

**RETURNING BY AN UNUSED PATH:
CHARISMATIC NEW RELIGIONS, PRIMARY NARCISSISM AND THE DENIED WISH**

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This paper was published as the final chapter of *Impatient for Paradise: charisma, personality and charismatic new religious movements* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2009). The rest of that book (see https://www.academia.edu/20009341/Impatient_for_Paradise_charisma_personality_and_charismatic_new_religious_movements) was a lightly-revised version of Doris McIlwain's PhD thesis in the Department of Psychology at the University of Sydney, Australia. That PhD was submitted in 1990, and awarded the H. Tasman Lovell University Medal at the University of Sydney. The preface to that book ended thus: 'I offer a final chapter which haunted the footnotes of the original work and which I presented to a specialist group at the University of Sydney in 1992. This chapter addresses why Freud got it so wrong in proclaiming that religion an illusion with a limited future. It explores the familial and cultural origins of charisma and shows why psychoanalysis got it so right about why many seek a world of demand and response rather than one of cause and effect.' The paper had been submitted to an international journal in 1993. One reviewer wrote that it gives 'a more sophisticated account of religion than Freud's', but recommended rejection because 'like Freud the author regards religion exclusively as psychopathological and thus in need of explanation (and cure) by psychoanalysis; she seems not to view it at all as a mode of life and enquiry which sometimes aims at truth and change of heart, and which may have something to teach and share with psychoanalysis'. The paper remained unpublished till 2009. Doris McIlwain died in April 2015. Please address any comments or queries to me, her partner, John Sutton: john.sutton@mq.edu.au

Returning By An Unused Path: charismatic new religions, primary narcissism, and the denied wish

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1 The roots of religion

"An animal without *prolonged infancy* in a *nuclear family* has no experiential basis for regressive belief in magic or religion. Only Oedipal apes can have religion", notes Weston La Barre (1980, p.275, my italics). He adds "only humans have the extravagant discrepancy between large, experiencing brains and protracted, near total dependence *on others* in their physically immature post-natal state. In this lie the roots of magic and religion" (p.272). The two elements of a prolonged infancy and the fact of that infancy being experienced in a nuclear family mark two central features of a psychoanalytic account of religion; wish fulfilment, and the need to deal with guilt. The wish (for protection by and union with a powerful other) springs from the helplessness of total dependency and vulnerability which characterises human infants; concern with guilt is part of the aftermath of the culpability of having desired one's parents which resulted in a system of morality arising out of the Oedipus Complex of the nuclear family. This two-fold function of religion is not evenly considered by Freud who neglects religion's promise of wish-fulfilment and the regressive dependency entailed in that aspect, and deals almost exclusively with its promulgation and assuaging of guilt. The neglect of wish-fulfilling features of religion stems at least in part from the restricted scope of Freud's subject matter, and perhaps in part for his slightly 'obsessive' leaning which Jones notes he acknowledged of himself. I will deal first with the restrictions of his treatment of religion, and speculate about the reasons for his focus.

2 Old, strong, urgent wishes

By briefly considering classical Freudian psychoanalytic accounts of the origin and function of religion, we open the way to a considering how such a specific focus on western religions precludes concern with the role of pre-oedipal relationships on the form of religious longings, specifically, how relations to the mother might have influenced the manner of expression of religious impulses and mystical phenomena. While Freud does not address in detail the legacy of the pre-oedipal years on religious experiences, save to borrow the words of his friend Romain Rolland in alluding to

the oceanic feeling, a faintly marked but unused path exists in classical psychoanalytic theory, which hinges on Freud's (1915) analysis of the 'pleasure ego', and the problematic nature of 'object' relationships during this phase. If we return by this unused path, certain uncanny features of the appeal of mystico-charismatic new religions come within explanatory reach.

For Freud, religion serves the oldest, strongest, most urgent wishes of mankind; the strength of religious ideas, given their illusory basis, is a reflection of the strength of these wishes. When so much of magic and religion is disconfirmed by later experience, notes La Barre, they are nevertheless firmly believed in and fervently sought. What experiences lend plausibility to these wishes?

3 Childhood and cherished illusions

Jones (1974) provides a succinct account: religious life represents a dramatisation on a cosmic plane of the fears and longings which arose in the child's relations to her or his parents. "The child's sense of guilt or sin regarding early sexual activities and longings are interfered with by the parents, and the child's repressed death wish towards the parents leads to a fear of retaliation which results in the desire for forgiveness and reconciliation." It is not merely a realistic transcription of early relationships however, as in an artificial group, such as the church, says Freud (1921) there is

the illusion that the leader loves all of the individuals equally and justly. But this is simply an idealistic remodelling of the state of affairs in the primal horde, where all of the sons knew that they were equally *persecuted* by the primal father and *feared* him equally" (p. 125, original emphasis).

Jones speaks of both parents, Freud of one. To be reconciled with the father is to gain assistance from him and this plus the conviction of sin and the ensuing necessity for salvation forms the core of (at least) Western religions for Freud.

4 An obsessive's account of religion: no place for love

However, even as an account of Christian religion it is a partial one, since the God portrayed is very much Jah Weh, the god of Moses, and a character for whom one must feel *mysterium tremendum*. Yet this captures well the 'otherworldliness of religion' (Jones, 1974), a relation to something which transcends space and time and to which, in the West, we are socialized to assume attitudes of dependence, fear and reverence with an emphasis on love intensifying with the advent of the New

Testament conception of God. The implications of the other-worldliness of God in the West is worthy of further exploration as one of the reasons for the return of a repressed wish in modern New Religious Movements [NRMs], the return of a wish for mystical, embracing union with a more immediate or immanent "God" .

The emphasis on God-the-superego is a diminished version of the functions of religion outlined by Freud (1927) in *The Future of an Illusion*. There religion is portrayed as an attempt to exorcise the terrors of nature, to compensate for the sufferings and privations of civilised life and to watch over man's obedience to the now (dangerously) divine moral precepts; dangerous because their divine status places them beyond human questioning. Elsewhere, in *Totem and Taboo*, and *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*, (1921), Freud presents us with an obsessive's account of religion. The emphasis on the stern father, fear, and punishment, is reminiscent of the comparison Jones makes between the neurotic's obsessive rituals and those of orthodox Christian religion. Both are prepared to avoid a feared calamity, and to avoid punishment and damnation rather than aiming at being blessed and loved. Vergote (1978) notes that the obsessive ritual, like the religious one, repeats the transgressing act it symbolically annuls. An obsessive's rituals symbolize acts of restitution only. Love is beyond him or her, while hysteria is not merely concerned with forgiveness but with love also, (Jones, 1974). To Freud, religious hysteria suggests the narcissistic and feminine position with respect to the divine father, part of the complex tangle of desires active during the Oedipus complex which he notes in case studies like *The rat man*, but which he does not apply to his analysis of religion.

5 Science, the tragic mind and wishes born afresh

Dependency and vulnerability do not feature strongly in Freud's account of religion. His is a voice of the Enlightenment. With a thorough scientific analysis, religion will go away, replaced by scientific logos. To some extent God did 'go away' as the order in nature became more apparent in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. He was forced 'upstairs' becoming more inscrutable in His workings and in His control of fate. God left the world, says Goldmann (1959) "and only a few Seventeenth Century intellectuals realized that he had gone". This 'hidden god' resulted in the Seventeenth Century tragic mind, tragic because of a conflict which is partly why religion is unlikely ever to 'go away' altogether, and a conflict which is pertinent now with the burgeoning of NRMs in the last few decades. Goldmann notes that the tragic mind hinges on

the complete and exact understanding of the new world created by a rationalistic individualism, together with all the invaluable and scientifically valid acquisitions which this offered to the human intellect . . . [being coupled with] the complete refusal to accept this world as the only one in which man could live, move and have his being" (p.32).

Wittgenstein expresses a similar concern when he suggests in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that "We feel even if all possible scientific questions are answered *our problem is still not touched at all.*" Religion is not merely a source of explanation, but also of consolation, and embodies a wish which persists in the face of science; a refusal to accept that the world of cause and effect is the only one in which we can 'live move and have our being'.

6 The persistence of the wish

A wish persists because civilization doesn't keep its promises, nature remains unsubdued and death defies human mastery, (Ferrarotti, 1977). A wish persists because difficulties arise for us in attempting to deal with the notion of death on an emotional and intellectual level. It persists because in the vagaries of nature there seems neither rhyme nor reason to 'that old machine which drives the seasons' in terms of the equity of occurrence of suffering, its form, its timing, and its accumulation for particular individuals. It persists because ultimately these issues must be faced alone. The spiritually inclined would exchange a world of cause and effect for one of demand and response. The classical psychoanalytic account of religion rests on a remote and inscrutable God and an unchallengeable tradition. To that extent it omits analysis of needs for consolation, and for union; for a more immediate relationship with a 'divine' personage, which might lend modern and specific pertinence to traditional writings, beliefs and practices. Weber recognized this need when he spoke (1963, p.25) of

the religious needs of the laity for an accessible, tangible, familiar religious object which could be brought into relationship with concrete life situations and definite situations or with definite groups of people to the exclusion of outsiders, an object which would above all be accessible to magical influences. The security provided by a tested magical manipulation is more reassuring than the experience of worshipping a god who precisely because he is omnipotent is not subject to magical influence.

The declining appeal, for some, of Western religions, stems in part from a very old problem - the problem of theodicy: God is omnipotent, yet the world is imperfect. From this flows one inevitable result, "the concept of an unimaginable great chasm between the transcendental god and the human being continually enmeshed in the toils of a new sin" (Weber, 1963, p.142). This is not a universal theological issue - there is a quite complete solution of the problem of theodicy in the Indian doctrine of *karma* where every ethically relevant act contributes causally to life outcome rendering unnecessary a judging deity. Both chasm and sin are eliminated. There is no chasm between god and wo/man due to an immanent conception of the divine, with no distinction between the natural and the spiritual coupled with the belief that human beings have the divine within, waiting to be realized. There is no sin since wrong actions are those which adversely affect spiritual development; no external judgement is entailed. Weber traces the concept of a transcendental god (implying an utterly subordinate and creaturely character of the world) as arising in Asia Minor, with the results for the Occident that "any planned procedure for achieving salvation faced a road that was permanently closed to self-deification and to any genuinely mystical self-possession of god . . . because this appeared to be a blasphemous deification of a mere created thing". So God remains a hidden god.

Such attributes of orthodox western religions have ramifications for accounts of religion, psychoanalytic and otherwise, which focus exclusively on the Western spiritual traditions. A sense of mystical union attested to by St Theresa of Avila and Meister Eckhardt is a union with God the Father. Thus, partly due to the scope of Freud's subject matter, the way is blocked for detailed analysis of the role that an early (perhaps maternal) golden age might play in religious feeling; described as the *oceanic feeling* by Freud (1927), attributed to Romain Rolland. Within the Christian orthodoxy such a mystical path was blocked and called heterodox. In emphasising the punitive moral father, and the ethical features of religious life, classical psychoanalysis denies a powerful wish by downplaying the sense of omnipotence wished for, and unconsciously gained by the longed for fusion with an all-powerful, all-providing, all-loving other - an unconscious regressive fusion with the mother and with pleasurable fragments of the natural world.

It has been noted by Faber (1976) that Freud did not use his case study material in his accounts of religion, did not consider Oriental religions at all, but looked at what he termed a 'cultural psychopathology' closer to home - orthodox western religions. The exclusion of the feminine is a

keynote in orthodox Western religions at the levels of theology and of practice. His analysis of religion is further restricted by sharing the limitations of the object of his research.

7 Women in theology and spiritual practice in Western religions

The Jews abolished mother worship and Weber suggests that it was the almost total exclusion of women that led to the ascendancy of Christianity over Mithraism when both were recruiting from the working classes. Mother worship "plays only a veiled part in Christianity," (Jones, 1974). Although the family-like trinity is maintained, "the third member of it has an ambiguously nebulous character, in spite of a probable derivation from the Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters in the beginning of the world and who must originally have been a brooding Mother." (Jones, 1974, p.209). This exclusion is something that Elaine Pagels (1979) says anyone interested in the early history of Christianity (the field called 'patristics' - that is the study of the fathers of the church) will be prepared for, given "the passage that concludes the Gospel of St. Thomas:

Simon Peter said to them [the disciples] 'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of Life.' Jesus said, 'I myself shall lead her, in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven' (p.72).

In contrast, the Gnostics had as their conception of God one which included a feminine element. Bishop Iranaeus notes with dismay, says Pagels, that women especially are attracted to heretical sects; "Even in our own district of the Rhone Valley, he admits, the gnostic teacher Marcus had attracted 'many foolish women' " (Pagels, 1979, p.80). By the end of the second century women's participation in worship was explicitly condemned and groups in which women continued on to leadership were branded as heretical. So women were excluded from religion, both at the level of the conception of the deity, and deemed unworthy of participation, and authority.

My point is that while Freud went intensively into the study of religious history, by not taking oriental religions into account at all, his conclusions entail similar omissions to those which the object of his study had somewhat forcibly deleted; the feminine in religion. He alludes to the importance of the experience of being suckled in a number of places, no more than intimating the undoubted importance of this experience, but refraining from further developing this line of thought. In his

study on Leonardo da Vinci, Freud (1910) suggests that the 'organic impression of' suckling at the mother's (or wet-nurse's) breast is the first source of pleasure in our life, one which 'doubtless remains indelibly printed on us' and which Leonardo went on to depict 'in the guise of the mother of God and her child.' In the *Introductory Lectures* he notes

if an infant could speak, he would no doubt pronounce the act of sucking at his mother's breast by far the most important in his life. He is not far wrong in this....I can give you no idea of the important bearing of this first object upon the choice of every later object, of the profound effects it has in its transformations and substitutions in even the remotest regions of our sexual life. (1916-1917, p.314).

Yet Freud does not fully explore the legacy of the pre-oedipal phase on religious longings and phenomena. In 1933, he attributes features of religion to our early developmental years, noting that religion is an attempt to get control over the sensory world by means of the wish-world, then dismisses further consideration of these early years sternly when he says that the final judgment of science of religion is that, "Its doctrines carry with them the stamp of the times in which they originated, the ignorant days of the human race. Its consolations deserve no trust. Experience teaches us that the world is not a nursery" (p.230). While Freud began to trace the origin of father hate to fixation on the mother, Henderson (1975) notes "he failed to pursue that, and veered instead to elaborate some reasoned proposals about an earlier father - the primal father", who jealously kept the women of the tribe to himself. The father's murder by the blood brother sons led to 'feuding, and ruinous disruption of the social order' leading to two moral imperatives: thou shalt not kill and the incest taboo. Henderson notes (p.111):

We have no quarrel with [Freud's] choice to look beyond the relationship to father, but his choice of an earlier father rather than what would seem today to be a more obvious area of enquiry (the infant-mother relationship) is curious.

8 Freud's Family Romances as a basis for 'neglect' of the feminine

Henderson speculates about Freud's own austere Austrian mother as the basis for this neglect, and puts forward what he terms a humbler view that perhaps Freud had little interest in child psychoanalysis and therefore lacked that form of empirical data. The latter speculation seems improbable as Freud pieced together the psychosexual stages of childhood from largely adult data.

Of the former, there are some tantalising leads. Roith (1987) presents an ably researched account of details of Freud's relationship to his mother, her strength and her origins, and surmises that she must have been something of a liability to Freud's view of himself as a Western scholar, given her *ostjuden* vernacular and habits, and given the absence of a strong and admired father in Freud's life. Guntrip (1975) in his commentary on his analyses with Fairbairn and Winnicott notes that much relevant material was missed due to the interpretation of his dreams and associations in uniquely Oedipal terms by Fairbairn. What was missed was an earlier trauma related to his troubled bonding with his mother, and his near death at her hands as she retreated from him at age 3, following the death of his 1 year old brother Percy. Faber (1976) comments that Freud's view of religion may have been influenced by the death of his younger brother and the guilt experienced over the death wishes felt towards the sibling. It is possible that this event also provided him with a changed maternal relationship at that young age. Roith (1987) lists in scholarly detail the plethora of Judaic traditions which may have borne upon Freud's relation to his mother and his views of women, leading him to de-emphasise the mother-son bond and devalue women. She cites "the rabbinic hostility to the female function" (with the uterus being referred to as a 'place of rot' (p. 99)), the recurring legal classification of 'women, children and slaves' (p. 94), fear and envy of female reproductive functions (p. 90) and an "important feature of Jewish family patterns in which cross-sex ties [particularly the mother-son relationship] are highly emphasised, often at the price of husband-wife relationships." (p. 105). Yet in contrast to Freud's many pronouncements on the differences and incapacities of women in relation to men (their more emotionally based morality, their incapacity to love, their excessive jealousy, envy, narcissism and diminished capacity for the sublimation required for intellectual pursuits) he suggests that the mother-son relationship is the only one to bring her "unlimited satisfaction" since it is entirely "free from ambivalence" (Freud, 1933, p. 133). Roith (1987, p.106) notes that

Subsequent psychoanalytic findings have long since superseded Freud's simplistic formulation of the mother-son relationship. The fact that he adhered to it, it is suggested can only be understood in terms of his own "family romance", the need to defend against related anxieties, and the larger subcultural system in which that 'romance' occurred.

She suggests a possibility which is rarely considered, that "the theory of the Oedipus complex - articulating the child's conflict with paternal power - might be a reaction-formation on Freud's part

to an opposite constellation, one in which the informal and customary role prescribed that his mother was the dominant and most powerful influence and the father the weaker one..." (p.105).

9 Returning by an unused path: tacit accounts of union, dependence and regressive fusion with the mother in religious experience.

For whatever reason, Freud has on a number of occasions overlooked the significance of the pre-oedipal mother-child bond; regarding the female superego he initially did not realise the significance of the early bond with the mother and the task for the girl of separating from her and moving towards the father in the Oedipus complex proper; regarding Dora, he was so concerned with her rejection of Herr K, he missed her attraction to Frau K; and now in connection with religion, he does not directly address the mother-infant bond which is arguably central to the mystical oceanic feeling, and a crucial part of the wish-fulfilment promised by religion in its promise of union, protection and consolation. However, he does address this issue indirectly, and this is the unused path which concerns us.

10 The riches of the pre-oedipal phase for explanation of mystical phenomena

Interest in the pre-oedipal phase is rewarded by the richness of this developmental epoch for human analogues of the phenomena of mystical fusion; the sense of an underlying oneness with the universe avowed by mystics of all cultures. La Barre (1980) ascribes to this early developmental phase the origins of magic and mysticism, reserving religion for a later developmental phase (p.274):

in life history, the impersonal magical commanding, or projecting and incorporating of ambiguously placed *mana* represents an *earlier individual* phase of adaptive ego growth than does religion, a later phase-development which knows in emotional reality the existence of persons.

He underscores this distinction in his comment, "[t]he mystic supposes some placental attachment to an omnibenevolent environment still to exist, the religionist more specifically to omnipotent others, his parental gods" (p.273). This is a distinction which does not hold for many religions within eastern traditions where an immanent relation to god is part of orthodox religion. Even within the Western tradition the spiritual union of the mystic (with the environment) and the wish for protection, and love (from powerful others) are not as incompatible with an emphasis on God the Father and on the important role of ethical religious values as Freud's account of these traditions

suggests. It is for this reason that I suggest Freud gives us an obsessive's view of religion, where culpability is in focus, and love somewhere out of the picture.

Union and protection in the history of our development are closely linked in that, in childhood, becoming like the father obviates fear of harm from him, and achieves protection by him: 'if I am like him, he will not hurt me'. This identification, along with the introjection of the parents' moral values, contributes to the formation of the superego. It is a wish for fusion with something greater and more powerful, which in religion extends to a wish for unconscious fusion with something divine, which can protect us from the crushing forces of nature and from our own mortality - a promised fusion which lies behind charismatic attractions. One could argue that the motives promoting Oedipal identification reconstitute, at least at an unconscious level, a more primary union. However, is it really Oedipal identification which concerns us here, or something earlier than that?

11 Primal self love, primary narcissism, and the pleasure ego

In discussing 'higher' religions, Jones (1974) notes, primal self-love is displaced onto the superego and the sense of supreme values in religion stem from the ego coming to be like the superego. In speaking of primal self-love, I take it that he is referring to the phase of primary narcissism before, as La Barre puts it, "the gold of self love is traded for love; the paper money of narcissism is exchanged for the nourishment of object love" (p.274). In this phase the child experiences 'itself' as a unity, but it is in fact a compound of pleasurable elements from the mother and from the external world, (Freud, 1915). Many analysts differ as to how this phase is characterised. Primary narcissism is the term used by Freud, Margaret Mahler and Kohut, while Klein and Kernberg speak of primary internal object relations and Balint (1952) speaks of intense relatedness. The Japanese psychiatrist, Doi (1971), refers to this phase as *amae*; literally 'cleaving to the breast with no shame'.

12 Primary object love and the end of a golden age

It is beyond the scope of this paper to detail the differences in these viewpoints regarding the activity or passivity of the child, her contributions to the texture of the relationship and so on, since the point is a simple one. I suggest that the relatedness experienced during this phase is not an example of identification, but at best a prototype for subsequent identification, since the 'object' as such has *never* been recognized as having a separate independent existence, has never been 'lost'. Further

the lost object never existed as something which could move discretely through space and time. Identification entails an unconscious belief in one's identity with, or possession of the attributes of another whom one (consciously, at least) knows to be separate, and whose loss one fears or has experienced in some regard. During this phase the child has not yet realised her mother might fail to arrive on time, fail to meet her needs, or leave her to unbearable instinctual tension by abandoning her. The pleasure ego assigns to itself all that is pleasurable and projects outwards in a primary defence all that is hostile to its comfort, (Freud, 1915). This is a peculiar state of fusion where two objects are experienced as one (though the relation is asymmetric, that is, it is experienced as fusion on the part of the child only) where the composite is a partial one, leaving out attributes of both of the actual objects, while including parts of the environment. It is an asymmetrical relation because, consciously at least, the mother acknowledges the separateness of the two, though unconsciously may believe the child to be part of her. The mother is capable of identification; the child is not. This unconscious tendency of the mother to subsume the child to herself and to her unfulfilled longings from her past is the trauma of misrecognition; one is born desired (Pereira, personal communication, 1988). The stronger this tendency of the mother's, perhaps the less satisfactory, or more abruptly terminated is this 'golden age' for the child. It comes to an end as the mother's desires intrude, impinging as alien as do the previously defensively projected aspects of reality, thus bringing to fruition the secondary process/reality principle which is the hallmark of the child's developing ego.

13 Fusion, identification and the concept of Amai

Doi's (1971) concept of *amae* refers to this union of mother and child. However the active sense of the word, where one seeks to *amaeru*, is retained for when the child "realises that itself and its mother are independent existences, and comes to feel the mother as something independent to itself" (p.73). *Amaeru* is closer to Freud's concept of identification; *amae* closer to the pre-object relations fusion. It is this union which perhaps underlies Freud's comment that every discovery of an object is a re-finding of it. The potential for unquenchable nostalgia is immense - one longs for an ago that never was. The object of phenomenal experience was not an object *de re*, but in a sense an object 'in you out there': what Kohut (1977) terms a self-object. There is a sense in which this lost object can never be rediscovered, since in a sense it never existed. This is not to slip into solipsism and the related assumption of idealism, since there is a real physical substance at least partly responsible for the sensations - be it mother, or physical environment. However, it is not an

object which can move as a discrete entity through space and time. It is an object born of the 'wish-world' alluded to by Freud, created by projection and incorporation. It is perhaps the first lost object.

Unlike Balint (1952) and Doi (1971), I do not think that this 'passive object love' lies outside the scope of Freud's explanatory endeavour. I do think that the implications of this phase and its ramification have been imperfectly traced in classical psychoanalytic accounts of religious phenomena. Further, it is perhaps just such a primal union which identification, love and other transference phenomena like charisma unconsciously, partially and imperfectly reinstate.

14 Fusion and the deathless object in charisma

Theologically charisma meant 'gift of grace'. Lindholm (1988) refers to it as "an ecstatic experience of self-transcendence with a beloved other" (p.3) or a "naked capacity to muster assent" (p.5). Charisma is a transference phenomenon based on a repression, or a symptom. It has an 'uncanny' quality. Freud (1921), identifying its occurrence in hypnosis, notes that the experience of the 'uncanny' "suggests something old and familiar that has undergone repression." (p.125). The hypnotist asserts and the subject colludes that s/he is in possession of a mysterious power that robs the subject of her own will. Freud suggests (p.127) that

the uncanny and coercive characteristics of group formations which are shown in the phenomena of suggestion that accompany them, may with justice be traced back to the fact of their origin from the primal horde. The leader of the group is still the dreaded father, the group still wishes to be governed by unrestricted force, it has an extreme passion for authority...The primal father is the group ideal which governs the ego in place of the ego ideal.

This passion for authority by force is a source of concern, since a leader in a charismatic relationship, like a leader in charge of a group, takes over the function of the person's own moral faculty, or ego ideal. Jim Jones in the People's Temple in Guyana, certainly acted out the attributes of wildest primal horde father, including exacting the most extreme submission on the part of the ego - to surrender its claim to life. This is in keeping with Freud's observation that the individual gives up his/her ego-ideal and substitutes for it the group ideal as embodied in the leader. He suggests that this is readily achieved in those for whom the separation of ego and ego-ideal is not very far-advanced. He notes in this case the leader "need only give an impression of greater force and of more freedom of libido"

(p.129). While this is rarely the case with traditional Eastern holy men and *Saddhus* who may be ascetic and celibate in lifestyle, it may characterise some leaders of NRMs.

15 Modern Charismatic Leaders

The person of the leader in NRMs is a focus of great interest for the followers and frequently great dismay for outsiders. Those leaders who have risen to ascendancy in recent times have, like the charismatic prophets of old, bridged the chasm between divinity and mere mortal. This is aided in many cases by claims of privileged access to the sacred, or by promulgation of a conception of immanent divinity whereby each of us houses a potential 'buddha-nature' within, and where, with enlightenment, each of us can realise our unity with the 'ground of all being'. The leaders may claim to be ascetics themselves, but they promise bliss, and offer themselves as a tangible mediator between a state of spiritual impoverishment and a sublime existence now; a mediator and an immediacy of bliss denied in the austere, judgmental god of orthodox western religions as portrayed by Freud. In NRMs, the personage of the leader is in many cases male; the path to enlightenment a more or less rigorous denunciation of transient pleasures, (less in the case of Rajneesh) but the outcome promised is a state of union now with all that is. The wish is, "if I am like it, it cannot harm me", and of course, "if it is part of me, I can influence it, and will live as long as it lives." It is a promised re-instantiation of a state of fusion with an 'object' which includes a good, protecting, all-powerful, all-loving object, and a benevolent environment. It is a promise of a regressive fusion with the mother, a return to the golden age of the 'oceanic feeling' of security and protection. Such a regression can only occur if total trust is accorded to the leader, if s/he takes the place of a person's superego. As Rajneesh notes: "Only those are accepted who surrender, only those are accepted who are utterly committed, who have fallen in love with me, who can trust and whose trust is unconditional and absolute..." (1984, p.297).

16 The Sources and Uses of Charisma

Weston La Barre (1980) characterises the nature of charisma as arising from a personal state of dissatisfaction in the follower, or a longing that leads the follower to feel that a leader has 'seen into her heart' and is 'speaking directly to her'. Charisma permits a relationship in a group context to collapse into a personal, unique and uncanny bond between leader and follower. La Barre notes:

The compelling force comes not from the great man as he voices some new supernatural truth; he speaks to the powerful anti-commonsensical fantasy

already present in the unconscious wish of each communicant . . . the voice of the vatic has an 'uncanny' consistency with each one's private wish (p.52).

Goldberg (1983) notes that these groups would not draw people to them so readily unless the followers were not already 'actively seeking lapses from reality'. So charisma is not so much a personal quality as a skill which causes the ascription of qualities to the leader by the follower; a follower who has no awareness that her unconscious conflicts and longings participate in the ascription of an 'uncanny' giftedness to the leader. This is reminiscent of Freud's account of therapeutic transference, and it must be noted that a psychoanalyst has, as a result of transference, marvellous attributes attributed to him or her, thus acquiring a measure of charisma as a result of giving voice to wishes prepotent in the unconscious of the analysand. Charisma can either be based on personal skills or institutional and social roles. As Hayley (1990) notes, psychoanalysts are those whose charismatic authority is based on both categories. Freud distinguished suggestion from other kinds of mental influence such as a command or the giving of information, saying that 'in the case of suggestion an idea is aroused in another person's brain which is not examined with regard to its origin but is accepted just as though it had spontaneously arisen in that brain'. He wrote (1925, p.42):

It is perfectly true that psycho-analysis, like other psychotherapeutic methods employs the instrument of suggestion (or transference). But the difference is this: that in analysis it is not allowed to play the decisive part in determining the therapeutic results. It is used instead to induce the person to perform a piece of psychical work - the overcoming of his transference resistances - which involves a permanent alteration in his mental economy.

The difference between therapeutic transference and transference to a religious leader is that the latter will tend to strengthen repression, and this is the basis of much concern regarding pastoral counselling (see Ross, 1975).

17 Psychoanalysis and New Religions

The relation between therapeutic transference and charisma experienced in relation to NRM leaders is also worthy of consideration. "It is not hard to discern," says Freud, "that all ties that bind people to mystico-religious sects and communities are expressions of crooked cures of all kinds of neuroses". The tendency towards the introjection of an object is enhanced by melancholia where

the "most notable of its exciting causes is the real or emotional loss of a loved object". This state may lead to an openness to a charismatic other. Because of the object loss which has been suffered, and the depletion of the ego, identification may be sought with a powerful other. Freud (1921) notes that idealisation often occurs in love, and that (pp.112-113).

the object serves as a substitute for some unattained ego ideal of our own. We love it on account of the perfections which we have striven to reach for our own ego, and which we would now like to procure in this roundabout way as a means of satisfying our narcissism.

If sexual overvaluation and being in love increase even further, then the ego becomes (p.113):

more unassuming and modest, and the object more and more sublime and precious, until at last it gets possession of the entire self-love of the ego, whose self-sacrifice thus follows as a natural consequence. The object has, so to speak, consumed the ego. Traits of humility, of the limitation of narcissism, and of self-injury occur in every case of love; in the extreme case they are merely intensified, and as a result of the withdrawal of the sensual claims they remain in solitary supremacy.

Everything that the object does is blameless, since the object has taken the place of the ego-ideal. I suggest that charismatic transference to a new religious leader has a nucleus of pathology - not in the sense that it hinges on a symptom (because perhaps all transference stems from a disguised repetition of something repressed and an unconscious assimilation of two quite dissimilar 'objects') but in the sense that the symptom is *shared*. The devotee cannot hope that the leader will disabuse her of her transference ascriptions and return to the ego the libido invested in the leader's person, setting her free to love and work with a minimum of conflict - the leader may attempt a cure, but will leave her with one vital symptom intact: her idealisation of the leader.

18 The Stability of Charismatic Relations

The symptom they share is perhaps a longing for narcissistic omnipotence. The charismatic relation is as stable and as non-pathogenic as the leader is stable. Deutsch (1983) notes the case of a deeply paranoid leader who set up a 'sidewalk ashram' in New York, who sank into a psychotic episode, but whose increasing bizarreness and cruelty were dealt with by his followers through their increased submission, and through denial. The object of devotion was beyond criticism.

A number of writers have suggested that charismatic insight derives from the fact that the leader shares some of the vicissitudes of the follower. Ross (1975, p.84) notes

A demagogue has a 'pipeline' . . .to the most socially destructive affects and wishes of large numbers of human beings." (p. 84). He gives the example of a paranoid patient of his, an enormously successful businessman, who, "was able (unerringly and without discursive thinking) to distinguish individuals as paranoid and corruptible as himself - and to play upon these characteristics with unfailing accuracy.

19 Welcomed Transgressions

In acknowledging unexpressed wishes, or seeming to see into one's heart and/or mind, the charismatic leader transgresses the boundaries of personhood. Kohut (1977) suggests that some charismatic authorities have "a keen grasp of even the subtlest reactions in other people which are related to their own narcissistic requirements". In an ashram I visited as part of a large empirical study I conducted on the pre-existing attributes of those drawn to New Religious Movements, some of those attending the ashram had been smoking marijuana, against the express traditions and expectations of those running the groups. The leader of the movement called everyone together and said that it was a very common experience to have an olfactory hallucination close to enlightenment, that it was perhaps even a sign of it. Of course, those responsible were having difficulty at this point in containing their amusement, and the leader was able to detect those responsible with little margin of error. Those who had been facing forward all this time and did not see the signs of barely contained amusement must have found his initial firm pronouncement of guilt rather remarkable.

This transgression of personal boundaries can be a component of love, and mystical fusion - it also has a powerful precedent in the parent-child relationship. As a result of this experience the follower may then accord to the leader parental powers viewed from the unconscious perspective of a dependent child and thus satisfy her own narcissistic dependency needs in a way that is conducive to supernatural and uncanny interpretations. Those especially vulnerable to this uncanny, charismatic relationship, Deutsch (1983) suggests (empirically supported by Ullmann (1982)) are those who had 'early traumatic disappointments with one or both parents'. A remedy

is sought by "seeking out in adult life new idealized objects with which to merge" (Deutsch, 1983, p.121).

20 Origins of Openness to Charisma

But does it rest there? From empirical research (Ullmann, 1982) and a theoretical vantage point (Freud, 1921; Lindholm, 1988) it seems that the recent loss of a loved one, through separation or death, may be a contributing factor to an openness to a charismatic relationship; the ego may be weakened by a loss of those attributes which were identified with the loved one, and the ensuing sense of depletion and worthlessness may predispose a person to entering into a charismatic relationship. Ullmann (1982) suggests that current traumata act to re-evolve earlier conflicts regarding separation anxiety. And that might seem to be the end of a tentative exploratory account of charisma.

21 Fusion with the Environment: Nature mysticism and the Romantic impulse

However, I retained a fascination with the notion of openness to a non-personal sense of union, found in James (1902) and the writings of St Theresa of Avila. The fascination was enlivened by the fact that the amalgam that is the pleasure ego is constituted by parts of the mother, the benevolent features of the environment, and part of the child's body proper. In the early totality that is the child's pleasure ego, there are to be found parts of the natural environment. Union with the non-personal world struck me as something that characterised only the most mystical strands of poetry and religion in the west, but seemed to me a likely further expression of the kind of permeability of identity that occurs in those who are drawn into charismatic relationships. Further, it seems a neglected strand of a wish which religion promises to fulfill - the longing for a sense of oceanic union. Doi (1986) suggests that while there is a link between Japanese experience of nature and those of the most abandoned romantic poets in the West, he notes "the long Christian tradition still had its influence, and even the Romantics were never able to give themselves up completely to nature" (p. 148). He cites Oyama, a Japanese scholar of German literature, noting:

[i]n the end, even Goethe, who is said to have entered into the bosom of nature most profoundly, set the ego and nature in opposition, a fact which leaves us feeling inexplicably ill-at-ease. (p.149)

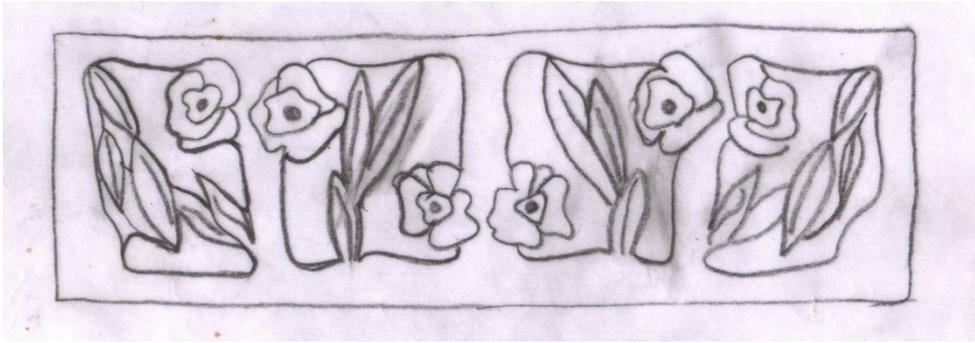
The Japanese, Doi suggests, turn to nature to seek oblivion from the complications in human relations. Ross (1975) sees this tendency to become immersed, lost, or absorbed by music, art and

nature as instances of "partial and reversible symbiotic states" which, he notes, are passionately sought by us in a variety of ways. He suggests that there is an archaic union of thought and feeling and that it is to this state that a person regresses in mystical experience, that it is for this reason that such experiences are characterised by feelings of "passivity, loss of discursive reasoning powers and merging with a pervasive object" (p.89) and cites James (quoting St Francois de Salles): "In this state the soul is like a little babe, still at the breast" (p.91).

Since the first 'object' with which union is experienced is not in fact an object which might move discretely through space and time, but is in fact an amalgam of all things pleasurable, including a segment of the environment, it is understandable that solace gained from one (the beauty of the natural environment) might be sought when the other (interpersonal relations) is a source of chagrin. This interchangeability of solace is not conscious, and the gratification and reassurance is similarly unconscious. The unused path traverses changing terrain; the romantic impulse, charismatic relationships, and mystical phenomena, which are not in principle beyond the scope of psychoanalytic explanation, but which have remained uncharted.

Summing up

Freud neglects religion's promise of wish-fulfilment and regressive dependency, dealing exclusively with its promulgation and assuaging of guilt. This seemingly leaves 'uncanny' charismatic and mystical phenomena beyond the explanatory reach of classical Freudian psychoanalysis. Reasons for this neglect are addressed and explorations made of an unused path already there in Freud's thought, unused because of a leap he made from analysing the father of childhood's effect on religious impulses, to those of the primal father, bypassing consideration of the importance of earliest relations. In returning by this unused path new links are made between charismatic relationships and psychoanalytic transference on the one hand, and pre-oedipal fusion with the mother, charismatic relationships and the romantic impulse on the other. Charisma, suggestion and transference owe an uncharted legacy to that developmental epoch, hinted at by their shared 'uncanny' features. Consideration of primary narcissism contributes to an understanding these phenomena bringing their uncanny features within explanatory reach.



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