

Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Religious Experience

by Otto F. Kernberg

1. A CRITICAL REVIEW OF FREUD'S POSITION Historically, psychoanalysis has been widely perceived as implicitly question

ing religious values and organized religious systems, primarily because of Freud's (1) critical writing about religion. In spite of the contributions of a distinguished group of psychoanalysts [Chasseguet-Smirgel (2), Meissner (3), Ostow (4), Rizzuto (5), Zilboorg (6), and others] whose writings pointed to the compatibility of religious convictions and the psychoanalytic identity, I believe it is fair to state that a tendency toward an atheistic philosophical position has prevailed among many leading psychoanalysts, and that this cultural tradition has only recently changed. In what follows, I shall summarize my own views regarding this issue, basing myself upon strictly psychoanalytic considerations regarding individual development and psychopathology, and the application of psychoanalytic understanding to mass psychology and the formation of ideologies.

In "The Future of an Illusion" (1), Freud spelled out his critical view of religion, and his expectation, that, in the long run, a rational system of moral convictions and a rationally based ethics would replace organized religions. He drew a picture of cultural requirements and expectations characteristic of humankind, centered on the need to understand and control nature, with the related gratification of human needs. He also suggested that a major challenge of culture was the regulation of interpersonal relationships, and the distribution of the produce of human labor. Freud considered that these cultural aspirations were challenged by the animosity toward culture derived, within the individual, from the drives-- both sexuality and the destructive aspects of aggression, from mass psychology, and from the limitations of the educability of the human being. He proposed that culture relies on the obligation to work and to renounce acting upon the derivatives of the drives, particularly in the form of incest, cannibalism, and violence.

Freud proposed that the superego reflects the internalization of the external demands posed by culture, controlling by means of its prohibitions the discontent of disadvantaged social classes, and providing narcissistic and substitute gratifications through the positive influence of ideals and artistic creativity. He proposed that religious imagination contributed to achieving the overall cultural objective of civilizing interpersonal relations by reinforcing prohibitions against drive-derived behavior and interpersonal aggression, while providing consolation regarding the uncertainties of human destiny, and explaining the apparent indifference of nature by humanizing it. Animism as a primitive religion reflected that humanization, while infantile dependency on the parents and longings for their protection were projected into the longing for the protection by an all-powerful God. Thus the functions of polytheism and, later, monotheism, Freud went on, were to control the frightening aspects of nature, the cruelty of human destiny and death, and to enforce cultural

restrictions.

Freud suggested that, insofar as science has reduced the sense of impotence in the face of the uncontrollable cruelty of nature, destiny and death, religious beliefs have focused more and more on the imposition of cultural demands. In essence, God dominates nature, even death; God will reward what is good, punish evil, and control destiny; God determines the fundamental laws of culture. Freud proposed that the unitary character of God reflects the paternal principle, protects against the dominating power of nature, and legitimizes the limitations imposed by culture.

Freud traced the history of religion to totemism as the beginning of belief in a protective deity, embodied in a sacred animal that could not be hunted as ordinary prey. The ritual killing and eating of the totem symbolically reflected the murder of the father and the appropriation of his power. The transformation of animal gods into multiple human-faced gods evolved toward the monotheistic concept, while the unique God reflected the ultimate protection of the helpless child against nature, and the fulfillment of its longing for an omnipotent, protective father. The ambivalence toward father, Freud proposed, was reflected in the combination of idealization and fear of God.

Freud referred to the demands of religious dogma of faith that cannot be justified scientifically, faith based in the tradition of the fathers, the proofs of tradition, and the prohibitions against doubt. Religious dogmas, he proposed, are illusions in the sense of not being open to demonstration nor to refutation. They correspond to childlike wishes, the projection of infantile demands and prohibitions. Yet, Freud conceded, all universal concepts (*Weltanschauungen*) are illusions. Furthermore, without religion, the human being confronted with death and required to submit to cultural demands would be overwhelmed by his own helplessness and frustration. Freud suggested that science reduces the territory of religion, but that the likelihood persists that culture can only be protected by the strict suppression and threats of punishment that organized religion provides. But religion had to tolerate "sin" in order to be tolerable.

Freud believed that the commandment "not to kill" is a rational prohibition. It should be possible to abandon the idea of God, he felt, and put culture on a rational basis of expectations and prohibitions. Yet, he went on, passion is stronger than reason, and inasmuch as murder of the father was the origin of all prohibitions, cultural prohibitions are thus derived from the original father and his Godliness. Only through the affectively imposed superego prohibitions can the drives be suppressed, and, in this regard, religion is analogous to an obsessive neurosis.

Freud stated that intelligence offers an alternative to religion as a means to control the expression of instinctual demands. He granted that many people are not able to achieve that, but believed that science will help us. It is at this point that Freud made his famous statement "the voice of intellect is soft, but it doesn't rest until it has been listened to." He believed that intelligence fosters the love of other human beings, and that science, developing constantly through trial and error, actualizes the sublimated wish to reduce suffering: and science is no illusion.

In summary, Freud saw the historical development of religion as beginning in the original conflicts around the murder of the father of the primitive horde, with

totemism as the precursor of polytheism, and monotheism as the highest form of religion. He saw the embrace of religions as a human disposition resulting from infantile helplessness, longing for the father, and the projection of the infantile superego. Freud acknowledged that rationality is undermined by sexual and aggressive drives, by the dangers derived from mass psychology, and by the challenges from suppressed social classes. And he granted that organized religion has had a powerful influence upon the flourishing of learning and artistic expression.

What seems to me most striking in this analysis, re-examined in the light of the experience of the twentieth century, is Freud's expression of faith in the triumph of rationality, and his conviction that a universal system of morality can develop out of rational considerations and in the light of our rapidly developing scientific knowledge. This is striking, because Freud himself, in his work on religion (1) as well as throughout the entire body of his developing formulations, stressed the unavoidable infiltration of consciousness and rationality by unconscious motivation, particularly the primitive aspects of unconscious aggression. He himself, throughout the late developments of his theoretical formulations, was forced to conceptualize the death drive-the profound destructiveness and self-destructiveness of human beings-as an instinctual force as powerful as libido (7).

In addition, his acknowledging the unavoidable nature of the conflict between suppressed or disadvantaged social groups and those in power, and the dangers derived from mass psychology that he himself had so dramatically formulated, are in direct contradiction to his-one might almost say, irrational-faith in the assured final triumph of rationality. Also, what he describes as the psychological origin and development of religiosity as a fundamental human tendency speaks to the profound nature of religious convictions as an essential part of human beings, but it does not deal with the objective nature of the existence of God, or the validity of religious systems in general. Here, I believe, psychoanalysis touches its boundaries with philosophy, and enters the danger zone of becoming a *Weltanschauung* in itself, running counter to the scientific spirit of psychoanalytic exploration.

Freud's assumption of the possibility of creating a universal system of ethical values on the basis of rational considerations would seem questionable not only on the basis of his own convincing findings regarding the unavoidable infiltration of rational thinking by unconscious motivation, but also, on a vast social, political and cultural level, on the basis of the experience of the twentieth century. As Francois Furet (8) has convincingly pointed out, this century has been under the shadow of two major competing ideological systems that pretended to develop a rational, universal basis of morality rooted in the "scientific" analysis of historical developments in modern western society. Nationalistic Fascism and Marxist Communism developed systematic and universal ethical systems supposedly based on a rational analysis of contemporary society. Both, in their purest and unrestricted forms dominating modern nations, led to the most horrendous crimes and mass murder in the history of humanity. The "rational moralities" of Naziism and Communism coopted science, without which the scope of their depredations would have been seriously curtailed.

The Holocaust in Nazi Germany, the reign of terror in the Gulag in the Soviet Union, the Cultural Revolution in China illustrate the practical failure of "scientific" rationality, re-confirming sadly, in contemporary history, Freud's cautionary statements regarding the universality of the death drive and the dangers of mass

psychology. Freud, almost as an aside, granted the autonomous existence of Art and artistic values as values that were independent from rationality and science. In what follows, I will argue for the need to grant an equally independent existence to the potentiality of a universal system of values not subordinated to reason and science.

2. THE NATURE OF EVIL AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOSITY. SOME PSYCHOANALYTIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Freud (7) reached the conclusion that basic human motivation was constituted by libido or the life drive, and thanatos or the death drive. He reached this conclusion on the basis of his systematic exploration of unconscious motivation in his experiences with patients, the growing database of psychoanalytic exploration in general, and also his application of psychoanalytic theory to the study of social and cultural phenomena. The overwhelming evidence pointing to destructive tendencies as part not only of psychopathology but as a potential in all human beings, and, at the same time, a potential for activation in mass movements and mass psychology in general, lent conviction to these fundamental assumptions in Freud's formulations.

One dramatic source of evidence is the prevalence of social violence, that is, the emergence of violent behavior as a mass phenomenon under certain socioeconomic, political, or ideological conditions. I am explicitly excluding here "ordinary" belligerent behaviors as an expression of warfare, in which the combination of nationally mandated participation in the armed forces, the actual presence of armed, belligerent opponents, and a nationalistic ideological superstructure foster and tolerate violence on a large scale. I am suggesting that social sanction of the massive killings of civilians and of the torture and persecution of minorities reflects the operation of the death drive as currently formulated by Andre Green (9), that is, a fundamentally destructive and self-destructive drive directed against the establishment and maintenance of object relations. I propose that this fundamental destructiveness operates in groups, institutions, and social and national conflicts, and that, without ignoring the specific historical, political, economic, social, and cultural origins of intergroup violence, psychoanalysis may contribute to the response to the basic question: what explains the sudden shift of massive human behavior from ordinary civilized interaction and respect for human life to massively expressed and sanctioned social violence? I have already referred to the dramatic and frightening evidence of social violence as a major fact of the century that is coming to an end. From the Gulag, the mass starvation of peasants, and the terror in the former Soviet Union, to the extermination of the Jews by Nazi Germany; from the terror of the cultural revolution in communist China to the mass killings of the Pol Pot regime; from the murderous oppression of minorities in the Middle East and Africa to military dictatorships in South America and the savage fighting in the Balkans at the end of the century, there is more than ample evidence of the universality of the phenomenon, although one could argue that the most extreme manifestations of it are reserved for ideologically totalitarian regimes in contrast to the more restricted violence of ordinary military dictatorships (8).

Some focused sociological observations and experiments provide more direct evidence of the sudden shift in behavior of ordinary human beings when mass psychology is activated. Bette Bao Lord (10) describes how, reflecting back on the Cultural Revolution, a history professor confessed to her his own regressive violence during that time. He had been a young student of a professor who had been branded

as counterrevolutionary by the Red Guards, and was subjected to public humiliation and beating by the entire group of his former students. He described how, standing in the circle surrounding his former professor, he realized that his fellow students could identify him with the counterrevolutionary behavior of his formerly admired and beloved teacher, and found himself participating in the savage beating of his professor, in a frenzy that he was unable to reflect on until many years later.

Henry Dicks's (11) study of twenty-eight German SS concentration camp guards, serving prison terms in Great Britain for torturing and killing concentration camp inmates, revealed ordinary, severe, but not violent narcissistic personalities in most of them, and a common background of ideological indoctrination and training "on the job." These criminals had reverted to rather bland and nonaggressive behavior, once in British jails. Victor Klemperer's (12, 13) diaries are perhaps the most lucid documentation we have of the massive social regression toward a tolerant indifference to, if not active engagement in the gradual dehumanization of Jews in Germany as a preliminary to their mass murder; and Wolfgang Sofsky (14) has described the machinery of the concentration camps involving tens of thousands of functionaries fully aware of the nature of that terror. Zinoviev (15), in his sociological analysis of mass corruption as an essential consequence of the socialist ideology and dictatorial system of the Soviet Union, has described the essential logic and overwhelming dominance of socially sanctioned dishonesty as a culturally accepted principle of coexistence. The Milgram (16) experiments showed how intelligent, culturally privileged university students could be induced to participate in experiments of slow torture under the guise of scientific objectivity.

There are specific developments in the psychoanalytic research on mass psychology and group psychology that point to the universal tendency to react with an upsurge of generally shared intense rage and hatred in certain regressive group situations.

Freud, in his study of "Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego" (17) described the mutual identification of all the members of the mass movement in their idealization of the leader, the shared projection of their superego onto the leader, and the resulting sense of freedom, power, and lust for destructive aggression that characterizes the mass movement or the mob. This activation of unbridled aggression when a mob or a mass movement has crystallized, has been studied further in the analysis of small unstructured groups carried out by Wilfred Bion (18). He demonstrated that when the task orientation of a group breaks down, there is an immediate regression into one of three "basic assumption groups," namely, the assumption of "dependency," "fight-flight" or "pairing."

In the basic-assumption group of "dependency," the group tends to idealize a grandiose, self-assured leader, the dependency on whom gives them a sense of security and gratification, while all the members feel incompetent and unskilled without the protection of such an idealized leader. Not surprisingly, individuals with strong narcissistic features tend to be induced to assume the leadership role by such groups. When, conversely, the group regresses to the fight-flight basic assumption, mutual distrust, suspiciousness, competition for power and dominance emerge. The group may either unite in a fighting spirit against an out-group, or subdivide into an in-group and an out-group. Leadership falls on the most paranoid individual of the group, well disposed to lead them in a fight against real or assumed enemies. Finally, in the basic-assumption group of "pairing," there is a tendency of the small

group to turn to a couple, heterosexual or homosexual, in the hope that their developing relationship will infuse the group with a sense of meaning and excitement and thus assure its future.

The psychoanalytic understanding of these group developments is that the "choice" of a basic assumption is based on the depth of the group's regression, which in turn is likely determined by the severity of the trauma involved in the initial loss of the group's functioning as a task group. Thus the pairing group, with its emphasis on sexuality and relatedness, represents a defense against the more primitive dependent and fight-flight groups, in which the idealization of the narcissistic leader of the dependency group is a defense against the still more threatening regression into the fight-flight group led by a paranoid leader. The general implication is that a potential exists in all individuals functioning within a small group to regress in one of these ways if and when ordinary task structures or work orientedness break down.

Pierre Turquet (19) studied the behavior of unstructured large groups, of fifty to one hundred and fifty individuals. He demonstrated that such a large group, when it has no task other than observe its own behavior, generates extreme anxiety and rapidly regresses into a state of diffuse fear of aggression, in which nobody listens to anybody else, efforts to form subgroups to defend against the fear of imminent outbreak of aggression are ineffectual, and aggression readily breaks out among the subgroups. "Innocent bystanders" develop within the large majority, and there is a general, resolute rejection of any rational leadership that might start to emerge. The large group only tolerates either the leadership of a narcissistic individual-who, au fond, is despised by everybody although his cliché-- ridden conventionality has a soothing effect on the group, or else they select a paranoid leader who transforms the chaotic large group into Freud's mob.

I have suggested in earlier work (20) that the large group constitutes, in effect, the basic situation against which the development of mob and mass psychology, on the one hand, as well as small group psychology, on the other, are defensive operations. In other words, in unstructured group situations, in which ordinary status-role relationships become inoperant, there is an immediate upsurge of fear of aggression that reflects the massive projection of aggressive tendencies on the part of all involved, and against which the development of a narcissistic or a paranoid orientation is a defensive structure. The ultimate explanation of these developments is that, under such "groupish" situations, the ordinary disposition to relate to dyadic and triadic family and social situations breaks down. The individual now experiences himself as surrounded by multiple others with whom he is related in an uncertain way, a situation that reproduces the intrapsychic condition before the development of what ego psychology refers to as object constancy. The multiplicity of external objects reproduces the multiplicity of primitive, split part-object representations and the need to sort them out into "all good" and "all bad" internal objects. This immediate reproduction under regressive social situations of a very early developmental stage of individual development leads us to the contributions of psychoanalytic object relations theory. In Kleinian psychoanalytic psychology this state is described as the "paranoid-schizoid" position. Because Kleinian object relations theory offers an explanation of both the evolution of the capacity for love and affiliation and the proclivity to regress to suspiciousness, hatred, and violence under certain conditions, I shall lay out the basic principles of object relations theory.

Psychoanalytic object relations theory accounts, in effect, for the origin of love and hate, the core emotions respectively of libido and the death drive. Psychoanalytic object relations theory assumes that the earliest relationship of the infant to its mother consists of moments when affects are rather low key and ordinary learning takes place, and other moments when affects are intense or extreme and hence result in the internalization of affective memory structures, constituted by the representation of self relating to the representation of mother under the dominance of the peak affect. In short, peak affects are structured into internalized object relations, which constitute the "building blocks" of the psychic structures that culminate in the ego, superego, and id in Freud's formulations.

A fundamental contribution of Melanie Klein (21, 22) was her proposal that in infancy a split is maintained between the internalized object relations that are under the affective dominance of aggression and frustration, and those that are dominated by elation and sensual stimulation, in order to preserve the illusory purity of ideal relations between infant and mother, and to protect the infant from the terror of the paranoid fantasies connected with internalized object relations controlled by rage and hate. These splitting operations and their related defense mechanisms determine for the infant, Melanie Klein suggested, an unconscious world of multiple ideal self representations interacting with ideal object representations, sharply split off from the multiple "bad" self representations interacting with their "bad" objects. This state of internal affairs characterizes what Melanie Klein called the paranoid-schizoid position. Throughout the first year of life, the overcoming of that splitting under the influence of predominantly benign, pleasurable, and loving interactions together with ongoing cognitive development, leads to the integration of idealized and persecutory aspects of the self and its objects, an integration that significantly strengthens and is strengthened by the cognitive potential for self-reflection and for realistic perception of external reality. This internal integration is what Melanie Klein referred to as the depressive position.

The depressive position, with its appreciation of the mother who frustrates as identical with the one who gives pleasure, permits the infant to internalize those aspects of the parents that imply demands and prohibitions. The acceptance of frustration in the realization that it is a price to pay for love and security thus originates the early superego. Under conditions of severe traumatization and sadistic and persecutory parental demands, a pathological superego may be constituted, with sadistic demands for perfection. Such a superego may turn a significant part of aggression against the self, leading to depreciation and impoverishment of the self that resonates with impoverishment of the self-experience in the face of subsequent separation and object loss. An intolerable, excessively sadistic primitive superego mostly reprojected onto the environment may lead to weakness or absence of superego functions, paranoid suspiciousness and hypersensitivity, and to uninhibited expressions of aggression. Under favorable conditions, however, the superego evolves into an organization of internalized ethical and moral values, with aggressive responses mitigated by the sophisticated affects of guilt and concern.

What interests us here is that, in these early processes of integration of affect dispositions and internalized object relations, profoundly significant developments occur that will constitute both the origin of religiosity, and the manifestations of what under a worst-case scenario will constitute the most severe disposition to hatred,

destruction, and self-destruction. When intensely frustrating, rageful interactions prevail in the life of the infant and young child, the corresponding internalized object relations tend to fixate the disposition of the individual toward rageful destruction of perceived enemies. Hatred develops as a structured object relation under the dominance of chronic rage and the resultant wishes to destroy, control, and make suffer a potentially threatening object. Both a constitutional disposition to excessive rage reactions, and severe traumatization in early childhood contribute to the dominance of such a disposition to hatred.

When frustration and hatred are dominant, splitting between idealized and persecutory relations tends to persist, with the typical manifestations of either a protective self-aggrandizement and devaluation of others-- narcissistic defenses--or else, a tendency to project aggression with a suspicious, fearful, and controlling attitude to the environment--paranoid defenses. When sufficiently severe, these tendencies give rise to the corresponding narcissistic and paranoid personality disorders.

In contrast, when the integration between the idealized and persecutory self and object representations is successful, a tolerance for both good and bad aspects of self and others evolves, with a corresponding deepening of the relationship to the parental figures, a capacity for more realistic self-evaluation and for concern and guilt over one's own aggression. Now emerge wishes for reparation, and, along with tolerance for ambivalence, the desire to restore an ideal relationship that leads to the wish to live up to internalized demands and prohibitions, to obtain a sense of security and well-being by being at peace with one's own superego and ego ideal.

To the extent that the early relationship with mother is primarily infused with euphoria and joyous sensuality, the associated feelings of love and a wish for fusion with mother give rise to dispositions to empathy, dependency, and a sense of union, even at a distance, that facilitates the experience of oneness with the world, a sense of transcendence.

Gratitude for love received, as well as the capacity for guilt feelings over one's own aggression, and the wish to repair damage done constitute the origins of sublimation, of the emotional experience of sinfulness and desire for expiation, and mourning as a capacity to miss and long for a lost good object. This constellation defines Klein's depressive position. While contemporary psychoanalytic thinking no longer assumes an early symbiotic stage of development in which self and objects are consistently fused or not yet differentiated, there do apparently exist states of early fusion under the impact of peak affect states (both of love and hatred). The peak affect state of love gives rise to a profound capacity for empathy, compassion, and mercifulness, and also, as Rayner (in his as-yet unpublished "The Institution of Justice a Factor in Interpretation") has proposed, to a fundamental sense of justice in terms of the expectation of reciprocity of love and fairness in mutual treatment.

In contrast, lack of achievement of the depressive position, and the predominance of object relations infused with rage and hatred, establish the potential for severe distortions and destructiveness in all object relations. In the antisocial personality proper this takes the form of a tendency to destroy all relationships with significant others. In narcissistic personalities one can observe chronic sadistic pleasure in making others suffer, along with inordinate envy. Such envy may lead to the

unconscious destruction not only of what is experienced as bad or dangerous but of what is experienced as good and desirable in other persons, so that the extremely envious person has to destroy what he or she so desperately longs for (23). Clinically, we call "perversity" a clinical syndrome in which the afflicted patient tries to extract love from others in order to destroy that love and the person who gives it.

Winnicott (24, 25), who first described the capacity for concern as a consequence of the achievement of the depressive position, also described how, at an early stage of development, the infant tends to find a "transitional object," that is, a belonging, such as a blanket or a toy, that is felt to be both part of the self and not part of the self. The transitional object represents the significant other and yet is totally under the control of the infant, an object that can be cuddled and attacked and that survives, that is always there, part of reality and part of fantasy. It expresses the infant's capacity for object investment and, at the same time, for building up a world of fantasy reflecting the internalization of that good object. This illusional transitional world, Winnicott proposed, is the origin of creative fantasy, of culture, art, and religion as a combination of fantasy structures and objectively created external reality. Winnicott thus traces the very origin of the drive for the production of cultural values, both in the areas of art and religion, to a basic human tendency active since infancy.

Edith Jacobson (26), who has developed the most elaborate theory of the organization of the superego, has described successive layers of the superego from a most primitive, negative, fantastically forbidding and punishing layer, to a later idealized layer of demands reflecting those of the idealized parental images, to the more realistic superego of the oedipal period, in which the first two layers merge and thus reduce the extreme nature of primitive internalized morality. These developments open up the child to the internalization of more realistic demands and prohibitions throughout childhood, eventually leading to processes of depersonalization, abstraction, and individuation of the mature superego, that integrates the ethical value systems of the individual reaching from deep unconscious levels to preconscious and conscious guidelines of moral behavior.

The understanding of the psychopathology of the superego when normal development fails has facilitated our understanding of the frightening psychopathology of the antisocial personality disorder, an extreme form of psychopathology in which there is no capacity for feelings of guilt and concern, no capacity for the "milk of human kindness," and unmitigated hatred reigns in the form of aggressive or exploitive destructiveness.

Bion (27) enriched our understanding of the basic structures of the normal superego by pointing to three mutually incompatible "vertices" that express libido and orient human behavior and relationship to reality: they are 1. the epistemological vertex, leading to knowledge and to defining and acquiring truth; 2. the aesthetic vertex, leading to the search for beauty, and 3. the ethical vertex, the drive toward what is good and toward ethical value systems. He pointed to the mutually irreducible nature of these vertices, in the sense that none of them can be subsumed under the other two. The vertex of ethics, in turn, is linked to the search for love and intimate relations with others, opposed to the destructive nature of primitive hatred, the expression of thanatos, that constitutes the counterpart of all three of these vertices. The death drive operates against loving relationships, against the recognition and

acceptance of truth, and against the acquisition of knowledge in general, and, of course, against normal morality reflecting ethical systems.

In this connection, Bion described three types of basic object relationships: "symbiotic," "commensal," and "parasitic." Symbiotic relationships are geared to produce growth and development of something new in the relationship, and expressed by creativity; commensal relationships are simply surface contacts without any deeper development of anything new; and parasitic relationships are geared to bring about mutual destruction. Donald Meltzer (28), in exploring related issues, described the "aesthetic conflict" as the conflict between, on the one hand, loving and implicitly erotic impulses of the baby toward mother, expressed in the idealization of the surface of mother's body and leading to the capacity for a sense of beauty; and on the other, the projection of aggression into the interior of mother's body, leading to the fear of the interior of her body, and derived hypochondriacal fears of bodily destruction. The predominance of love in the mother-infant relationship fosters the development of the depressive position, with its consequences for superego development referred to before, in contrast to the predominance of hatred, that may corrupt and destroy love, as in the syndrome of perversity already mentioned.

From a different perspective, Ronald Fairbairn (29) described the "moral defense" as a basic psychological tendency to transform aggressive demands and punishment from the parents into acceptable internalized demands, out of the profound need to make sense of the world, and to develop an internalized guidance system to deal with it. He explained the excessive severity of the superego in patients subjected to extremely traumatic experiences as the internalization of sadistic parental behavior into the superego because "it is preferable to live in a world of a cruel God than in the world of the unpredictable devil."

In my own research on the unconscious relationship of the couple in love (30), I have suggested the simultaneous development of three levels of relationship of the couple: the sexual, the object relational, and the ego ideal levels. I have proposed that the projection of the mature aspects of the ego ideal onto the beloved other transforms an internal value system into an external, embodied, ideal other, thus transforming external reality into the realization of an intrapsychic longing, as an important aspect of the experience of transcendence. Love thus includes both an "illusion" and a "reality." My considerations were based on the systematic studies of the ego ideal by Chasseguet-Smirgel (2, 31), who has contributed, perhaps more than anybody else, to reexamining the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion. She pointed to the real existence of evil, and the function of religion to control evil by the establishment of boundaries and the law.

Chasseguet-Smirgel, in her fundamental book *Creativity and Perversion* (31), described the "perverse solution" to experiences in infancy and childhood that greatly intensify the traumatic effects of the crucial challenges faced by all children. Starting from the oedipal situation as a universal human conflict, she pointed first, to the narcissistic trauma of the exclusion of the infant and child from the intimate relations of the parents, and the humiliation of being unable to compete with the parent of the same gender for the parent of the other gender. This trauma is reinforced by the universal seductiveness derived from the unconscious erotic currents linking the infant to the parent of the opposite gender, and by castration anxiety as the most

primitive form of unconsciously feared punishment for the oedipal wishes involving incest and murder. The inordinate intensification of these traumata in cases of severe pathological development lead, Chasseguet-Smirgel suggested, to the "perverse solution," which takes the form of defensive denial of the differences between the genders in order to deny castration anxiety; denial of differences of age, in order to make incest permissible, and denial of the privileged functions of the genitalia. These defensive distortions render all aspects of the body equal: there are no differences of age, gender, and organs. This universal equivalence destroys all law and order, facilitates the dominance of aggression in condensation with sexuality, and the "anal" transformation of object relations-in the sense that the relations with an object acquire a completely undifferentiated, devalued, and expulsive characteristic.

Chasseguet-Smirgel describes the world of de Sade as characteristic of this state of affairs: the dominance of polymorphous perverse infantile sexuality suffused by aggression, and coinciding with the denial of law and order as well as of God and religion. Religious and sexual ecstasies are condensed under the dominant affect of aggression, with idealization of the destructive rupture of all boundaries. Perversion, Chasseguet-Smirgel concludes, is a recreation of a primitive chaos, within which anal relationships of dominance, expulsion, and soiling replace normal relations. These patients who have found the "perverse solution" to childhood trauma present a denial of reality and an idealization of anality in terms of a pseudo-aesthetic attitude that hides a profound tendency to treat all relationships as excrement.

Chasseguet-Smirgel points to the reality of the existence of evil as represented by this perverse tendency to recreate a primitive chaos; religious commands and prohibitions constitute a universal, intuitive reaction against, and protection from, such chaos. She analyzes the Ten Commandments in terms of their underlying structure that requires respect for the authority of God and demands respect for older generations, forbids incest, murder, and the destructive invasion of other people's rights and property. The Ten Commandments and related and derived commands and prohibitions, such as those made explicit in Leviticus, chapters 18-20, represent a fundamental moral law directed against the dominance and triumph of evil. Chasseguet-Smirgel concludes that religion constitutes a fundamental recognition of, and radical opposition to, the nature of evil, and to perversion as its psychopathological representation.

Andre Green (9, 32) has expanded on Chasseguet-Smirgel's contributions to the nature of evil, pointing to the profound influence of the death drive on psychic functioning at all levels. On the basis of the exploration of the most severe forms of destructiveness and self-destructiveness in individual patients, and in society and culture, he proposes that the essential characteristic of the death drive is that of "deobjectification," that is, a radical destruction of all object relations, in contrast to the "objectifying" function of libido, reflected in the drive to establish, maintain, and deepen object relations, to give and receive love, and to express creativity in the context of gratifying object relations. Andre Green (9) described the thrust of evil as the expression of the death drive, as implying that everything that exists is without meaning; evil obeys no order nor law, has no objective, and seeks only to achieve one's will and obtain one's object of appetite by the exertion of power. Evil has no reason. In a fundamental development of our contemporary understanding of the death drive, Andre Green, in his book *Le Travail du Negatif* (32), described radical

destruction of the need for significant relations with others as a manifestation of the death drive. This is much more severe than sadomasochistic relationships with objects that indicate at least some fusion between libidinal and aggressive strivings.

In summary, recent psychoanalytic studies have contributed significantly to our understanding both of religiosity with all its components of compassion, concern, guilt, reparation, a solid system of ethical principles as an indication of normal superego development, and the dominance of love and commitment, in contrast to the characteristics of evil reflecting the most severe manifestations and derivatives of the death drive. The fact that evil operates as a basic component of group regression and mass psychology, as well as an aspect of individual psychopathology, points to the unavoidable, overarching nature of the threat of evil as part of human destiny. One particularly severe manifestation of evil is the interlocking quality of the manifestations of severe psychopathology in leadership, on the one hand, and the regression of group processes and mass movements under the influence of socio-political conditions, on the other.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, GROUP REGRESSION, AND SOCIOCULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

The two paradigmatic personality disorders that reflect, respectively, the idealizing and the persecutory "all good" and "all bad" aspects of earliest experience are the narcissistic and the paranoid personality disorders. In the narcissistic personality disorder, as a defense against threatening activation of the split-off paranoid experience, a defensive self-idealization takes place, in which a pathologic grandiose self "absorbs" the characteristics of the idealized objects and thus wards off the threat of dependency and need of others. This self-idealization shows in the patients' grandiosity, selfcenteredness, overdependency on admiration, devaluation and greedy exploitation of others, lack of empathy and difficulties in commitment. Conscious and unconscious envy reflect the underlying unconscious hatred against which narcissistic grandiosity, aloofness, and exploitiveness are both defenses as well as being their indirect expression. These patients need to be admired in order to protect their self-esteem, and they are strongly motivated to occupy positions of power and potential admiration. We have already found them as the natural leaders of the small group assumption of "dependency," and the large group attempting to protect itself against the upsurge of aggression.

The paranoid personality disorder, rather than being a defense against the nonintegrated early paranoid experience, may be considered its prototype. These patients' intense hostility tends to be projected onto others, determining intense suspiciousness, distrust, hyperalertness, and "righteous indignation" when some rationale can be found to justify the attack on assumed or real enemies. This is the typical leader of the "fight-flight" group, and of the mass movement or mob as an alternative organization to the large group. Paranoid personalities-similarly to narcissistic personalities-thus also emerge as natural leaders in certain regressive group situations.

In addition, a particularly severe personality disorder is constituted by the syndrome of malignant narcissism, in which narcissistic and paranoid features are combined and condensed (33). Here the patients' grandiose self is infiltrated with aggression, and these patients obtain their sense of security and grandiosity by exercise of power

and threats, by inspiring terror, and exerting sadistic control. These patients, in short, present a combination of narcissistic and paranoid features, with absence of superego functions manifested by antisocial behavior and ego-syntonic aggression directed against self or others. As illustration, from all we know, both Hitler and Stalin clearly presented these features of malignant narcissism. Participants in mass movements dominated by such leaders are expected not only to submit to them but also to admire or love the leader, who is feared. The projection of the individual superegos of members of the mass movement onto such a leader may lead to the unbridled development of massive antisocial behavior. The totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union illustrate these developments on a large social scale.

The implications of this relationship between group regression, on the one hand, and certain features of leadership, on the other, are made more complex by the fact that even normal, functional leadership of institutions requires from the leader not only high intelligence, moral integrity, and understanding of others in depth, but also small doses of narcissism and paranoia: narcissistic features in order to protect his/her internal security in the face of the ambivalence to which leaders are exposed, and paranoid features as opposed to naivete, that is, a motivated innocence that protects them from diagnosing accurately the negative currents that may limit or threaten leadership functions in an organization.

Regressive group processes and psychopathology of leaders that emerge under such regressive conditions reinforce each other. The situation is made even more dangerous by two social mechanisms that, on the one hand, may control group regression and protect the functional quality of institutions, but, on the other, also may be infiltrated by destructiveness, thus worsening even further the institutional regression into violence.

These two social mechanisms are bureaucratization and ideology formation (20). Bureaucratization refers to the organization of procedures, rules, and regulations that control the functioning of a group, or of groups within institutions, or institutions relating to each other. It controls group regression precisely by transforming an unstructured group situation into a structured one. Robert's rules of order are the simplest example of maintaining the structure of an assembly; the indispensable rules and regulations that control the relationships among staff, between supervisors and subordinates in organizations are another example of this structuring.

The problem is that, while such bureaucratic structures are indispensable for the functioning of social organizations, bureaucracies themselves tend to evolve into privileged groups with their own interests. In its interactions with those outside its boundaries, such an entrenched bureaucracy may express the same "fight-flight" characteristics that regressed groups display in their interior. In other words, aggression controlled within the bureaucratic organization may be displaced to its periphery, and be reflected in the proverbial sadism of the lowly members of the bureaucracy toward outsiders, and of the "guardians of the gates" of all institutions. At the same time, in large social institutions, such as state governments, an efficiently functioning bureaucracy may amplify and exaggerate the negative effects of the regressive leadership of a narcissistic, paranoid, or malignantly narcissistic leader. The immediate totalitarian transformation of Germany upon the assumption of Hitler was a testimony to the highly effective German bureaucracy. In a somewhat

similar process, the Russian communist regimen's bureaucracy was able to extend its powers throughout the entire Soviet Empire.

The second social mechanism for controlling group regression is the development of an ideology that cements relationships within a group and, when humanitarian in nature, may counteract the tendency to regressive activation of violence. The psychoanalytic study of ideologies illustrates that they, in turn, may vary along a broad spectrum, the polarities of which are characterized, on the one extreme, by what might be called narcissistic trivialization, while the other extreme is characterized by a violent, paranoid fundamentalism. The middle region of ideologies usually is characterized by humanistic value systems. Thus, for example, the lip service to communist ideals during the last two decades of the Soviet regimen, an indispensable requirement to ascend the social and political ladder of the "Nomenclature," was cynically regarded by the large majority of the Soviet Union's population, a typical example of narcissistic trivialization. In contrast, the fundamentalist Marxism of terrorist groups, such as the Shining Path in Peru, the RAF in Germany, and the gangster regimen of Pol Pot illustrate the paranoid--fundamentalist polarity of Marxism where socially sanctioned violence dominates. The humanitarianism of western European Marxist movements in the 1970s and 1980s may be considered the humanist center of the ideology. As Andre Green (34) has pointed out, humanist or mature ideologies typically include respect for the individual, respect for autonomy and differences of view points, tolerance and protection of the privacy of the sexual couple and of family structure, as opposed to the efforts of fundamentalist ideologies to assert the social community's total control of individual life in all its aspects. Whether an individual enters a totalitarian ideological system, as Andre Green also pointed out, depends on the maturity of the superego and of the ethical value systems of the individual: there is a complementary relationship between socially dominant ideologies and individual psychopathology.

There also exists an intimate connection between ideology formation and historical traumata. Vamik Volkan (35) has pointed to how national identity is built into early ego identity by means of language, art, customs, food, and the intergenerational transmission of narratives of historical triumphs and traumata as part of this commonality of culture. The multiplicity of other individuals surrounding the infant, the child, and young adult, all connected by common cultural traditions, contributes to the consolidation of ego identity in establishing common features of multiple selfrepresentations in relating to multiple objects that have to be integrated in the shift from the paranoid-schizoid into the depressive position. By the same token, during severe group regression, such sociocultural commonalities become fundamental in linking the members of a social group with each other, cementing a common ideology, and compensating for the loss of individual identity with a group identity based upon both identification with a leader and a heightened sense of cultural identity embedded in a common historical background.

A number of factors, singly or in combination, can promote a shift of a dominant social or political ideology in the paranoid-fundamentalist direction, particularly in a culture with strong trends toward racism and religious warfare. These include severe social traumata, such as the loss of a war or territory, economic crisis, the threat of internal foreign groups or external enemies, or belonging to socially disadvantaged

or suppressed social classes. Any of these conditions can foster group regression into a violent mob or mass movement.

To summarize: the various conditions that may determine the massive regression of a population and foster socially sanctioned violence and breakdown of ordinary morality and civilized human interaction are various combinations of unmetabolized social traumata; fundamentalist ideologies; primitive, particularly malignant narcissistic leadership; an effective, rigid bureaucracy, and the dissolution, by financial crisis or social revolution, of ordinary social structures and the task systems linked to them.

As Bracher (36) pointed out, the ascent of a totalitarian leadership is fostered, in addition, by state control of the economy, the armed forces, and, particularly, the media. Moscovici (37) has expanded Freud's analysis of mass psychology in pointing to how, historically, the printed word, the newspaper, radio, and television have successively increased the simultaneity of information for large masses, creating, in the process, an instant mass psychology with its inevitable regressive potential. This process continues with the growth of electronic communication. When watching television, we automatically tend to react in a more passive-narcissistic and/or paranoid way than would be the case when reading, for example, as a way of absorbing and metabolizing information in an individualized, autonomous, manner.

Thus, regressive features of modern society emerge as a powerful counterpart to the increased opportunity for information sharing and education provided by the development of contemporary media. Media and mass psychology tend to move socially accepted systems of ideas regarding the meaning and history of the social structure in regressive directions, fostering a narcissistic superficiality or a paranoid sharpening of socially dominant ideology systems. Efficient bureaucracies and powerful control by the state apparatus may indirectly contribute to the activation of violence under conditions of social breakdown, if a fundamentalist party achieves control. In areas of poverty and extreme density of population, when such density and poverty is accompanied by destruction of family structure and traditional values, including, of course, those of religion, the activation of large group processes may induce random violence even within a society with stable social structures, a democratic system of government, and control of violence throughout society at large.

The characteristics of the massive regression of social groups include the lust for cruelty, dehumanization of out-groups, primitive self-- idealization, conventionality and thoughtlessness, envy and destructiveness: in short, the characteristics both of patients with severe personality disorders and, particularly, malignant narcissism, and the characteristics of regressive large group psychology. These, in essence, are the manifestations of evil not only at the level of the individual, but at the level of group processes and political movements, that may affect an entire society or nation.

Obviously, the description of the mutual reinforcement of individual, social, political, and cultural factors that determine the activation of unbridled aggression and social violence also implies potentially corrective factors, the urgency of which has become more evident, given the disastrous developments within the twentieth century.

This paper cannot explore potentially preventive and controlling measures in detail, although it may be stated without exaggerating, that we do know some corrective features, some preventive measures, some means of control, although we have not achieved the ability on a social level to implement measures that could counteract the potential for malignant regression in communities or nations. Our present knowledge, stemming to quite an extent from psychoanalytic studies of individuals, indicates the importance of prevention of severe psychopathology from infancy and early childhood on; the protection of democratic systems of government; the importance of well-functioning social organizations as opposed to breakdown of task systems, and the need to achieve systems of distribution of the products of human labor that mitigate and control the effects of poverty, population density, and family disorganization.

The importance of the protection of the humanistic center of ideologies at the social and political level is the counterpart to the assurance of the development of healthy systems of moral values and ethical commitments on the part of the individual. Healthy superego structures of the individual are permanent structures, but socially dominant ideologies may shift rapidly toward regression, causing deterioration at the level of groups and social masses, of the effectiveness of individual ethical systems. The value of universally valid ethical systems, such as those provided by organized religion, has emerged as a major counterforce to the threats of massive group regression. Organized religion, of course, may also be infiltrated by socially sanctioned aggression in its shift into fundamentalist polarities, or lose its humanizing power through regressive trivialization at the narcissistic polarity, or become a corrupt and self-serving bureaucracy in opposition to the legitimate needs of society. This brings us back to the antinomy of evil and religiosity as basic characteristics of the human being.

4. MATURE RELIGIOSITY, THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEITY AND OF MATURE RELIGIONS

In what follows I am carrying out a restricted analysis on the basis of psychoanalytic findings and concepts, rather than attempting a philosophical and theological approach to religion. With regard to the individual superego, its characteristics include an integrated system of personal ethical values, a universal set of rules of behavior and rights, and a universal value system that transcends the individual.

More in detail, mature religiosity includes an integrated value system that transcends the individual's interest, and has truly universal validity that applies to all human beings. It is a comprehensive and harmonious system, and its fundamental principles are love and respect of others and of the self. It includes a sense of responsibility for this value system that transcends all concrete laws, and expects such a sense of responsibility also on the part of other human beings, but with understanding, compassion, and concern in combination with a sense of universal justice. Such a mature religiosity includes the capacity for reconciliation, forgiveness, and reparation on the basis of understanding the unavoidable ambivalence of all human relationships. This value system includes prohibitions against murder and incest, and the regulation of sexual relationships. Such regulation implies tolerance and protection of the loving couple and of the marital couple, and of the privacy of their sexual freedom. Such a mature religiosity also includes tolerance, hope, confidence in goodness without denial of evil, and a sense of responsibility toward a higher

moral instance that corresponds to the common ideal of humanity. Mature religiosity includes the investment of work and creativity as a contribution to the creation of what is good, and the struggle against destructiveness. Mature religiosity, finally, includes respect for the rights of others, and tolerance for unavoidable envy and greediness without letting them control one's own behavior.

It should be obvious that such characteristics, directly opposing the manifestations of evil within the individual, also may act as a powerful countercurrent against the temptation of seduction into a regressive mob, with its paranoid-schizoid ideology of dividing all humanity into good and bad, self-idealization and dehumanization of the enemy, rationalized cruelty and destructiveness, and blind obedience to a leader's autocratic rules of morality.

It is of interest to compare these characteristics of mature religiosity as an essential aspect of normal psychology with the nature of God as described in the religious systems of western culture. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is described as sovereign of nature, the creator of the world; He maintains lawfulness of nature, He is kind, compassionate, forgiving yet punishing. He is transcendent, and His wisdom is the source of human understanding. Through revelation He relates himself to humankind, and through redemption, He sanctifies all existence.

The correspondence between the characteristics of mature religiosity, derived from the various sources of development of the ego-ideal and the superego, and reflecting a dominance of love over hatred, of libido over the death-drive as an aspect of psychological health and maturity with the characteristics of the Deity in Judeo-Christian religions is striking. The emergent desire and necessity of a transcendent system of ethical values is one crucial "vertex"-to use Bion's term-of psychic functioning, that evolves in parallel to the search for knowledge and truth, and the search for, and creation of, beauty.

Returning once more to Freud's views of religion: his idealization of rationality missed, I think, the irreducible nature of the aspiration for a universal ethical system that transcends the rational needs of the individual, although it certainly considers them. His equalizing the psychological origins of religiosity with the illusional character of religion pre-empted unnecessarily a philosophical and theological approach. In all fairness, it obviously preceded the discovery of the creative and transcendent quality of the transitional aspect of psychological functioning in Winnicott's work.

Psychoanalysis may be considered one of the basic psychological sciences, together with the neurobiology of the central nervous system, but the understanding of human functioning cannot leave out the corresponding social-psychological and cultural-anthropological sciences in general. In the same way that psychoanalysis cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of artistic creation (although it certainly has much to say about the unconscious origins, motivations and inhibitions of aesthetic creativity) I believe this also is true for the reality of a transpersonal, supraordinate system of ethical values as a basic precondition of human survival. Freud himself contributed to our understanding of the psychological origins and unavoidable reality of evil, in discovering the overshadowing influence of the Dynamic Unconscious on human existence.

Organized systems of religion are undoubtedly not free from such unconscious influences, and from the regression toward the polarity of ideological systems referred to before. Our experience with patients illustrates how religion may be used as a rationalization for personal cruelty and destructiveness, how it may be transformed into obsessive-compulsive systems, and how the psychopathological deterioration and destruction of superego functions may lead to destructive and self-destructive antisocial behavior. But psychoanalysis cannot provide the answers for the truth value as opposed to the origins of universal ethical systems: it cannot become a Weltanschauung. The psychological and social functions of religion as a hierarchically supraordinate, universal system of values, and the conception of God as the guarantor, or abstract principle, or unifying concept of a religious system may have its intuitive origin in the development of the psychic apparatus, but cannot be contained, I believe, within the "scientific vertex" of psychoanalytic theory.

In contrast to Freud, I would conclude that science and reason cannot replace religion, that religiosity as a fundamental human capability and function has to be integrated in our understanding of normality and pathology, and that a universal system of morality is an unavoidable precondition for the survival of humanity. Psychoanalysis has given us fundamental information regarding the origin of religiosity, but not a world conception or an arbitration of the philosophical and theological discussion regarding God.

At a clinical level, one of the functions of the psychoanalyst is to explore the extent to which religiosity as a mature desire for a transpersonal system of morality and ethical values as outlined is available to our patients. The function of the psychoanalyst is not that of a pastoral counselor or a guide to such a universal system of values; rather, the psychoanalyst's function is to free the patient from unconscious conflicts that limit this capability, including the systematic confrontation, exploration, and resolution of unconscious conflicts that preclude the development of concern, guilt, reparation, forgiveness, responsibility and justice as basic aspirations of the individual. Psychoanalysis also has to help certain patients to free themselves from the use of formal religious commitments as a rationalization of hatred and destructiveness directed against self or others. Perhaps one might add to Freud's suggestion that love and work are the two main purposes of life, that the commitment to morality and the appreciation of art are two further major tasks and sources of meaning for the human being.

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