring both ego ideal and all cultural forms, like mushrooms from their underlying vegetative body. Manifest religion emerges from Freud's latent religion, located in the id as the place of unity and mystery.

c) *The Religious as Feeling* A third characteristic of latent religion in Freud is feeling, which has been central to the understanding of religion for Jonathan Edwards, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Søren Kierkegaard. At the outset of *Civilization and Its Discontents* Freud seriously considers the suggestion that religion originates in an "oceanic feeling."

He defines this "oceanic feeling" as his friend Romain Rolland reported it to him: as "a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without." It is "a sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic.'" It is a feeling and not "an article of faith; it brings with it no assurance of personal

immortality, but it is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems." On the basis of having such a feeling, Rolland thinks it possible to "call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion" (Freud 1961b, 11).

Because, as Freud says, "I cannot discover this 'oceanic' feeling in myself," he reinterprets it from a feeling of the *boundless* to a feeling of a *bond*: "[I]t is a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole." This shift to an "ideational content . . . associated with the feeling" (Freud 1961b, 12) manifests his discomfort with an undifferentiated context and need for Cartesian redefining of it so "the ego seems to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation" (Freud 1961b, 13) from the world. He reduces this present sense of bondedness to a "shrunken residue" (Freud 1961b, 15), a memory of the original, infantile state. Yet he has the resources within his own thinking to understand both the boundless, as navel and mycelium, and bondedness, as Eros. He thus defends himself from a friend's experience of mystery and unity through Cartesian reductionism. Mother as matrix has again been eluded in favor of objects for masculine control.

Refusing to draw on his own resources, he seemingly leaves the subject behind to engage in classical erudition. Yet he unwittingly achieves an insight into the hermeneutics of the religious and his own resistance to it. He takes up the question of whether we have "a right to assume the survival of something that was originally there" (Freud 1961b, 15). This carries him—shall we say by free association?—into consideration of the formation of Rome and how different cultural strata in the archaeology of the city rest upon each other. But as in free association he is brought, unaware, back to the nodal point. He ends this seemingly irrelevant digression by admitting—in disguised language, to be sure—that there is an underlying religious stratum that can be seen by a shift of perspective. He speaks of Hadrian's Pantheon being underlain by Agrippa's original edifice, and "the same piece of ground would be supporting the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the ancient temple over which it was built. And the observer would perhaps only have to change the direction of his glance or his position in order to call up the one view or the other" (Freud 1961b, 17). It is precisely such an alteration that Freud refuses to make in approaching the "oceanic feeling." Where he had hoped, in 1900, to become more at home in the dark, now he seeks, like Schiller's diver, to rise from the obscure and intangible depths to the "roseate light" (Freud 1961b, 20).

While he denies finding this feeling within himself, he has had a

similar religious feeling, not of the unbounded but of wonder, "when I stood," he says, "for the first time on the hill of the Acropolis in Athens, between the temple ruins, looking out over the blue sea. A feeling of astonishment mingled with my joy" (Freud 1961a, 25). Historians of religion, such as Mircea Eliade, would call this an experience of the sacred. Freud is in a sacred space and feels the awesomeness of it. In terms of his latent religion, he is opened in this place to experience the underlying navel, mycelium, and undifferentiated unity. This eludes his objectivist definition and critique of religion (Freud 1961a, 25). He recounts an experience, not an idea; an inward reality felt in a geographic place, not a fact; and something he himself has discovered, not merely been told. But he discounts it as something "of a wholly subjective nature." Yet, if a patient recounting a dream were to say to Freud what he himself says here—"I will not lay too much stress on the significance of this experience"—he would not let the patient get away with it. It is as if the memory of this occurrence, of twenty-three years earlier, is produced by the id because it will not permit such a severe objective definition of religion without undermining it with an anecdote that is a disguised affirmation of his latent religion.

d) The Religious as Quest for Meaning Freud's quest is for meaning. Despite the seemingly meaningless character of our dreams, he shows that they are meaningful: A "dream has a meaning, though a hidden one" (Freud 1971, 129). Through dreams he explores our lives, individual and social. While many of his contemporaries wrestled with the apparent meaninglessness of existence, the fundamental human problem for him is helplessness, not meaninglessness. Our lives are shot through with meaning, for desire courses through our being whether we like it or not. He attacks religion because its moralistic and rationalistic character represses and obscures our underlying foundation of passion, and restricts or denies the life-affirming energies of what he calls "wish." His job is to interpret and liberate our meaning-laden lives. The therapeutic aim is freedom: "[U]navelling them [pathological symptoms] coincides with removing them. . . . [T]he patient is freed from it" (Freud 1971, 132-33).

There is not only an existential but an autobiographical aspect to his work. He wrote *The Interpretation of Dreams* in part as a response to his father's death, the "most important and poignant event of a man's life." It was an effort, he tells us, at "my own self-analysis" (Freud 1971, xxvi), presumably seeking liberation. If religion is a quest for meaning, as Tillich would say, for what is of ultimate

concern in living, then Freud's life was a religious quest.

Young Freud saw his life as a hero's quest. Two anecdotes reveal the complex motivation for this early view. He tells, in 1900, of an unheroic deed by his father, who, while strolling, had his cap knocked off his head by a Christian, who shouted that, as a Jew, he should get off the sidewalk. Sigmund asked what he did then, and his father replied: "I went into the roadway and picked up my cap." Sigmund reflects: "This struck me as unheroic conduct" (Freud 1971, 230). And then he tells another anecdote, about his mother:

When I was six years old and was given my first lessons by my mother, I was expected to believe that we were all made of earth and must therefore return to earth. This did not suit me and I expressed doubts of the doctrine. My mother thereupon rubbed the palms of her hands together—just as she did in making dumplings, except that there was no dough between them—and showed me the blackish scales of *epidermis* produced by the friction as a proof that we were made of earth. My astonishment at this ocular demonstration knew no bounds [Freud 1971, 238].

Like a hero in ancient times, Freud was prophesied over at his birth. An old peasant woman said of his mother "that with her first-born child she had brought a great man into the world" (Freud 1971, 225). Dubbed a hero at birth, he was compelled to transcend an unheroic father and a mortal mother. Perhaps he always wanted to redefine mother from matrix to loved object in order to avoid the vulnerability of participation in a context of earthiness and mortality, and to gain control over an objectified thing.

He conceives his hero's journey in terms of Dante's great Christian quest. He begins chapter 3 with unmistakable resonances to the *Divine Comedy*: "When, after passing through a narrow defile, we suddenly emerge upon a piece of high ground, where the path divides and the finest prospects open up on every side, we may pause for a moment and consider in which direction we shall first turn our steps." The editor appends a passage from a letter to Fliess in 1899 about his book that substantiates this Dantean analogy:

The whole thing is planned on the model of an imaginary walk. First comes the dark wood of the authorities (who cannot see the trees), where there is no clear view and it is easy to go astray. Then there is a cavernous defile through which I lead my readers—my specimen dream with its peculiarities, its details, its indiscretions and its bad jokes—and then, all at once, the high ground and the open prospect and the question: "Which way do you want to go?" [Freud 1971, 155].

Like Dante, Freud enters the underworld and emerges with new meaning.

He images his heroic quest in terms of other classical figures as well: Odysseus, with whom he seeks the "deepest and eternal nature of man" (Freud 1971, 280); Augustine of the *Confessions*, with whom he shares a conception of the self as restless, driven by desire, and an autobiographical style of writing; and Milton, in his talk of nightly return to dreams as Paradise regained (Freud 1971, 278). He even conceives of his quest as a means "towards a revelation of the hidden characteristics of individual men" (Freud 1971, 658). His great insight into the meaning of dreams he records as revelation. He imagines a plaque on the house where the "secret" came to him in a dream: "In This House, on July 24th, 1895, the Secret of Dreams was Revealed to Dr. Sigm. Freud" (Freud 1971, 154).

Yet it is clearly a journey for meaning within the confines of the realities of this world. He speaks, twenty-seven years later, of being one of many "honest smallholders" of a plot of earth that a person can cultivate. He rejects the grand illusions of another world and calls us to the heroic task of making life tolerable on this earth:

Of what use to them is the mirage of wide acres in the moon, whose harvest no one has ever yet seen? As honest smallholders on this earth they will know how to cultivate their plot in such a way that it supports them. By withdrawing their expectations from the other world and concentrating all their liberated energies into their life on earth they will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone.

He ends this passage by quoting Heine: "We leave Heaven to the angels and the sparrows" (Freud 1961a, 50).

e) *The Religious as Creative Agency* There is a power of creativity that works within us. In his first book Freud calls it the "dream-work" and speaks of any writer as "no more than the tool" of a "process of transformation" (Freud 1971, 279). He even calls it a "'daemonic' power which produces the dream wish" (Freud 1971, 652). This process, at work in the formation of dreams, creates "new values" through what he calls "overdetermination" (Freud 1971, 343), and is responsible for "giving things a new form" (Freud 1971, 545). Later, as we have seen, the undifferentiated id creates the diverse cultural forms out of its mycelium and would appear, therefore, as another name for this transformative process first called the dream-work.

His late thoughts about Eros and death instincts would appear to be yet another manifestation of this creative agency working within us.¹ Explicitly instincts in the id, these are also transcendent

principles of meaning. This meaning is “beyond the pleasure principle,” dealing not with pleasure and pain but with binding and disintegrating. Eros binds, unites, and complicates while death attempts to simplify: “to lead organic life back into the inanimate state” (Freud 1960, 30 and 35).

Not only has Freud drawn upon a mythological figure, Eros, to articulate a principle transcending our individual control, but his way of defining it as binding suggests a religious understanding. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymology of “religion” is *religare*, which means “to bind.” Religion is that which connects, which complicates our lives by connecting us to the natural world, other people, and ourselves. For Eliade, such connectedness in the history of religion is that to which cosmogonic symbols open us. The *OED* also suggests (from Cicero) the possible etymology of *relegere*, which means “to read over again.” If one considers religion an interpretive framework of the world that requires us to look again beneath the surface appearance of things to see underlying mystery, then it fundamentally requires us to read the world and our lives over again.

In any case, Freud has come to see our lives as caught between the Heraclitean-like conflicting forces of love and death. Here the ego is threatened from both sides, to be dissolved into the chemicals of the earth or to be complicated in an ongoing way that shatters the structure of the ego. Its “fear is of being overwhelmed or annihilated” (Freud 1960, 47). Each principle threatens change, and the ego seeks to protect itself as it is. The superego fulfills this function, performed earlier by father and later by divine providence. However, if it fails to protect itself “by its own strength,” it “lets itself die.” He then says a revealing thing about the feminine: Letting the self die is “the same situation as that which underlay the first great anxiety-state of birth and the infantile anxiety of longing—the anxiety due to separation from the protecting mother” (Freud 1960, 48). This situation, underlying the separation anxiety, is the unity of child and mother. Freud connects the ego’s death, therefore, with unity with the mother.

In the history of religions this is mythologically true, that the Great Goddess destroys her son. However, death is preparatory to rebirth. Freud does not believe in such rebirth and thus forever defends the ego from being either annihilated or overwhelmed. For Freud, the mother keeps disappearing because, as the matrix in which we participate, she is the means of death and rebirth to the ego. By keeping the father on the scene, Freud manages to keep the mother as desired object and prevent the ego from being buried alive in

mystery. Through identifying with the father, the ego avoids the issue of dying and being reborn by establishing the ego ideal which engages in the moral acts of demanding conformity, judging, and punishing.

The fundamental human problem for Freud is helplessness, inasmuch as both Eros and death seek to take us beyond our control. Freud resists such ecstasy. The spiritual wisdom of the ages, whether Christian or otherwise, advocates such a letting go, which is a kind of helplessness. Perhaps like a sublimated libido, it is a transformed kind of helplessness that, beyond our own strength, can trust the unknown. Even though early in his career he hopes to be more at home in the dark, he now has come to resist entrance into those deeps that could remake the self.

Nevertheless, he sees himself in the hands of two metaphysical principles that creatively form the conflicted texture of our existence. Indeed, by quoting Goethe, he names them "Heavenly Powers," and then he says a touching thing:

And we may well heave a sigh of relief at the thought that it is nevertheless vouchsafed to a few to salvage without effort from the whirlpool of their own feelings the deepest truths, towards which the rest of us have to find our way through tormenting uncertainty and with restless groping [Freud 1961b, 80]

Perhaps as a gesture toward his friend Rolland, he may mean by "deepest truths" his oceanic feeling—both the boundlessness of the navel and the bondedness of Eros, each of which confronts the ego with the meaning of transformed life.

We have now considered five aspects of Freud's latent religion—mystery, unity, feeling, meaning, and creative agency—which elude his critical analysis of manifest religion. Now we turn to a brief exploration of the postcritical nature of this latent religion and thus to some concluding remarks about the relation of psychology and religion.

II. RELIGIOUS MATURITY IN POSTCRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Freud's critique of manifest religion and his simultaneous development of latent religion point toward a postcritical conception of religious maturity. His critique calls for us to withdraw our "expectations from the other world" to concentrate our "liberated energies" in being "honest smallholders on this earth" to cultivate our own plot of land (Freud 1961a, 50). He thus calls us away from

the illusion of an external divine entity, a Supreme Being, and of consolation through certainty of immortality and eternal reward. He calls us away from rationalism and moralism to a dimension of psychic experience within, where we discover desire, helplessness, guilt, and the workings of a daemonic power of creativity. He calls us away from metaphysical speculations or scientific demonstrations to ordinary talk in which we share what has been happening to us, through which we can discover meaning and obtain liberation.

Are not living here and now in our given world, recognizing what we do not know and what is happening in our existence, and talking out of this level of experience important ingredients in mature religion? When Freud defends science as nonillusory by saying the following five things of the scientific mind, could it not be said as well of religion as a spiritual dimension of depth within our experience rather than as belief in the existence of an external God? That is, it: developed within us in order to live in the world; is a constituent of the world; can only allow us to say how existence appears to us; is known only as the result of the interaction of the nature of our self with how the world affects us; and makes the world interesting (Freud 1961a, 53-56).

His method in *The Interpretation of Dreams* is postcritical. While a "critical" method begins, à la Descartes, in doubt, in the belief that unassailable truth will be discovered after all that is dubitable has been rejected, Freud suspends critical doubt in order to see what will emerge from the depths and thus to attend to aspects of our existence which are always there but overlooked or denied by the critical approach. He writes:

We must aim at bringing about two changes in . . . [the patient]: an increase in the attention he pays to his own psychical perceptions and the elimination of the criticism by which he normally sifts the thoughts that occur to him. In order that he may be able to concentrate his attention on his self-observation it is an advantage for him to lie in a restful attitude and shut his eyes. It is necessary to insist explicitly on his *renouncing all criticism* of the thoughts that he perceives. We therefore tell him that the success of the psycho-analysis depends on his noticing and reporting whatever comes into his head and not being misled, for instance, into suppressing an idea because it strikes him as unimportant or irrelevant or because it seems to him meaningless. He must adopt a completely impartial attitude to what occurs to him, since it is precisely his *critical attitude* which is responsible for his being unable, in the ordinary course of things, to achieve the desired unravelling of his dream or obsessional idea or whatever it may be [Freud 1971, 133; my italics].

This willingness to suspend criticism is fundamental in both

Freud's therapy and cultural explorations. It permits a shift in perspective that enables seeing deeper layers. Surprisingly, he likens such a revelatory shift to mystical practices:

It is easy to imagine, too, that certain mystical practices may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, so that, for instance, perception may be able to grasp happenings in the depths of the ego and in the id which were otherwise inaccessible to it. It may safely be doubted, however, whether this road will lead us to the ultimate truths from which salvation is to be expected. Nevertheless, it may be admitted that the therapeutic efforts of psycho-analysis have chosen a similar line of approach [Freud 1965, 79-80].

The similarities between mystical practices and psychotherapy in upsetting the normal to reach the depths suggest that Freud's method is a meditative technique. Even though free association leads into a chain of ideas that carries us away from our present state, it nevertheless begins by opening to what will emerge.

What if Freud were to apply the same method to religion? Rather than criticizing its objective forms, what if he were to suspend criticism and attend to what emerges from the depths that could be called spiritual?

Such an approach would be to reject the dualism or split between the religious and psychological that Küng, Tillich, and Ricoeur use—Küng in conceiving the religious center as existing independently of self and world (Küng 1979, 65, 77, 80, 115), Tillich as shining through the psyche (Tillich 1951, 124; 1959, 122; 1963, 281), and Ricoeur as addressing the psyche as Wholly Other from outside (Ricoeur 1970, 524-26). Rather, it would be to find the religious emergent within the psyche. What Freud provides the resources for us to see in those depths is meaning, mystery, original unity, unbounded and awesome feeling, and a process of transcendent creativity within us. Nowhere does he acknowledge these as religious nor as aspects of a single dimension. While he explores them, he nowhere chooses to think from them so as to see other psychological elements in their light or to reflect on their connections to the moral and cultural. Nevertheless, these are five important ingredients in a postcritical conception which recognizes that the religious is a dimension within self and world and not an external realm; that it is, therefore, something in our experience, emerging from beneath cognition and volition; and that it is knowable only in our commitments, not through doubt.

In a very suggestive remark, Peter Homans has said that religion is a speech error (Homans 1970, 76). He explains that a speech error

results from a disruption of conscious meaning by the emergence of a depth-psychological process. What if we were to use Homans's insight to look at religion as the disruption of our ordinary speech by the emergence of depth? What if religion is the language of depth? For Freud, dreams are disguises but religion is illusion. Why not perform the same interpretive act on religion as Freud performs on dreams? He never takes dreams to refer to some external entity, but to symbolize what is going on in our depths. So also with religious language; it could be interpreted as expressing symbolically deep experiences and intentionally evoking the dimension of depth.

The latent Freud beckons us to rethink theology, and psychology as well, from the navel. Both theology and Freudian psychology would look different if they began from underlying mystery rather than from doubt and the application of a dualistic system that divides reality into subjective and objective entities and thus has no place for that which is relatively indeterminate, for mystery.

Then we could have the "talking cure," which helps us therapeutically with our helplessness and guilt, take its fruitful place in mature religion as dialogue. We are "on the way": through dialogue we can transcend our sense of helplessness by discovering our connectedness to others and to this earth, and we can find acceptance that eases our guilt. Freud focuses the problem, not only of guilt and helplessness, but of desire. To recognize that desire roots in mystery provides a way of coping. We can learn to let go of the passionate pursuit of a particular object, sought in the immediate future, by settling into the enviroing mystery felt in the present. Then we can let go of our infantile wish for certainties where they do not exist. Sublimation would then be recognized, not as a mere shift from narcissistic ego to cultural creation, but as the alchemy of soul that transforms the ego by opening it to the vast, sustaining well of mystery.

The mother would not, henceforth, keep disappearing. Mother as matrix would be seen as the context for the "masculine" efforts to know and control particulars. Indeed, we could transcend such stereotypical sexual divisions between feminine and masculine by acknowledging, for each of us, woman and man, that particular figures in our foreground are interdependent with the environment of our background. We can affirm that we live from a matrix of mystery which is a realm of grace at work in our psychic depths, not as the intervention of an external God, but as liberating and enhancing power within—a potency, however, not simply in me, but in the "withinness" of the world. We can share with others what we find ourselves committed to and thus cultivate our lives on earth together

as creative forms and agents of creativity, sprung from the mycelium of being.

NOTE

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