



Therapeutic Heresy or Emotional Salvation?

American Catholic Interpretations of Psychoanalysis During and After World War II

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Abstract

During and after World War II, American Catholic intellectuals were fascinated by psychoanalysis. Addressing many of the same concerns as their theology – the nature of free will, the origins and effects of sin and guilt, and the powers of evil and love -- the theories represented a potential danger to their faith. Freud's assertions that religion was an obsession-neurosis or that Christ symbolized the return of the repressed were hurdles to Catholics who hoped to engage his theories. Closer attention to the relationship that developed between psychoanalysis and Catholicism can illuminate the ways that Catholics came to represent themselves and also the ways that Catholics influenced the realms of medicine, psychology, and popular spiritual culture. American Catholics found in psychoanalysis an opening through which to sacralize the fields of psychology and psychiatry that seemed, to them, to be increasingly routinized and dehumanizing.

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Exorcism, Analysis, and Catholic Dilemmas

In 1949, while attending Georgetown University, novelist William Peter Blatty read about the exorcism of a fourteen-year-old boy in nearby Mount Ranier. Born to deeply religious Lebanese immigrants in New York City and having attended Jesuit schools, Blatty was immersed in Catholic culture throughout his life and fascinated by the story of this religious ritual. Just over twenty years later, in 1970, he began to research the incident further as background for his bestselling horror novel, *The Exorcist* (1973). As Blatty uncovered the

psychoanalytic explanations for split personalities, hysteria, and other disorders that caused sufferers to appear possessed, he began to center his story on the tension between psychoanalytic and theological representations of the inner lives of individuals that pervaded both psychology and religion in the post-war years (see Winter).

As the protagonist of *The Exorcist*, Father Damien Karras, a trained psychiatrist as well as a priest, embodies many of these conflicts. When readers first encounter Karras, he is writhing in a vise of existential angst. Fraught with doubt about the existence of God, he is apprehensive about entertaining Chris MacNeil's plea that he perform a formal Catholic exorcism on her troubled daughter, Reagan. Explaining that the church had not engaged in exorcisms "since we learned about mental illness; about paranoia; split personality; all those things that they taught me at Harvard," Karras initially attempts to explain Reagan's bizarre behavior in terms of "conversion hysteria," "dissociation," and "repressed guilt." Karras is deeply disturbed by the specter of human consciousness somehow overwhelmed by unconscious forces within. His deepest fears revolve around Reagan's apparent loss of free will and rationality. Attempting to explain her psychological predicament, Karras employs an analogy of mutiny within:

Now imagine that the human body is a massive ocean liner, all right? And that all of your brain cells are the crew. Now one of these cells is up on the bridge. He's the captain. But he never knows precisely what the rest of the crew below decks is doing. All he knows is that the ship keeps running smoothly, that the job's getting done. Now the captain is you, it's your waking consciousness. And what happens in dual personality – maybe – is that one of those crew cells down below decks comes up on the bridge and takes over command. In other words, mutiny. Now – does that help you understand it?

The mother's response, "Father, that's so far out of sight that I think it's almost easier to believe in the devil!" destabilizes Karras's conviction that a psychoanalytic explanation would bolster a purely rational worldview, and offers him a tantalizing alternative (Blatty: 99, 213).

Imagining that Reagan's apparent possession by the devil might be a metaphysical reality, Karras finds new hope that the forces of Good and Evil – God and demons – truly exist and live. As the character of Karras evolves, he functions in a continual state of desperate ambivalence, fueled on the one hand by a desire to believe in the otherworldly, supernatural realities that underlay Catholic theology; on the other, by a logical empiricism that insists on physical, scientific explanations. While he understands that some find psychoanalytic theories to be almost as otherworldly as theological ones, Karras himself operates under the assumption that if the apparent devil that lives inside the little girl can be explained away by almost any scientific or para-scientific means, then it does not exist in reality, therefore negating the existence of God as well. Doctor Karras cannot escape the spiritual doubts that his medical training had embedded in his outlook, but Father Karras deeply longs to discover that science cannot explain away the devil. Psychoanalysis, in the novel, functions as a foil to religion. In a final ironic twist, we find religious passion succumbing to the forces of secularization. Blatty depicted the place of authentic, metaphysical belief in American culture as tenuous and declining. A police investigator explains Karras's suicide: ". . . emotional conflicts, his guilt about his mother; her death; his problem of faith . . . the continuous lack of

sleep.” He concludes that Karras’s “mind had snapped, had been shattered by the burdens of guilt he could no longer endure” (Blatty: 331, 336).

The blockbuster status of both Blatty’s novel and the movie made from it demonstrate that the engagement of Catholicism with psychoanalysis was dynamic enough to percolate into commercial culture and capture the popular imagination. A number of themes in Karras’s story echo the concerns that consumed real-life Catholics who worked with psychoanalysis and psychology in the 1940s and 1950s. Psychoanalysis appeared, to these Catholics, as a potentially serious challenge to their belief and authority structures. By World War II, this challenge had assumed urgency, when psychoanalysts gained popularity and authority as healers to war-torn veterans and Americans vicariously traumatized by global events in the early forties. In what one historian has called the “romance” of Americans with psychology, the discipline gained institutional footholds throughout World War II as the government turned to these doctors for help in dealing with issues from combat fatigue to strategic planning. As part of this ascension, psychoanalysis gained particular popularity – in the form of flocking clients and extensive media coverage – during what Nathan Hale calls the “golden age of popularization” (see Herman; Hale).

Like Damien Karras, many post-war Catholic intellectuals were fascinated by psychoanalysis, as it addressed many of the same concerns as their theology – the nature of free will, the origins and effects of sin and guilt, and the powers of evil and love. They experienced the theory, however, as a potential danger to their faith as well. Freud’s assertions that religion was simply one form of obsession-neurosis, that God was a projection of the father figure image, or that Christ symbolized the return of the repressed were significant hurdles to any Christian who hoped to engage his theories (see Freud 1978, 1998, 2010a, 2010b, among other critiques of religion).

With some exceptions, until recently, Catholics have tended to be either marginalized or difficult to find in major historical accounts of religion and psychology. The insightful projects that have thus been done have articulated well the role of Catholics in American psychological history. There has not been as much focus, however, on Catholics’ attention to the ways that psychoanalysis, specifically, intersects with their faith. Closer focus on psychoanalysis would be a particularly helpful augmentation to more general discussions of Catholics and psychology in light of the dramatic shifts that were taking place in the ways that Catholics understood their identity in the national community during this period. By World War II, American Catholic identity patterns had shifted. Large numbers of Catholics had made a generational transition from immigrants to entrenched members of the middle classes. Catholics were assuming more influential positions in academia and were less hesitant about articulating religious concerns. A number of Catholics achieved celebrity status on the wave of self-help and inspirational bestsellers and television programs that swept the nation in the forties and fifties. Discussions about psychoanalysis and therapeutic culture were important venues where Catholics articulated and shaped these new identity constructions.¹

¹ For a brief overview of Catholic responses to psychoanalysis, see Gilbert. For a discussion of Catholic and Jewish interpretations of psychoanalysis, see Heinze 2001. For examples of Protestant dominated works on religion and psychology, see Holifield; Meyer. For the many works that address the relationship between Catholics

These discourses were also indicative of the ways in which Catholics positioned themselves vis-à-vis other religious cultures. As an “outsider” American faith, slowly melting into the mainstream, Catholics often voiced their views in terms that critiqued mainstream Protestant approaches to self-help and psychology. Meanwhile, the strong identification between Judaism and psychoanalysis – Freud’s Jewish background and the disproportionate number of Jewish analysts in America – means that Catholic approaches to one are tied to attitudes towards the other. The rising perception that intellectuals of Jewish background stood at the vanguard of secularization in American institutions, means that Catholics’ critiques of Freud’s atheism may well be connected to their feelings about his Jewishness. Andrew Heinze has called the discussions among Jews and Catholics about psychology a modern day “disputation.” The sides in this dispute, however, were not clear-cut (on psychoanalysis as “Jewish science,” see Gay; Shorter; and Gilman 1993a, 1993b).

By overlooking some of the Catholic dialogue about psychoanalysis, we are missing opportunities to understand important factors in the ways that Catholics came to understand and represent themselves in post-war culture, and also the ways that Catholics influenced the realms of medicine, psychology, and popular spiritual culture. Close analysis of American Catholics’ responses to psychoanalysis might reshape some of the larger patterns that define religious historiography as well by lending support to scholars who challenge the model of secularization. These scholars reject those who depict the psychological view as part of the secularizing forces that overwhelm the vital presence of religion in the inner lives of individuals (see Lears; Lasch; Reiff).

In their efforts to seize upon the popular audiences and academic interest that psychoanalysis evoked in the forties and fifties, religious thinkers exerted far greater influence upon the ways that Americans conceptualized both their inner and communal lives than they would have had they not engaged in these discussions of religion and psychology. Ultimately, American Catholics, among other religious thinkers, found in psychoanalysis an opening through which to sacralize the fields of medicine and psychiatry that seemed to them, in the post-war years, to be growing increasingly routinized and dehumanizing. As psychoanalysis itself could be construed as a more philosophical, “person-centered” counterpoint to the theories of behaviorism and biodeterminism that seemed poised to dominate medical psychiatry, discussions about it provided opportunities for Catholics to address ideas about the nature of individuals and their souls that might otherwise have been excluded from both scholarly and public arenas.

Like Blatty’s Damien Karras, these Catholic psychoanalysts were deeply concerned with understanding mental illnesses and spiritual crisis that seemed to strip human beings of their free will and rational decision-making abilities. In his ship metaphor, Karras expressed his fear of internal mutiny from below. This revolution against the conscious captain is posited at the root of neurosis in psychoanalytic theory. Freud construes the return of these repressed elements as the origins of both neurosis and religion. Efforts to rethink the politics of this internal community of thoughts and to find ways to ameliorate the tensions between captain

and psychology, consider Neenan; Veldt and Odenwald; Misiak and Staudt; Braceland; Dempsey; Braceland and Stock; Farnsworth and Braceland; Gillespie; Kugelmann.

and crew are central to the work of post-war thinkers on the topics of religion and psychology. Spurred by newfound fears of tyranny and mass rebellion in the political world, they sought to address these concerns in their reconstruction of individuals' inner worlds. These endeavors took on heightened importance after World War II. While historians and economists sought political, social, and economic explanations for the rise of fascism and the onslaught of war, psychologists and theologians were just as eager to uncover the emotional and spiritual crises that led to catastrophe (see Fromm; Arendt).

Therapeutic Heresy: Freud's Catholic Critics

Newspaper reports did not utilize terms of warfare, such as "attack" and "truce" to describe the relationship between psychoanalysis and Catholics during the 1940s and 1950s without reason. Many prominent and vocal Catholic leaders were indeed up in arms over what they perceived to be the encroachment of psychoanalytic theories and practice onto their own theological and pastoral turf. Criticism from Fulton Sheen and Clare Booth Luce was widely covered by the popular press. Each equated psychoanalysis with other Cold War crusades and assailed the determinism and materialism that they perceived within its theories (see citations in Gilbert: 171-73).

On Sunday March 9, 1947, Fulton Sheen announced from his pulpit in St. Patrick's Cathedral of New York City that "Freudianism" is "based on four assumptions, materialism, hedonism, infantilism and eroticism." He emphasized that "this brand of psychoanalysis denies sin and would supplant confession," and declared "there are no more disintegrated people in the world than the victims of psychoanalysis" (Gillespie: 16). His bestselling *Peace of Soul* garnered a healthy readership, selling over 200,000 copies in the late forties and early fifties (Schneider and Dombusch). Sheen's polemics from the pulpit were also widely covered in venues like the *New York Times* and *Newsweek*.

In Sheen's view, the problems with psychoanalysis were both theological and political. Sheen argued that psychoanalysis was based on many of the same assumptions as totalitarian world views, and was, therefore, detrimental to democratic communities. He believed that the popular version of Freudian theory discouraged individuals from taking personal responsibility or exhibiting initiative. Psychoanalysis, in Sheen's opinion, turned individuals inward upon themselves, shutting them off to other people, the larger community, and God.

Conservative journalist and politician, Clare Booth Luce, whose conversion to Catholicism was facilitated by Sheen in 1946, was equally contemptuous of psychoanalysis in the autobiography of her conversion that she published in *McCall's Magazine* from February to April of 1947. According to Luce, her interest in Catholicism stemmed in part from the inability of her experiences with psychoanalysis to answer "the Big Question, the meaning of life and death, the real goal of human life." Luce complained that her esteemed analyst, Dorian Feigenbaum of Columbia University, defined her life solely in terms of sexuality, stripping it of the higher meaning she sought (February 1947: 153). Of her analyst, Luce concluded, "It was our joint misfortune that we happened for a number of months to get lost together," she recalled, "in the godless and atavistic underbrush of Freudianism." Freud's secularizing agenda

was ultimately perceived by Luce as a heresy against her new-found Catholic faith (February 1947: 16).²

Rudolf Allers shared Luce's sense that Freud represented a heretical diversion from Catholic theology and agreed with many of Sheen's criticisms. Unlike Luce and Sheen, however, Allers was a trained analyst who had studied with Freud in 1906 as a member of his last class at the University of Vienna. Allers went on to work in Vienna's psychoanalytic community from 1918–1938 when he was a part of Alfred Adler's circle and worked closely with Victor Frankl. With the rise of the Nazis, Allers immigrated to America in 1938 where he worked for one decade as Professor of Psychology at Catholic University before becoming Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown. Allers articulated his scholarly critique of Freud in *The Successful Error* (1940), which he later re-named *What's Wrong with Freud? A Critical Study of Freudian Analysis* (1941). Through a series of popular advice books, as well as his continued academic work in America, Allers promoted his own ideas about how psychoanalysis could be practiced in ways that reinforced rather than challenged Catholic beliefs and ideals.³

Allers levied a two-pronged attack towards Freud's ideas. Directing himself, on the one hand, to a broad scholarly audience, Allers argued that, while Freud insisted upon identifying himself as a scientist, his theories were actually fraught with logical inconsistencies and lacked empirical justification. Asserting that Freud's theories constituted a philosophy more than a science, Allers removed the possibility that Catholics could incorporate them into a theology, based upon Thomas Aquinas, that used empirical science to seek knowledge about the world without questioning the existence of God. In this way, Allers represented psychoanalysis as a sort of heresy against both science and religion.

Allers relied upon Hilaire Belloc's definition of heresy as "the dislocation of some complete and self-supporting scheme by the introduction of the novel denial of some essential part therein" (2). Because this kind of heresy leaves standing a great part of the structure that it attacked, Belloc argued that "it can appeal to believers and continues to affect their lives." Allers believed that Freud's ideas were particularly appealing, therefore dangerous, to Catholics because, as heresies in Belloc's sense of the word, they actually echoed many truths that Allers associated with Christianity. Like Luce, Allers was most troubled by the ways that Freud seemed to reiterate Christian views – on original sin or the unity of human nature – in a desacralized context. Opposing Freud's view of himself as a product of nineteenth century empirical science, Allers supposed that he had absorbed Catholic ideas from the renaissance of scholasticism in the 1870s under Pope Leo XIII and from his interactions with Catholic thinkers like Franz Brentano in Vienna (Gay).

² Heinze (2004), who also quotes Luce, points out that the line between Luce's enthusiasm for Catholicism and her prejudicial view of Judaism was slender. Contemporaries and historians alike have been tempted to group both Sheen and Luce's critiques in with larger currents of anti-Semitic vitriol directed towards Freud and Marx during the Cold War. Heinze ultimately argues, however, that the enthusiasm that Luce demonstrated for Catholicism was indicative of her conversion and not symptomatic of anti-Semitism.

³ Biographical information included here was provided by the description of the Rudolf Allers Collection, in Special Collections at Georgetown University.

Allers articulated a “warning directed to all Catholics” because “the Catholic mind has been accused of being backward . . . so that Catholics have become a little uncertain” and they fear being “left behind,” making them vulnerable to the modern appeal of Freud (1941: 199). “But Catholics know also,” Allers asserted, “that whatever contradicts their faith cannot be true” (1941: 93). He held that psychoanalysis fails to uphold Christian ideals on several levels. It carried, for Allers, no stance on morality, positing pleasure and “normality” as goals for living. Attributing causation to instinct and emotion, Freud’s ideas denied free will, in Allers’ view. Without free will, sin disappeared. “Nobody who penetrates the spirit of psychoanalysis and, at the same time is fully cognizant of the essentials of supernatural faith can believe that these two are compatible,” Allers declared (1941: 197). “One either believes in Christ or in psychoanalysis,” He concluded and explained that in Freud’s view, religion means “nothing more than a peculiar manifestation of the human mind, of the same rank as magical practice, totemism or witchcraft” (1961: 186).

Emotional Salvation: Freud’s Catholic Champions

While Sheen, Luce, and Allers were among the most popular Catholic spokesman in America during the late forties, theirs were by no means the only voices to weigh in on public discussions of psychoanalysis. Following Sheen’s sermon critiquing Freud in 1947, a number of prominent Catholic psychologists aired their opposing views to the New York City press. Outraged by Sheen’s comments, Dr. Frank Curran resigned his position as the chief psychiatrist at St. Vincent’s Hospital on May 27th when the Archdiocese of New York failed to publicly address and refute Sheen’s views. In July, four Catholic psychiatrists attending the national conference of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry in Minneapolis publicly denounced Sheen’s reported charge that “the practice of psychiatry is irreligious” (Gilbert: 170; Gillespie: 16-17).

One of the only women to challenge Sheen, Sister Annette Walters, was still concerned by the rift between psychoanalysis and religion when she wrote an essay for *Catholic World* in 1955. She railed against the “narrow, parochial, and in the last analysis, un-Catholic prejudices” that prevented many Catholics “from learning what is true and valuable in modern psychology.” As a trained psychologist and professor of psychology at St. Catherine’s University, as well as a nun, Walters mirrored the aspirations of the Catholic thinkers to whom we now turn (Gillespie: 75).

Leo Bartemeier

Dr. Leo Bartemeier emerged as a particular leader in the efforts of Catholic psychiatrists to clarify the disagreements over psychoanalysis. On June 17, 1947, Bartemeier’s response to Sheen appeared in the New York publication, *PM*:

It is most unfortunate that one who enjoys Msgr. Sheen’s prestige would allow himself to give voice to such grievous errors. Tolerance and charity are fundamental tenets of both Catholicism and psychoanalysis. There is no contradiction between Catholicism and psychoanalysis, which is aimed at the understanding of people in trouble in order to bring about more wholesome personal, family and community relations (quoted in Gillespie: 17).

Where Sheen saw two world-views based upon incompatible premises – materialism and determinism vs. free will and reason – Bartemeier viewed psychoanalysis and Catholicism as two completely different types of disciplines – one a medical approach, the other a faith – with common goals. While Sheen’s opinions proliferated throughout American conduits of mass culture – radio, television, and best-sellers, Bartemeier’s ideas influenced the professional tiers of academic psychology and medicine. Bartemeier became one of the first practicing Catholics to assume leadership roles in the American psychoanalytic movement. He did so by carefully negotiating the boundaries between his faith and his profession. Bartemeier did not conflate Catholicism and psychoanalysis, but he did strive to pursue the values and beliefs that he held as a Catholic in his work as an analyst.

Born in 1895 and raised in a small, predominantly German Catholic, farming community in Iowa, Bartemeier grew up in a devoutly religious family and attended parochial schools. At the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. he worked with Thomas Verner Moore, a Benedictine monk who pioneered interactions between psychiatry and religion in American Catholic universities. After completing medical school at Georgetown, Bartemeier was accepted at Phipps Psychiatric clinic in Baltimore where he studied psychiatry and neurology with Adolf Meyer. Upon graduation, he set up his medical practice in Detroit, but became “unhappy about our meager knowledge of the causes and treatment of mental disorders” (Braceland and Martin: 630). To address these concerns, he trained at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis with Franz Alexander and, by 1938, became the first Catholic training analyst.

Psychoanalysis became a central component of Bartemeier’s professional identity as he assumed professorships at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Medical Schools and helped to found the Detroit Psychoanalytic Institute. Catholicism provided another aspect of his identity and professional interactions. In the brief spiritual autobiography that Bartemeier constructed when he was seventy-seven, he emphasized that his “spiritual feelings were threaded through my thinking and all I had to say”. He recollected that one of his oldest psychiatric colleagues always greeted him as “Padre” and jokingly described Bartemeier as the “only married Jesuit in the Order” (1972: 73-74).

Bartemeier tended to pursue activities that reflected the humanistic values – charity, tolerance, wholesome relationships – that he associated with both psychoanalysis and Catholicism. He actively participated in international outreach activities, from working with the World Health Organization to establishing a child guidance clinic in Ireland to consulting with psychiatrists in Cuba. Bartemeier was also eager to ameliorate the devastating psychological effects of World War II. In 1945, he participated in a commission of experts sent to Europe by the Army to study the reasons for the large number of psychiatric casualties turning up in various area commands. Working with notable psychiatrists Karl Menninger, Lawrence Kubie, John Romano, and John Whitehorn, Bartemeier reported on the committee’s findings. After the war, Bartemeier participated in training seminars for Army Chaplains of various faiths, and helped to conduct workshops for Clergy at St. John’s University in Minnesota (Bartemeier 1972: 73-74).

In 1951, Bartemeier spoke to the American Psychiatric Association on the topic of “Psychiatry and International Understanding,” emphasizing the ways that the psychiatric

profession fostered healthy interactions among nations. He pointed to the operation of the discipline itself as an important model for international collaboration, lauding the lines of communication between psychiatrists working in different countries, particularly those forged by meetings like the first International Committee on Mental Hygiene that met in 1930. The interdisciplinary or multi-professional method that Bartemeier saw as originating in American venues, such as child guidance clinics where psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, and psychiatric social workers might collaborate, was another important model that he believed would further international sharing. Bartemeier also saw the psychiatric method as an important source of information on the emotional and psychological factors that influence relationships among nations.

In 1952, Bartemeier was inaugurated as President of the American Psychiatric Association. His presidential address captured the relationship that he saw between his interest in psychoanalysis and his humanistic values. Much of the address centered on Bartemeier's desire to bring psychotherapy generally, and psychoanalysis specifically, into more prominent positions within the psychiatric profession. World War II, in Bartemeier's view, was a pivotal moment in the development of the relationship between psychoanalysts and other psychiatrists. "The psychiatrist and the psychoanalyst met under fire and they worked together; they met the clinical problems together and had to solve them in common; they exchanged their views" (3). Bartemeier also attributed the growing relationship between psychoanalysis and psychiatry to the transposition of the major psychoanalytic centers from Europe to America during the thirties and forties. While Bartemeier saw psychoanalysis as developing in isolation from psychiatry in Europe, he noted intense collaboration in America. Bartemeier further noted that the vitality of both disciplines was energized by the very experience of war – the demand for screening and mental health services for the armed forces and the opportunity to learn about human nature through military work.

While Bartemeier saw post-war America as a nurturing environment for psychoanalysis, he also saw psychotherapy as a positive influence on the larger psychiatric discipline. In Bartemeier's view, psychotherapy, specifically psychoanalysis, brought the individual back to the center of a psychiatric approach that threatened to become impersonal. "What greater scourge could befall psychiatry than becoming impersonal – which means losing sight of the person of the patient?" Bartemeier wondered. "The great technological advances that have taken place in medicine within the last three quarter century," he warned, "raise this threat – the loss of the personal relationship with the patient." He emphasized that "the whole tradition of medicine is based on healing and caring for the sick as persons, through constant personal contact between the doctor and the patient" (1952: 1).

Despite Bartemeier's enthusiasm for psychoanalysis, Sheen's criticism troubled him. In 1949, Ernest Jones, the president of the International Psychoanalytic Association, asked Bartemeier to succeed him as the new leader. He told Jones that, although he believed that Sheen and other critics spoke in ignorance of psychoanalysis, he still needed to reach some sense of resolution in that controversy before he could accept the presidency. He held a private meeting with Pope Pius XII to discuss his concerns:

When I met him and acquainted him with my problem I told him that my religion was far more important to me than the possible high honor to which

I might be elected, so I had to ask him his views on psychoanalysis. Quite immediately he said that Freud had discovered more about human nature than anyone preceding him for thousands of years (Braceland and Martin: 630).

Bartemeier was impressed by the Pope's knowledge and "felt like he was speaking to an analytic colleague." When he asked the Pope how he felt about psychoanalytic therapy, the Pope responded that "this depended upon the character of the physician." Their meeting concluded with the Pope assuring Bartemeier that, should he be elected to the presidency, he should "accept it and do honor to the church" (Braceland and Martin: 630).

The shifting tenor of later remarks by Pope Pius XII, regarding psychoanalysis in the 1950s, reflects the influx of the discipline into the institutional structures of the Church, as well as into the medical field through doctors like Bartemeier. In his Discourse to Doctors of Neurology, 1952, the Pope rejected "the pansexualist theory of a certain psychoanalytic school." The next year, however, he suggested that psychoanalytic techniques could be used empirically – in almost a reductionist fashion – to explore the psychological operations of religion. "Psychology of the depths," he asserted in his Discourse at the Congress of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology in 1953, "must not be condemned if it discovers the contents of the religious psychism and strives to analyze it and reduce it to a scientific system, even if this research is new and the terminology cannot be found in the past." By 1958, he advised the International Congress of Applied Psychology that "spiritual values be taken into consideration by both the psychologist and his patients" (Wolman: vii-viii).

With the Pope's blessing, Bartemeier was able to move into the presidency of the International Psychoanalytic Association and continue pursuing his career and his spiritual aims. He did so, however, by understanding the difference between the two. In "An Autobiography of my Religion" (1972), Bartemeier expressed how difficult it was for him to overcome the professional reticence of an analyst unaccustomed to revealing his personal beliefs in order to declare his "religious faith and how it had carried him through life." He clarified, however, that religion was not therapy. "This autobiography of my religion," he stated, "is intended to signify that its purpose is the worship of God." Bartemeier asserted that "the function of religion is neither the generating or relieving of anxiety nor the care of our temporal ills." For him, "its function is worship" (quoted in Braceland and Martin: 630).

Bartemeier had earlier emphasized that Catholicism and analysis need not exist in philosophical opposition in "Psychoanalysis and Religion," an essay he wrote in 1965, in which he tried to pry Freud's personal atheism away from his psychological theories. Bartemeier pointed out that while teaching that religion is an illusion, Freud was careful to point out that an illusion is not the same thing as an error; that the determining factor in defining an illusion is not its truth or fallacy, but the motivation behind its belief – wish fulfillment. Bartemeier argued that Freud's essays on religion were not meant to disprove the existence of God, but were intended to analyze the psychological influence of religious belief. As a result of his immersion in a philosophical environment that was influenced by Catholicism, Freud's theories actually ended up corroborating church teachings, in Bartemeier's view. He pointed to the parallel between Thomas Aquinas' assertion that "all hatred arises from love" and Freud's doctrine of ambivalence. He also saw Aquinas' vision of the unity of the human being

– in opposition to the Platonic or Cartesian separation between body and soul – affirmed by the connections that Freud drew between conscious and unconscious experiences.

Bartemeier further believed that psychoanalysis could be used as a tool to demonstrate that many Catholic teachings found expression in the psychological processes of individuals. In his spiritual autobiography, for example, Bartemeier quoted extensively from his friend Lawrence Kubie's response to Sheen's criticism of psychoanalysis. He was particularly interested in Kubie's assertion that psychoanalytic techniques correlated with Catholic beliefs in the human struggle with original sin:

Like the church, psychoanalysis recognizes the fact that both child and man struggle against powerful primitive drives. It was St. Augustine who said that the so-called innocence of childhood is due more to the weakness of their limbs than to the purity of their hearts. Where the Church speaks of "original sin" the psychoanalyst speaks of primitive drives. Thus the first recognition that the primitive components of human nature are a major source of difficulty in our ethical and emotional development is to be attributed not to Freudian psychoanalysis but to the Church itself. To this fundamental truth, however, analysis added a discovery of vast importance, namely that these primitive drives operate not only consciously, but also deep below the level of consciousness and that in man's battle with his own primitive impulses both of these levels must be dealt with. Psychoanalysis thus is, in fact, an important complement to the efforts of religion in that it provides a tool by which man can deal more effectively with the more deeply buried and unconscious drives which hamper his struggle toward the good life (*New York Herald Tribune*, April 20, 1947).

Ultimately, Bartemeier employed psychoanalytic insights to reflect upon his own spiritual development. Pointing to Freud's assertion that people can only tolerate the world for two-thirds of their lives, forced to turn away from it nightly in sleep to recuperate, Bartemeier explained that his spiritual development seemed to follow a similar pattern of shifting engagement and detachment. Chronicling moments of intense religious awe, such as his audiences with the Pope, alongside incidents of distraction and doubt, Bartemeier believed that his spiritual life paralleled the struggle between conscious and unconscious mental processes that accounts for daydreams, memory lapses, and mistakes in Freud's theories. Along with Freud, Bartemeier argued that "we are less in control of ourselves than we think we are" (1972: 76).

From this simple recognition of the limitations upon his ego, to his interest in exploring the ways that psychoanalysis might provide scientific proof for Catholic doctrine, Bartemeier began to engage issues and questions that doctors like Karl Stern and Gregory Zilboorg would explore in much greater depth. In his dedication to viewing psychoanalysis and Catholicism as distinct and complementary systems, Bartemeier maintained a bridge between both disciplines at a time when that connection seemed tenuous. Stern and Zilboorg, with the energy that often accompanies intellectual or spiritual conversions, celebrated that link and sought to strengthen it.

Karl Stern

In his assessment of Freud's analysis of religious conversion, Sandor Gilman notes that, for nineteenth century Jews, conversion seemed to offer a tantalizing escape from Jewishness, an imagined passport into the broader European culture. Freud himself reflected upon the seductive appeal of conversion, embodied in the Catholic nursemaid who appeared in his recollections as a woman seeking to seduce him sexually and to lure him into the Catholic faith. This alluring vision of assimilation, of course, was more attuned to fantasy than to the realities of fin-de-siecle Europe, where Jewishness was defined as a racial category; "Jew" contrasted to "Aryan" more often than to "Christian." Gilman points out that, within this worldview, conversion appeared as pathology, an attempt to rail against the natural order (1993a: 69-89; see also Allitt).

Karl Stern, converting from Judaism to Catholicism in 1943, was painfully aware that such ideas had circulated and feared that his actions could be perceived as neurotic, at best, and as acts of betrayal, at worst. While Stern studied the Gospels, admired the Catholics who fought against the Nazis and slowly, tentatively allowed himself to "try on" belief in Jesus Christ as the true messiah, he also agonized over the disloyal implications of his possible conversion:

Here I was, one of my people in the middle of the most dreadful persecution we had ever suffered and, like a faint shadow, the possibility arose of leaving this community of destiny. This seemed madness. It seemed madness the more since it was my natural urge to stay with those with whom I was born to suffer. Was the swastika not a modification of the crucifix under whose sign we had been tortured before? This is what it seemed to be if one took history on the natural plane. Perhaps all this was a "build-up," carefully framed by my subconscious to camouflage an escape from Jewry (1951: 182).

Stern determined, however, that by embracing Catholicism, he would validate the aspects of Judaism that he most valued, while abandoning the nationalism that he believed was a dangerous and inherent part of Zionism and Jewish belief. Stern embraced a career in psychoanalysis and a life in Catholicism that he believed would serve his moral and ethical ideals. The fundamental values that formed the core of Stern's religious and intellectual belief system were reverence for all individuals, respect for their unique souls and psyches, and loathing for any political or social structure that seemed to dehumanize or routinize human lives. In Stern's view, good battled evil within each individual with stakes as high as the wars on global planes. The road to social good wound through the hearts and souls of the individuals who comprised the community. The experiences, suffering, and stories of each mattered.

In the autobiography of his conversion, Stern gracefully articulated the arduous and far reaching intellectual and emotional processes through which he determined that Catholicism offered the best way for him to live in the world. He explained why Catholicism provided him with a belief system that not only structured his inner life, but also gave him an approach to the world that he believed would foster peaceful and democratic communities. The autobiography also narrated Stern's flight from the Nazis and his immigration to Montreal – a move that, in his view, made him an "American," although a relatively displaced and uncomfortable one who felt relegated to the fringes of his new community by the forces of

anti-Semitism and provincialism that he encountered among his Canadian neighbors. From his academic post in the psychiatry department of McGill University, Stern published both his widely read autobiography and, two years later, his treatise on religion and psychology, *The Third Revolution* (1953).

Like his decision to convert, Stern also faced choices that appeared contradictory in his professional life. As a trained psychoanalyst and neurologist, Stern operated in a medical community whose leaders tended to stand in opposition to religion and metaphysics, heralding science as the best hope for salvation in this world. Indeed, Stern harbored serious fears that psychoanalysis and other social sciences could eventually play a very destructive role if they became instruments of “scientism.” Mocking the allure of “rationalist pragmatism,” Stern urged:

Let us investigate objectively the roots of racial and of class hatred, with all the tools of present-day science, with methods of economic investigation, of sociology, of behaviorism, of psychoanalysis . . . let us be as scientific and systematic in the establishment of inter-human relationships as we have been in technology. Let us have some sort of international board of social psychologists to study and control the relationships of groups of people. In order to be able to do this successfully we may find that we have to abolish metaphysical concepts of human existence because it is possible that those are the concepts contributing to tension. If we find this necessary let us be courageous and do it, let us sterilize the air and remove all germs of faith so that we may live more rationally and more peacefully in an aseptic scientific atmosphere. Human affairs have long enough been governed by Belief, let them now be governed by Science and Usefulness (1951: 292).

Such a belief system, in Stern’s view, could lead only to a “hell on earth,” nihilism, a life without God. The greatest dangers in such a worldview were the same threats that Stern saw in Fascism and Communism: dehumanization, the inability to value the individual and recognize the uniqueness of each person.

While Freud might have gladly placed psychoanalysis at the vanguard of a movement that displaced religion with science, Stern was convinced that psychoanalysis could actually provide an important key to the revitalization of religious influence instead. Concerned that religious leaders were responding to the challenges of psychoanalysis with defensiveness and pessimism, Stern urged religious believers to see instead the possibility that psychoanalysis could reintroduce free will and personalism into the social sciences that had been growing mechanistic and deterministic (1953: 130). He saw, for example, evidence that the salvation of the world began with the inner experience of an individual in both the Gospels and Freud. “The gospel teaches that if I am concerned with making the world a less cruel place to live in I do not need that Board of Social Scientists,” Stern asserted, “there is inside myself evil enough to work on, enough to last me a lifetime.” In this belief he found proof that “psychoanalysis has reaffirmed that which the Church has taught all the time” (1951: 297):

Potentially there is inside every man a den of murderers and thieves. Why these potentialities become manifest in your neighbor and remain latent in you, this is not for you to judge. The view which separates the potential evil in you from

the manifest evil of the man about whom you are going to read in tomorrow's headlines is thinner and more mysterious than you think – this is the catharsis which emanates from the great Russian writers of the nineteenth century and from psychoanalysis, this is the true purification of which modern man is so desperately in need. But it is only an elaboration of an old truth. Every act contains an element by which I am endangered. For centuries every Catholic child, man and woman has prayed: "I have Crucified my loving savior Jesus Christ" (1951: 297).

Just as he believed Freud had affirmed the existence of the universal struggle between good and evil within each person, Stern argued that Freud asserted, from the materialist platform of a nineteenth century scientist, the "primary position of love in Man's world." Stern saw "an embryology of love" in psychoanalysis that "reaffirms and enriches the Christian idea of man." Stern explained that psychoanalysis depicts an infant as more of a passive recipient of love than an active lover, and as one who cannot bear hostility. As human beings mature they are abler to "love actively" and to withstand rejection. Stern points out that Christianity teaches that the "climax of human perfection is to love infinitely and to be able to be hated infinitely" – the very definition of human maturity in Freud's model (1951: 278-79). Psychoanalysis and Christianity, in Stern's view, teach that *amore* can be transformed into *caritas* – selfish lust into selfless caring. Stern predicted that "later generations will see that in the rediscovery of the crude archaic traces of love in Man's physical nature there occurs a decisive turning away from that Manichaeism of which Western Man has been so dangerously ill" (1951: 279). Stern saw psychoanalysis rescuing the human individual from bureaucratic anonymity or mechanistic quantification. "Psychoanalysis with its detailed care for the history of each individual and its emphasis on psychic injuries, reaffirms, more than any other discipline in psychiatry or psychology," Stern argued, "the dignity of the human person" (1951: 279).

Fleeing the holocaust, listening to stories from relatives who spoke of murdered babies and ruthless torture in death camps, Stern was particularly attuned to the unique ways that suffering afflicted individuals. While recognizing the potential usefulness of psychological science to provide insight into the "intrinsic mechanisms" of suffering, to "analyze, disentangle, classify and name" the things that hurt people, Stern was convinced that there remained in each case "a secret element which cannot be reproduced nor re-experienced" as "it belongs entirely to that one soul." In the life of Jesus Christ, Stern believed that he had found a "universality and infinite multiplicity" of suffering that "anticipates and contains your and my life in a singular way." He saw in his medical work "countless human mirrors" in which patients suffered something "which is incommunicable, something which in this form does not seem to occur in anyone else's life" (1951: 294-95). At this point, Stern posited the metaphysical union with Jesus Christ. "With that one aspect of his life he seems to be alone," Stern said of his patients, "But he is not" (1951: 295).

It was within the individual, as well as in the single person of Jesus Christ, that Stern situated his hopes for the future of civilization:

There is only one way: Jesus Christ. If we are concerned with the suffering of those innocent ones, we have first to look at him. If we are concerned with the

Evil which has brought it about, we have first to look at ourselves. Everything else is deception. If I want to renew the world I have to begin right in the depth of my own soul. This is the only true and permanent revolution which I am to achieve. Class warfare leads to another set of oppressors and oppressed; national revenge leads to another set of persecutors and persecuted; and the Board of Social Scientists for the Prevention of Inter-group Hostilities is the most dangerous mirage of them all because it makes us believe even more that the decisive battle is fought far away from us, outside ourselves; it turns good and evil into two pale abstracts; it seeks to de-humanize the issue (1951: 294).

Stern saw social justice as a goal that had to be achieved through changes in the hearts of individuals rather than through structural, political change. The most dangerous ideas of all seemed, for Stern, to be those that enabled individuals to think in terms of abstractions, to view humans as objects of study or cogs in a social structure rather than as unique souls.

One of the most important ways that Stern believed psychoanalysis could actually promote Catholic ideals in the larger disciplines of the social sciences was by focusing on the role of empathy in human relationships. In Stern's view, empathy, the capacity of genuine participation in the thoughts or feelings of another, was a central tenet of Christianity. He saw the psychoanalytic mechanism of identification, the ego's desire to be like another, and its ultimate internalization of the characteristics of the object of identification, as a useful way to explain empathic processes from the Bible. When Christ declares that whatever you have done to the least of my brethren, you have done unto me, Stern argues that he actually points to himself as one object of identification and the least of our brethren as another. Believers are asked to emulate and internalize the qualities of Jesus, to identify with him (1953: 239).

Stern (1964) pointed to the empathic nature of Thomas Aquinas' reliance of knowledge by revelation as a way of knowing that could augment the Christian's reliance on the empirical. In psychoanalysis, he found a similar use of intuition and insight in the evolution of Freud's theories. Stern used transference as an example of a phenomenon that was discovered, not through empirical research, but through the intuition, or empathic recognition of the therapist. He also used Freud's exploration of the uncanny to show how the analyst used poetry (that of E. T. A. Hoffman) rather than scientific experiments as evidence. Stern argued that much of Freud's work was supported by "poetic" methods – the ways that hypothesis and assumptions harmonized with other aspects of his theory, and the ways that they "worked" to explain psychological operations.

The most significant opportunity that Stern saw for psychoanalysis to foster more authentic, empathic relationships among individuals was in the therapy session. Like Bartemeier, Stern feared a therapeutic approach that simply objectified the patient or treated him or her like a list of symptoms rather than a unified individual. In psychoanalysis, Stern saw a social science characterized by the "absence of an object." Instead, Stern portrayed analysis as a meeting of two subjects in a relationship that was alive with change and possibility. The meeting of two individuals in a therapeutic relationship transcended, in Stern's vision, Freud's atheistic worldview and philosophic belief. Stern argued that, as a therapeutic method, "psychoanalysis is philosophically neutral," and "it helps to free the patient from his neurotic

shackles and enables him to re-discover his basic set of beliefs, whatever they may be.” (1953: 146). Stern lauded the mechanisms of transference and counter-transference as the strength of therapeutic relationships: “The unique encounter, the meeting of two human beings, with all the re-enactment of a forgotten drama, the re-presentation of that which is ‘familiar’ (of the family) – this is the true principle of healing” (1953: 146). Stern argued that this encounter could be rendered philosophically neutral by the therapist who desires to do so. The anti-Christian bias that others identified in psychoanalysis was, for Stern, a result of therapists introducing their own biases into the therapeutic process (1953: 146).

Of Freud’s avowed atheism, Stern determined that it was a “tragic historical accident,” to be expected from “a genius who is a product of the nineteenth century.” But, like mathematics or geology, the method could be used to learn (1951: 278). In Freud’s rejection of religion, Stern saw the reductionism that had shaped scientific debate since the Copernican revolution: the earth is just a rock, human beings are just animals, religion is just neurosis. In Freud’s “debunking” of religion, Stern saw more engagement with myth, philosophy, and speculation than with empirical evidence or rational logic.

Psychoanalysis introduced terms that had traditionally been the vocabulary of theologians and philosophers, such as “Love and Hatred, Fear and Hope, Guilt and Freedom,” into the discussions of medicine and psychiatry. Stern noted that Freud’s writings on faith did not fit into either of the two big schools of anti-Christian philosophy – dialectical materialism and scientific positivism. “They are odd,” Stern said of Freud’s religious theories, “they emphasize too much an element of tragedy . . . they have created nothing in the popular mind like the wave following the post-Darwinian evolutionist literature; there is nothing in these writings to catch on” (1953: 11). Freud’s critique of religion, however, was not without value to believers, in Stern’s view. Had Freud simply told patients that “What you call religion is actually your neurosis,” rather than “religion is neurosis,” he may well have been correct (1953: 123). Stern argued that from this perspective, Freud could serve to “stir us out of our complacency” and recognize the times when “religion” is “unconsciously used as a channel of aggressiveness” (1953: 174).

While others, Freud included, saw psychoanalysis as an explanatory tool that would disenchant the world, revealing the fallacies of superstition and dispensing with the need for metaphysics, Stern was convinced that psychoanalysis was actually a method that could be used to uphold the major tenets of Catholicism. He saw as well an opportunity to posit the values that he associated with Catholicism – love, empathy, reverence for the individual, at the heart of the social sciences. For Stern, psychoanalysis and Catholicism provided two avenues towards the same ends.

Gregory Zilboorg

Like Karl Stern, Gregory Zilboorg was born into a Jewish family, studied medicine and psychiatry in Europe, immigrated to America, converted to Catholicism, and became a vigorous proponent of the rapprochement between religion and psychoanalysis. He felt, however, less compunction about abandoning the faith of his youth. Fleeing Russia shortly after the Bolsheviks took control, Zilboorg considered his Judaism to be less a part of his political identity. By the time he converted to Catholicism in 1953, he had already undergone a number of intellectual and spiritual conversions, making these transformations a regular part

of his life. Having taken part in the first (Social Democratic Party) Revolution before leaving Russia, Zilboorg abandoned his early Marxism and quickly embraced the liberalism of his adopted country. This was followed in short order by a conversion to the English language. Knowing only “yes,” “no,” and “Bolshevik” upon his arrival, within three months, Zilboorg was able to give his first lecture in English (Zilboorg 1967: vii-xi).

In the audience, Zilboorg met a Professor of Philosophy from Swarthmore and member of the Society of Friends who invited him to join the Chautauqua Circuit. Before long, Zilboorg had become a Quaker, but maintained a sense of religious exploration. Having married an Episcopalian, Zilboorg became fascinated by her religion, engaging in lengthy and frequent theological discussions. During the 1930s and 1940s Zilboorg’s intellectual interest extended to Catholicism and he began to write frequently on the relationship between religion and psychoanalysis, paying particular attention to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and other components of Catholic theology. He attracted the attention of prominent theologians, including the Dominican Father Noel Mailloux, himself a psychologist. Zilboorg became intellectually consumed by his engagement with these Catholic thinkers, intrigued, according to his wife, by “their humanism, their devotion to man as an individual” (Zilboorg 1967: ix).

In 1953, Zilboorg officially converted to the Catholic Church. Continuing to write extensively about the relationship between Catholicism and psychoanalysis, Zilboorg came to be known as a sort of Catholic culture hero, one of the numerous Catholics who emerged as relative celebrities in the years after World War II. Like fellow Catholics Thomas Merton and Fulton Sheen, Zilboorg achieved popular success and represented Catholicism as a way of life that carried lessons and inspiration for Catholics and non-Catholics alike (Zilboorg 1967: x).

Zilboorg achieved this exalted status, not only through his writing and speaking engagements, but also through his association with other celebrities. From his private practice in New York City, Zilboorg treated Ernest Hemingway, Marshall Field, George Gershwin, Lillian Hellman, and Moss Hart, among others. His fees, when others were charging four dollars an hour, reached \$75 per session. Moss Hart, who was treated by both Zilboorg and Lawrence Kubie, penned *Lady in the Dark* (1943), a musical about psychoanalysis. Starring Ginger Rogers, the movie centered on the analysis of a young woman, repressed by her copywriting career, whose true energy emerged in colorful song and dance sequences set in her therapist’s office. While rumored to be patterned after either Kubie or Zilboorg, the analyst in *Lady in the Dark* matched Zilboorg’s public image – coolly detached and vaguely intimidating (Lehrman; Madsen).

This persona – high powered and self-assured analyst to the elite – emerged in Zilboorg’s well-documented encounter with fellow Catholic culture hero, Thomas Merton. Zilboorg’s interactions with Merton demonstrate the extent to which psychoanalysis was infiltrating the realms of monastic life in America, as well as in the popular mind. Merton, whose spiritual conversion and emotional struggles had captivated American readers in *Seven Storey Mountain*, continued to fight anxiety and depression. Interested in psychoanalysis, Merton suggested that his monastery in Kentucky employ personality tests to assess new initiates, and offer therapy to the contemplative monks. When his supervisors noticed that Merton seemed to be exhibiting increasing emotional fragility, they arranged for him to meet with Zilboorg at a workshop on psychiatry and religion, held at St. John’s University in 1956 (Mott).

After a private conference with Zilboorg, Merton recorded in his journal that “it turns out . . . that I am in somewhat bad shape, and that I *am* neurotic.” He wrote down a number of Zilboorg’s direct observations including: “you are a gadfly to your superiors,” and “you like to be famous, you want to be a big shot, you keep pushing your way out – into publicity – megalomania and narcissism are your big trends” (Mott: 295). Zilboorg condemned Merton’s plan to become a hermit as “pathological.” Merton seemed to take this assessment in stride and indeed to appreciate the analytic insights. He wrote the next day that “As for my own personal problems – clearly Zilboorg is the first one who has really shown conclusively that he knows exactly what is cooking” (Mott: 296). Merton looked forward to working further with Zilboorg.

Merton’s second meeting with Zilboorg, in the presence of his abbot, Dom James, was much more traumatic. Unprepared for his demons to be exposed and dissected in the presence of his supervisor, Merton “flew into a fury and cried tears of rage,” when Zilboorg began to address his problems. In the face of Merton’s emotional breakdown, Zilboorg kept repeating in a level voice what he had said before about the hermitage idea being pathological: “You want a hermitage in Times Square with a large sign over it saying ‘HERMIT.’” Facing his Russian analyst with the walrus mustache, Merton sat with tears streaming down his face and muttered “Stalin! Stalin!” Merton’s biographer, Michael Mott, notes that the episode haunted Merton for years and that Merton worried that the incident had permanently tainted the ways that his supervisors perceived him (Mott: 297).

This incident is telling in that it shows how very seriously the clergy involved took psychoanalysis. Although Merton abandoned his plans to undergo analysis with Zilboorg in New York, he did meet with the doctor when he was invited – by Merton’s superiors – to the monastery in Louisville. A Zilboorg-recommended psychologist began treating novices, and Dom James decided that the monastery needed a psychiatrist in residence. Merton himself continued to express admiration for the insight that he received from Zilboorg, despite their traumatic encounter. Clearly, the Catholics at Gethsemane were enthralled by psychoanalysis, and eager to make it part of their institutional life.

They found in this endeavor a great ally in Zilboorg. Throughout the forties and fifties, he wrote articles that encouraged Catholics to recognize the potential of psychoanalysis to affirm aspects of their faith. Publishing in a wide range of venues – from *Atlantic Monthly* and *America*, to *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* and *La Vie Spirituelle* – Zilboorg engaged a popular and scholarly audience in the United States and abroad. Threaded through these essays were themes and arguments similar to those put forth by Karl Stern. Zilboorg, too, worried about the dehumanizing tendencies of scientism and construed psychoanalysis to be the sort of science that, in the wrong hands, could become part of that problem, but, in his own interpretation, became an antidote. Zilboorg was also eager to demonstrate that psychoanalysis maintained individual free will and fostered Christian love in human relationships. Of the analysts that we have discussed, however, Zilboorg was the most orthodox Freudian. He railed against the ways that Freud’s ideas were often re-interpreted and transformed as they gained popularity in America. Zilboorg did not strive to augment or reshape psychoanalysis to conform to Catholicism. He was, instead, focused on demonstrating that the strictest interpretations of Freud were actually the most attuned to Catholic concerns.

Like Bartemeier's, Zilboorg's reconciliation of psychoanalysis and religion was founded upon the conviction that psychoanalysis was an empirical science rather than a philosophy or worldview. Zilboorg believed that he could use information gathered through psychoanalytic methods to construct a philosophy, just as he could draw from zoology or geography, but that the methods themselves were empirical. Zilboorg distinguished between "science," which could be used to investigate religious issues, and "scientism" – the faith that science is the only way to truth or knowledge, and that science provides the only hope for salvation – which became a religion unto itself. Zilboorg warned that when science is made into a religion, becoming an object of worship and a system of ultimate truth, it "invariably becomes a bad religion, teaching men to worship the achievement of the human mind" (1967: 38). By the same token, Zilboorg perceived this as "bad science" as well, that hardens into "dogma." In the case of psychoanalysis, Zilboorg was dismayed that Christian thought has "failed to accept" a "scientific finding" that lends support to its own "ethico-religious teaching" and brings a "biological, observational, scientific proof of the revelatory intuition which has inspired religious teachers since the time of St. Augustine" (1967: 107).

By representing psychoanalysis as an empirical science, rather than a belief system, Zilboorg was able to construe it as a liberating tool that would remove physical and biological impediments to the freedom of individual egos and, ultimately, souls. Zilboorg operated under a framework in which the chemical and material realities of the brain, as an organ, could be biologically determined without diminishing the free will and the human soul. He explained:

If one looks upon the psychic apparatus as an organ and not as a psychoanalytic substitute for the soul, the misconceived controversy about psychoanalysis and free will will easily recede. Man's free will cannot come to expression without free reason; reason cannot be free unless the organic or biological system within which the human personality is destined to function does function without the impediments which we, for want of any other term call neurosis, or illness. Freud's psychological determinism never went and never could go beyond the limited frame, the closed system, of the psychic apparatus. The deficiencies or malfunctions of the latter vitiate the free exercise of the will as much as do deficiencies and pathological changes of the brain (1967: 52).

The striving for the opportunity of free choice was inherent in psychoanalysis, he argued. "If psychoanalysis does not explicitly accept the postulate of free will, it does not deny it," Zilboorg asserted, "if anything, it supports it by its striving to liberate man's reason and will from the frailties which his biological, and therefore psychological, imperfections impose on him in his daily life" (1967: 53; see also Brunner).

Like Stern and Bartemeier, Zilboorg focused on the types of relationships between individuals that psychoanalysis seemed to foster. Even more explicitly than his colleagues, Zilboorg was convinced that the development of love was the driving force behind Freud's theories and the key to the liberation that they provided. "Freud, unconcerned with ethics or religion, arrived at the conclusion that the life of man is based on creative love," Zilboorg argued, "on constant domestication of his aggression, on constant harmonization of the animal within him with his humanness, on the constant living of his life on the basis of love

and reason instead of hate and aggression.” Developing these ideas through his empirical, clinical observations, “Freud, unbeknown to himself, thus established an empirical basis of life which is in total conformity with the Christian ideal,” according to Zilboorg (1967: 125). Citing Freud’s assertion that “Love alone acts as the civilizing factor in the sense that it brings a change from egoism to altruism,” Zilboorg would continually return to this evolution towards altruism as the process that would liberate individuals and bring their psychological experiences into harmony with Catholic spiritual teachings (1921: 38).

Zilboorg described adulthood as “that state of psychological development in which the various infantile, partial, hedonistic (sexual, in the Freudian sense) drives become synthesized in such a way that the sensual-egocentric (infantile-sexual) drives become adult-altruistic and the infantile, exclusive love for the object outside oneself (father and/or mother, and or sister or brother) becomes adult love for other people” (1967: 69). The object-libidinous relationship, in Zilboorg’s view, was an important step towards adult altruism, because it was a move away from egocentrism. The more that an individual was able to focus libido energy towards multiple objects beyond one’s self or those that one views in a possessive, territorial capacity – the more that the individual felt comfortable channeling desire towards “higher,” selfless goals – the more altruistic they became. The centering of desire upon an object beyond one’s self was the first move away from egocentrism.

Zilboorg argued that “the ideal of human psychological health was . . . the ever-increasing libidinization of the higher human activities such as parental, filial and friendly love in general, at the expense of the purely sensual-erotic and aggressive-destructive drives.” He insisted that this transformation is the goal of psychoanalytic therapy, and that “the chief measure of this transformation is the degree to which the libido is directed toward objects and integrated in the totality of human functioning among and with other fellow human beings.” Zilboorg insisted that these transformations wrought the “ultimate liberation of man from the slavery in which his own instinctual impulses, his unconscious, non-domesticated drives always hold him unless he achieves the highest degree of object-libidinous relationship to people and the world as a whole” (1967: 128).

Zilboorg further employed Freud’s model of maturity (the move from egocentrism to altruism) to construct an ethical critique of contemporary social conditions. He decried the emphasis on utilitarianism, the potential for hatred, and the prejudice that he saw operating in modern America as well as abroad:

The earlier infantile impulses are all characterized not only by an egocentric, narcissistic sensuality, but by a sort of utilitarian, mercenary love bestowed on others only if and when one gets something for it. This utilitarian love is also an unsteady love which becomes hate rather easily at the first experience of frustration; it is a mixed, ambivalent love in which anxiety and anger, aggressiveness, fear and cowering passivity are all combined in unequal proportions and in a state of considerable lability (1967: 69).

Zilboorg criticized the utilitarian approach in American’s relationships with ideas as well as with each other. In 1951, reflecting on World War II, Zilboorg pointed out that Freud defined civilization as an entity that restricts the outward expression of aggressive, destructive drives and internalizes them. Zilboorg construes this to mean that, “civilized man, by virtue of his

being civilized, has learned not to kill and learned inwardly to prefer his own death to murdering his neighbor.” In these ideals, Zilboorg reflects the influence of Catholics’ espoused commitment to “turning the other cheek,” and perhaps also the Quakers’ dedication to pacifism, absorbed from his earlier days in the Society of Friends (1967: 88-89).

The way that modern military psychology would utilize Freud to avoid combat fatigue so that “man should learn not to be afraid to kill and to die,” was deeply troubling to Zilboorg. Arguing that this goal would serve neither Freud nor humanity very well, he asserted that “this is how the ‘practical’ among us seek to draw ‘material’ from whatever science they may find, in order to fulfill a goal which is just the opposite of the goals of reason, morality, civilization and science.” The “practical man,” in Zilboorg’s view, is always “on the lookout for something to use”:

The atomic bomb can be fissioned? Let us make an atomic bomb. The superego is powerful? Let us “make it” and use it for a Communist revolution, or for an intensification of the acquisitive instinct. . . . Being practical seldom involves Eros in its integrated functioning, for loving thy neighbor as thyself is very “impractical.” Being practical most frequently involves the destructive drives and a host of their minor aides in our intellectual life, from infantile sexuality (partial erotic drives) to narcissistic impulses (1967: 89).

Zilboorg also found explanation for the inverse of love, hate, in Freud’s findings. He argued that only the “incomplete synthesis of Eros in the adult makes prejudice (hate) possible.” This made possible the contingent projections of the “pseudo-socialized, pseudo-sublimated erotic drives,” such as drives for “power (in its form of extreme sadism), drives for worldly possessions (in its form of extreme lecherous avarice) and orgiastic restlessness which becomes sensual depravity.” Zilboorg believed that all three of these drives “came to their tragic and catastrophic expression in the Nazi philosophy and practice, which was acquisitive, sadistic and sensual to the point of reducing male and female humans to machines for the mass production of future German guardians of Nazi-exclusivism” (1967: 74).

The psychological drives behind this Nazi debacle were far from unique, in Zilboorg’s view. “That the ceaseless drives of man are usually projected into others by the aberrations of prejudice is more or less a normal phenomenon” (1967: 73). In his research, Zilboorg observed that the prejudiced – whether anti-Semite, racist, anti-Catholic, or anti-communist – all said the same things about the subject of their hate: that they were driven by an unnatural drive for sexuality, riches, and power – the very drives that Zilboorg found fueling the prejudiced themselves.

Like Stern, Zilboorg saw the relationship between patient and analyst as a pivotal opportunity for the cultivation of human connectedness and the expression of Christian love, or *caritas*:

Freud’s demand of tolerance and of an object-libidinous attitude towards the patient is the most important. By object-libidinous attitude, Freud means an attitude devoid of severe condemnatory judgment of the patient, as well as of that purely personal prejudice or bias which is commonly called love, or rather being in love – which is to Freud but an overestimation of one’s object of

sexual interest. In other words, Freud demands a rather high quality of love for the patient; it is something akin to paternal or maternal protectiveness, tolerance and reserve, which is combined with forgiveness and sympathy. It is a form of charity, the nature and role of which in psychoanalysis still remains obscured by contentious argumentativeness and suspiciousness (1967: 124).

This type of relationship was very different from that between priest and penitent. The detached analyst provided a different type of love, and the therapy session functioned differently from confession. While the later was infused with ritual and symbolic value, the former was an act of service. Like Allers, Bartemeier, and Stern, Zilboorg saw the interaction between therapist and patient as a crucial opening through which Catholic values of empathy and love could enter into medical practice.

Conclusions: Exorcizing Modern Demons from the Inside Out

Ironically, in 1935, when Zilboorg's interest in Catholicism was just beginning to develop, he confronted some of the very dilemmas that Blatty chose to throw at Damien Karras in *The Exorcist*. In one of his first works on the history of psychiatry, Zilboorg analyzed the phenomena of witchcraft and demon possession in the Renaissance. He argued that the women persecuted for witchcraft were actually suffering from acute mental illness – not hysteria, as had been previously proposed, but compulsion neuroses and schizophrenic psychoses. He pointed out that a typical sufferer from these maladies tends to exhibit some conscious or unconscious expression of sacrilege, “a series of impulses directed against God, Christ and the Church” (1935: 63), even in the modern era.

Zilboorg's central argument was that this encounter with mental illness in “witches” was a catalyst in the development of modern psychology. The hero in Zilboorg's tale, Johann Weyer, played a role similar to that of Freud in Zilboorg's interpretations of modern psychiatry. Weyer was convinced that the Devil was devoid of power, unable to transform “blood into water, or dust into lice.” Thus he perceived priests and monks who resorted to exorcisms or accusations of witchcraft as “abusers of the name of the Lord,” and “ecclesiastic magicians.” Weyer believed that his job as a doctor was to remove the physical impediments to spiritual liberation. He purged “black bile” from patients thought to be possessed, and aimed to build their physical stamina. This would enable the church to then save their spirit. Zilboorg lauded the way that Weyer not only conceived of neurosis as a medical rather than spiritual condition, but also approached the sufferers as individuals with specific case histories. Like the descriptive nature of psychoanalysis, the approach advocated by Weyer represented, for Zilboorg, a humanizing influence (1935: 141, 174).

The other Catholic analysts that we have examined, both critics and celebrants of psychoanalysis, were also quick to recognize Freud's role in centering the individual and his or her life history within the practice of psychiatry. Allers, Stern, and Bartemeier joined Zilboorg in heralding the humanizing effects of Freudian analysis. Most Catholic commentators were also relatively willing to perceive psychoanalysis as a medical practice that could remove physical and biological impediments to sound thinking, thereby liberating the suffering from their neuroses and leaving them receptive to the ministrations of the Church. Even Fulton Sheen, Freud's most vociferous Catholic critic, came to believe that “psychoanalysis does a

world of good when it skims off the superficial justification for actions and discovers the real reason beneath,” particularly in the cases of acute mental illness” (1967: 103).

The doctors that we have discussed were eager to find spaces where their beliefs about the soul and Freud’s theories about the mind intersected, and to bring spiritual values into both the theory and practice of psychotherapy. Each posited the interaction between analyst and patient as a crucial point at which the Catholic therapist could act with the love and service that each understood to be Christian qualities. These doctors lauded the introduction of philosophical questions about love, guilt and ultimate meaning that Freud brought to psychiatric discourse. Like Freud, they longed to strip away neurosis and bring unconscious drives into the full light of consciousness, removing any impediments to free will and rational decision making, so central to the Catholic humanist’s fundamental choice of good over evil, Jesus Christ over Satan. They also sought ways to integrate psychoanalysis into Thomas Aquinas’ scholasticism – defining it as an empirical method with which to probe the mysteries of the universe. Under this definition, Bartemeier, Stern, and Zilboorg were quick to find scientific affirmation for original sin, the metaphysical union with Christ, or spiritual revelation. Much of their attention, however, revolved around the ways that psychoanalysis could help them understand how human beings were connected to each other in meaningful communities through empathy, love, and shared commitments to democratic thinking. In these concerns, Catholic doctors echoed preoccupations of Freud himself and his worries about the behavior of groups – their vulnerability to charismatic leadership, their inclination to panic in the face of freedom.

In these areas of overlap, we can perhaps find reasons why writers like Blatty and Zilboorg were so interested in how the themes of psychoanalysis and supernatural possession were related. At mid-century, Catholics, like Damien Karras, were terrified of a world in which people operated unconsciously, influenced by drives beyond their comprehension – whether economic, social, emotional, or demonic. Our Catholic doctors dreaded Communism, Fascism, and conformity – any system that seemed to treat humans as mechanized cogs. Such systems, to them, appeared, in Stern’s words, as “hell on earth,” the ultimate work of the devil. They feared a weightless world, where individuals were unable to affix meaning to the components of their lives and allowed the world to be defined for them. But these doctors also shuddered in the face of obsessive ideologies in which one drive might mean too much – overwhelming the processes of conscious intentional analysis and decision making.

Freud’s entire body of work was devoted to liberating individuals from the neurosis that he saw clouding these very processes of conscious intention and rational decision making. We do not have records to indicate that Freud treated any patients whose symptoms mirrored Blatty’s fictional victim, Reagan, in their likeness to the conditions that religious believers might diagnose as demonic possession. He did, however, critique a historical case of alleged possession and exorcism in the seventeenth century. In 1922, Freud examined the clerical records and diary fragments of Christoph Haizmann, a seventeenth century painter who believed himself to be possessed by the devil, then cured by a Catholic exorcism in 1677. While he did not propose the diagnoses of hysteria, obsessive compulsion, and split personality that Damien Karras originally suggested in *The Exorcist*, Freud did construe Haizmann’s evident loss of free will and conscious intention to be the result of neurosis (79).

To understand the phenomenon of demon possession, Freud urged readers to “merely eliminate the projection of these mental entities into the external world which the middle ages carried out; instead we regard them as having arisen in the patient’s internal life, where they have their abode” (72). Just as neurosis took on the form of organic illness in the modern era of scientific medicine, medieval neurosis assumed a demonological character, its external expression conforming to internalized expectations. In Freud’s view, the devil was a production of internal dysfunction, projected onto the external world.

This interpretation would have resonated with Sheen’s sense that World Wars are simply “projections” of the “conflicts waged within the soul of modern man” (1949: 1), or Stern’s assertion that “if I want to renew the world I have to begin right in the depth of my own soul” (1951: 294). Although his theology, atheism, differed drastically from that of Catholics who believed in the metaphysical realities of God and Satan, Freud’s methods were quite similar. By seeking the origins of social ills – from war and genocide to complacency and conformity – in the thought processes of individuals, both Freud and the Catholics who studied him prescribed a political role for psychoanalysis. Our subjects hoped to help individuals organize their internal communities of thoughts in ways that bolstered their outward commitment to reason, free will, conscious decision making, compassion, and engagement with others. In their view, psychoanalysis – like the pastoral aspects of Catholicism itself – was not a form of escapism in the face of crisis, but a vital political imperative – a way to liberate individuals from the inside out.

While Freud’s view of metaphysical reality was quite distinct from that of any Catholic, the *way* that he hoped to temper the potency of the devil – by unearthing repression within so that individuals would not project visions of evil without – mirrored the strategies of many of the Catholics who embraced his theories. They too sought to counter the potential evil around them by re-ordering the inner lives of believers. In discussions of Freud – the self-proclaimed atheist – Catholics perceived a deeper engagement with the humanistic values and reverence for the individual that they associated with Catholicism. Catholic psychoanalysts eagerly embraced this opportunity to articulate powerful roles for both Catholicism and analysis in the personal lives of Americans desperately searching for meaning, and in the joining of these individuals into meaningful, democratic communities.

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