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FREUD, THE SCAPEGOAT, AND THE EUCHARIST

CHARLES BROCK

The key to Freud's method of psychoanalytic healing is the phenomenon of transference. Jung writes:

'The enormous importance that Freud attached to the transference phenomenon became clear to me at our first personal meeting in 1907. After a conversation lasting many hours there came a pause. Suddenly he asked me out of the blue, "And what do you think about the transference?" I replied with the deepest conviction that it was the alpha and omega of the analytical method, whereupon he said, "Then you have grasped the main thing"¹

Freud believed that the task of the analyst is to help the patient become aware of the repressed elements in the unconscious that cripple his efforts for happiness. Firstly, the analyst must obtain the patient's trust so that there can be complete candour on the part of the patient which means strict discretion from the analyst. Though this sounds like a secularised father-confessor role, there is a great difference. The analyst wants to hear not only what the patient knows and conceals from other people, but more especially he wants to know what the patient conceals from himself. The analyst will listen carefully to everything that comes into the patient's speech – slips of the tongue, jokes, asides, as well as noting carefully the way the patient relates to the analyst – no matter how trivial or meaningless it may seem. All information can contribute to new understandings of the patient. There will be much resistance on the part of the patient giving away information about himself, not only because he wants to hide himself from the analyst, but because he wants to hide from himself and his own very painful memories. Many times there will be certain personality differences between analyst and patient that will prematurely terminate the sessions, but then the analyst should advise the patient to seek help from another before giving it up altogether.

This latter difficulty is often caused by the role that the analyst must take, not only as one who seeks out the secrets of the mind, but the analyst becomes a re-incarnation of someone out of the past – namely the father (though in rare cases the mother). This is the first meaning of transference. The role that the analyst takes is quite ambivalent to the patient because it comprises positive and affectionate aspects as well as negative and hostile attitudes. A positive transference means that the patient tries to win the applause and love of the analyst. The weak ego becomes strong and his symptoms disappear and he seems to have recovered – all this out of love for the analyst as well as a new understanding of himself. The analyst has the opportunity to use his role of the parent to help undo some of the blunders of the original parents in the formation of the mind. Also the transference process means that the patient produces for the analyst a picture of what actually did happen in childhood by acting out onto the analyst the relation to the parent.

Later it almost always happens that the positive attitude towards the analyst turns negative. This too is a repetition of the past. If the patient wooed the analyst as the

father-figure, the wish will not be able to be fulfilled. Then the patient will come to hate the analyst and feel himself insulted and neglected. He will probably try to end the analysis. At this point the analyst must tear the patient away each time from the father-figure illusion, and show him again and again that this procedure is only a repetition of the past.

Then comes the second meaning of transference. The libido (Freud's term for the energy of Eros, the love instinct) can attach itself to people, objects, or oneself. The great difficulty about children growing up is that they form a libidinous attachment to their parents – boys to their mothers, girls to their fathers. But boys are forced to abandon their libidinous feelings for their mothers because of an imagined threat of castration from their fathers. Though there are many variables to this, generally the boys' relationship to their fathers becomes ambivalent. On the one hand he is very hostile to his father because it is the father who is the potential agent of harm as well as the jealous suitor of his mother. And yet because of the necessity to sublimate or repress the desire for his mother, the boy can and most often does identify with his father, and imagines himself in the place of his father. This 'Oedipus complex' is made more difficult by the aspect of bisexuality. Not only does the boy want to possess his mother, but he also wants to be the love object of his father. This then is not the wish for identification with the father, but it is rather that the boy wants to be the object of his father's love. Yet this would require the loss of the male genitals which is too much to bear so this love is repressed too.

What happens to little girls? Because of the bisexual nature of people there is a similar growth in love as in boys, but there are differences as well. They also share the incestuous phantasies about possession of their mothers, but since they discover that neither they nor their mothers possess a penis, another thought becomes manifest. From the very first she envies boys because they have what she does not have. At this point her personality can develop in a number of ways, but the usual pattern is for the little girl to put herself in her mother's place and to identify with her. The wish for a baby from the father then takes the place of the wish for a penis.

These problems are carried in people all of their lives, and sometimes the pressure of the guilty feelings is too much for some to bear and forms of illness may occur. It is at this point that the analyst is of use. In analysis the patient is helped to understand himself, and gradually the libido for the forbidden objects is placed onto the analyst. The analyst encourages this and allows this to happen. Freud writes: 'When the libido has been detached from its temporary object in the person of the physician it cannot return to its earlier objects, but is now at the disposal of the ego. . . . Perhaps the dynamics of the process of recovery will become still clearer if we describe it by saying that, in attracting a part of it to ourselves through transference, we gather in the whole amount of the libido which has been withdrawn from the ego's control.'²

Thus the libido, which has taken the form of an incestuous love for the parent has been transferred to the physician, who carried the forbidden part of the libido away and renders it harmless. Some libido still exists and should

always do so, but it cannot now return to its earlier objects but is under the control of the self.

Freud claimed that everyone has this problem to a great or lesser extent, and some repressions take away much needed energy from people when they try to keep them under control. Thus it would be a benefit to everyone if they could release and transfer the unacceptable part of the libido that they have.

Freud wrote four books and numerous articles on religion, but his favourite subject in his later years was Moses. In 1934 he wrote: 'Not that I can shake him off. The man and what I wanted to make of him pursue me everywhere'.³ Freud claimed in *Moses and Monotheism* that the deliverer of the Hebrews was also the founder of their monotheism which he received from Egypt, and because Moses was a father-figure for the Jews, they eventually murdered him in the desert because of uncontrolled libidinous transference.

Surprisingly, Freud paid no attention to Aaron, the brother of Moses. But the second meaning of transference has a curious parallel to the most solemn time of the Hebrew year – the Day of Atonement. Part of the account in Leviticus:

'... Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.'⁴

There are many other ancient rites of transference, especially used for healing sick people where the disease is unloaded upon an animal.⁵ In many parts of the Jewish world other sin-transference ceremonies replaced the scapegoat rite once the Temple was destroyed in CE 70. The Kapparot custom has a cock (for a male) or a hen (for a female) swung round the head three times with the words: 'This is my substitute, my vicarious offering, my atonement; this cock (or hen) shall meet death, but I shall find a long and pleasant life of peace.'⁶ The fowl is thought to take on the sins of the participant. Other animals can be used. Some congregations use money rather than an animal with the same said formula. At the Tashlikh ('Thou shalt cast') ceremony there is a custom of shaking out the pockets of one's garments over water which is taken by most as a rite of transferring sins to the fish.⁷

There are many differences between these accounts and Freud's method. For the ancient Hebrews, people must be cleansed so God's anger can be averted. But there is also a sure recognition that guilt is harmful for the individual and the people until it is expiated. Also it is true that incest is the main problem for Freud, but it is one sin among many in the Hebrew scriptures. It is, however, interesting to note that the main subject of confession at the afternoon service (Minhah) in contemporary Day of Atonement rites is incest where Leviticus 18 is used as the basis of prayer. Also there are no sophisticated notions of the unconscious in early Hebrew thought, although dreams are often used as primary means of revelation. In the Torah sins are clearly listed and stated, and Aaron confesses them in public and performs a clear expiatory act for all to see. Freud helps the patient to find his hidden sins but relates them to one great

unconscious hope of forbidden love, and he does so in private over a long period of time gradually building up confidence of the patient. Nevertheless, the parallel is there too. There must be an unloading of sin whether public or private, conscious or unconscious, with lists of faults or without. Both Aaron and Freud recognize that something is wrong in the lives of the people. Though there are numerous ways to deal with guilt, unloading is the key to expiation.

Perhaps the greatest difference between Aaron and Freud is that the analyst needs to be loved by the patient before the cure can begin.

'Without this support arguments have no weight with the patient. . . . a human being is therefore on the whole only accessible to influence, even on the intellectual side, in so far as he is capable to investing objects with libido.'⁸

In a letter to Jung, Freud wrote:

'One cannot explain things to unfriendly people. I have therefore kept to myself a good deal that I could have said about the limitations of therapy and its mechanism, or mentioned it in such a way as to be intelligible only to the expert. It would not have escaped you that our cures come about through attaching the libido reigning in the subconscious (Transference) which comes about with more certainty in hysteria than elsewhere. Where this fails the patient will not make the effort or else does not listen when we translate his material to him. It is in essence a cure through love. Moreover it is transference that provides the strongest proof, the only unassailable one, for the relationship of neuroses to love.'⁹

It might be hard to love a goat. But for the religious believer the ultimate bliss is to love God, the 'Father'. Indeed, this is the subject of the 'Shema' and the 'greatest commandment' of Jesus – to love God with all your heart, mind, strength. Then if *God* should choose to take on one's sins or forbidden loves, it might be easier to provide a transference there than to an animal.

For centuries Christians have pondered the relationship of God and the son of God to the transference of sin. Though there are several ways of expressing atonement in the New Testament and in the history of Christian thought, an important idea is that Christ carries the sins of the world on the Cross, then descends to the wilderness of Gehenna. As Karl Barth wrote, 'Like that second goat [in Lev. 16], [Christ] must suffer the sin of the many to be laid upon Him (and it is the faith of His Church that it can and should lay all its sin upon Him), in order that He may bear it away'¹⁰

Jung saw the parallel to Freud:

'Just as medical treatment appoints the person of the doctor to take over the conflicts of his patients, so Christian practice appoints the Saviour, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins". (Eph. 1.7 & Col. 1.14, Isa. 53.4: "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.") He is the deliverer and redeemer of our guilt, a God who stands above sins, who "committed no sin, no guile was found on his lips" (I Peter 2.22), who "Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree" (Heb. 9.28).'¹¹

It should be noted that the New Testament does not make a great deal of direct use of Day of Atonement customs. The closest reference is I Peter 2.24, but that can be translated and interpreted in a number of ways. The Passover lamb and the sacrificial lamb of Isaiah 53 seem to be the most widely used Old Testament points of reference regarding animal parallels with Christ. But as Jung recognized, Christ bears sins not unlike the goat of Leviticus 16 or lamb of Isaiah 53 in order to carry them away from the people and this has become one powerful meaning of 'Saviour'.

There are liturgical understandings of Christ as sin bearer in many of the analyses of pre-Vatican II eucharistic rites that include notions of transference:

'During this prayer [Hanc igitur] the priest extends his two hands horizontally over the chalice and the host in such a manner that the right thumb is placed over the left one in the form of a cross. . . The ritual of laying on of hands frequently occurs in both the Old and the New Testaments, as well as in the liturgy. According to its fundamental signification, it is always a symbol of the transferring of one thing to another; for example, in the Mosaic worship the laying on of hands was a symbolical representation of the transferring of sin and guilt to the animal that was to be sacrificed, which vicariously had to suffer death instead of man. Here in the Mass the laying on of hands has a similar object, for it shows that Christ offers Himself on the altar, in our place, for our sake, and on account of our sins, thus fixing deeply in our mind the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. Moreover, it indicates that we should unite ourselves with this sacrifice, offering ourselves along with it.'¹²

Another Catholic writer:

'In extending his hands over the oblations [the priest] signifies that Christ is dying on the cross, and in the Eucharist, the re-enactment of the sacrificial death, really takes upon himself the sins of all mankind.'¹³

Another:

'The imposition of hands was suggested by the marked emphasis upon propitiation and expiation. It appeared here in the 14th century: by anticipation, the priest heaps upon the divine Lamb the sins and suffrages of all who are present.'¹⁴

Protestants often have had difficulties with the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, but as the Presbyterian theologian Donald Baillie has argued, the sacrifice of the Eucharist can be understood as Christ eternally offering himself before the Father for the sins of the world and he extends the one sacrifice of Calvary to the world through the Eucharist.¹⁵ This is expressed in some contemporary Reformed eucharistic prayers by the words:

'Wherefore, having in remembrance the work and passion of our Saviour Christ, and pleading his eternal sacrifice. . . .'¹⁶

What does it mean to 'plead' his eternal sacrifice? It could be thought of in a number of ways, but an important distinction made by the Lutheran theologian Gustav Aulén is that Christ makes a once and for all sacrifice on the Cross which is an *atonement* sacrifice, but since 'he is always living to plead on their behalf'¹⁷ Christ performs an eternal *intercessory* sacrifice. 'The purpose of his intercession is to release and actualise the powers of life which are contained in the atonement.'¹⁸ Aulén also claims:

'It is one of the fundamental conceptions of Luther that Christ continues his redemptive work in that he assumes our burden and is our spokesman before God.'¹⁹

A profound meaning of this pleading, intercession and assuming our burden could indicate that Christ carried our sins so that we can distinguish two parts of the sacrifice – the atonement was made once for all, but the expiation of the sins of the world is still being taken away to free us from our present guilt. The Eucharist makes this gift available to us.

The Reformers had trouble with the sacrificial aspect of the Eucharist because they feared it was being considered a "work" – something done by man to secure God's love. But modern Catholics insist that Christ is the celebrant. 'In the Mass, Christ offers himself to the Father as the sacrificial lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.'²⁰

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Has Freud assimilated this ancient concept of transference and recast it in secular terms, making it one of his key concepts of psychoanalysis? Perhaps that is what he meant by his cryptic remark when asked how he was Jewish:

'A very great deal, and probably its very essence. He could not now express that essence clearly in words: but some day, no doubt it will become accessible to the scientific mind.'²¹

The great difference is the object of transference. For Freud it was the analyst; for Aaron it was the scapegoat; for the Christian it is Christ and thus in orthodox trinitarian thought, also God 'the Father'.

But Freud's other re-discoveries will help churches to have a look at their own practices. Clergy will want to help people deepen their understanding of their sin and guilt, though they will want to widen the definition of sin to go beyond incest and include pride, injustice, and may want to add the rabbinical idea of the *yetzer-ha-ra* (evil instinct) which Freud understood as the 'death instinct' in his later works. Dreams may be of help here. Careful and sympathetic individual attention to all aspects of the personality can be of great value, but it can do much harm if there has not been adequate training.

However, Jews and Christians will also want to allow more occasions for confession and transference, and always have set aside special 'seasons' for this (Elul and Lent culminating in Yom Kippur and Good Friday) along with the realization that regular times of confession and forgiveness are needed all through life.

For Christians it would be beneficial if confessions and/or counselling were eventually to culminate in the Eucharist. As in most eucharistic liturgies, a general and corporate confession of sins followed by words of forgiveness opens the service. This is also the case for good therapy or counselling. The person needs to know that he enters a situation where he is accepted and not put on trial. Then as times goes on – therapeutically and/or liturgically – methods are followed whereby the person can begin to transfer sins. It is one thing to be declared forgiven; it is

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For Christians it would be beneficial if confessions and/or counselling were eventually to culminate in the Eucharist. As in most eucharistic liturgies, a general and corporate confession of sins followed by words of forgiveness opens the service. This is also the case for good therapy or counselling. The person needs to know that he enters a situation where he is accepted and not put on trial. Then as times goes on – therapeutically and/or liturgically – methods are followed whereby the person can begin to transfer sins. It is one thing to be declared forgiven; it is

another to get rid of the power of sin or that part of the libido which causes neurotic damage. This is where the liturgical action of laying on of hands on the elements can be of use. It should be carefully explained that it is Christ not the priest as 'father' who bears the sins. In the new rites it could be done during the Agnus Dei before the breaking of bread.

What follows is Communion – that which is denied to the Freudian patient who is not allowed to touch father/analyst. Jews have communion feasts, but with God as participant, not victim. Most Christians believe that communicants feed on Christ himself (with various ways of understanding how this happens). Christ, who vicariously carried the sins also victoriously bears them away, then gives himself so that communicants may be filled with his life. As in biblical thought, blood is the life, so in the Eucharist the wine becomes that life filling the believer which "warms, nourishes, strengthens and gladdens the heart."²²

A stronger and remade self is the positive result of good psychoanalysis. A forgiven and sanctified life is the gift of participation in the historic Jewish and Christian liturgies. All have much to gain from listening to each other and seeing how close they have been to each other, often without knowing it.

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