



The Kentucky Psychoanalytic Institute

399: Psychoanalysis of Religion

Instructors: Susan A. Eichenberger, Ed.D., NCPsyA
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Meeting Time: Tuesdays 11:00-12:30 pm

Classes begin on Tuesday, May 4, 2010

With the discovery of transference Freud evolved what could be called a cure by idolatry; in fact, potentially, a cure of idolatry, through idolatry. But the one thing psychoanalysis cannot cure, when it works, is the belief in psychoanalysis. And that is a problem. (Phillips, 1993, p.121 -- On Kissing, Tickling, and Being Bored)

Course Description: Since Freud, psychoanalysts have sought to understand and explain religion and religious experiences using analytic developmental theories and concepts. This course sets out to a) explore key psychoanalytic theories regarding religious experience and b) understand how the therapist's theoretical perspective and cognitive-emotional beliefs shape his/her handling of the patient's religious experience.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course participants will have developed a critical and constructive understanding of the key psychoanalytic theories regarding religious experience and how these theories shape analytic interpretations. These aims will be accomplished by students reading the course material, weekly class logs, and through discussions in class.

Course Requirements: Readings and weekly logs. Logs provide an opportunity to process class experiences and readings. The participant is expected to turn in a log regarding his or her affective and cognitive reflections on each class meeting at the following class session. A log is also written for Independent Study Sessions and for any class missed by the candidate. These logs encourage the expression of thoughts and feelings and their integration with the reading and discussions. The log is treated as privileged communication.

Week 1 Introduction

Meissner, W. (2009). The God question in psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic psychology*, vol.26, pp.210-233. (pdf. file)

Defining terms—religion, faith, and psychoanalysis

Discussion Questions:

If religion is the object of study, what is it? (James) How is religion different from the idea of faith? Is psychoanalysis a science or art? What is psychoanalysis? How does psychoanalysis investigate religious experience?

Week 2 Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Religion

Readings:

Freud, S. (1907). Obsession and religious practices. *Standard Edition*, vol. 9, pp.115-128. (Handout)

Freud, S. (1927). The future of an illusion. *Standard Edition*, vol.21, pp.3-58.(Handout)

Rizzuto, A. (1979). *Birth of the living God*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Read chapter two.

Additional Reading:

Freud, S. (1950) *Totem and Taboo*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Freud, S. (1939). *Moses and Monotheism*. New York: Vintage Books.

LaMothe, R., Crane, J. & Arnold, A. (1998). The penumbra of religious discourse in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy*, Vol.15, pp.63-73.

Meng, H. and Freud, E. [Eds.] (1963). *Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister*. New York: Basic Books.

Sorenson, R. (2004). *Minding Spirituality*. Hillsdale, J: Analytic Press.

Wallace, E. (1991). Psychoanalytic perspectives on religion. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, Vol.18, pp.265-278.

Discussion Questions:

How does Freud understand religion? IN what way is Freud's argument about religion flawed? What are some of the shortcomings of his model of religion and what are the sources of these shortcomings in theorizing about religion? How does a Freudian model of religion shape the analyst's interpretive stance vis-à-vis the patient? What are some of the key points Rizzuto makes regarding Freud's view of religion? What are some of the sources for Freud's views on religion?

Week 3 Freud and Religion—Part II

Readings:

Frosh, S. (2006). Psychoanalysis and Judaism. In D. Black (Ed.) *Psychoanalysis and religion in the 21st century: Collaboration or competition*, pp.205-222. London: Routledge Press.

LaMothe, R. (2002). Loss and re-creation of faith in Freud's life. *Free Associations*, Vol. 9 (3), pp. 371-392. (pdf file)

LaMothe, R. (2003). Freud, religion, and projective identification. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, vol.20(2), pp.1-26. (pdf. file)

LaMothe, R. (2004). Freud's envy of religious experience. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, vol. 14(3), pp.159-174. (pdf files)

Pfister, O. The Illusion of a Future: A Friendly Disagreement with Prof. Sigmund Freud. (pdf.)

Additional Readings:

Hardin, H. (1987). On the vicissitudes of Freud's early mothering, I. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol.56, pp.608-644.

Hardin, H. (1988a). On the vicissitudes of Freud's early mothering, II. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol.57, pp.72-86.

Hardin, H. (1988b). On the vicissitudes of Freud's early mothering, III. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol.57, pp.209-223.

Rizzuto, A. (1998). *Why Did Freud Reject Religion?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Discussion Questions:

How might we understand and interpret Freud's antipathy to religion from a psychoanalytic perspective? What did Freud replace religion with—according to Rizzuto? ? How would one understand Freud's faith given his stance toward religion? What suffering might be the source of Freud's antipathy toward religion? Why was Freud able to accept and find friendship with people like Oskar Pfister if he was an atheist? What are your own views about religion and how do these views shape your work with patients who are religious?

Week 4 Winnicott, Object Relations Theory, and Religion

Readings:

Meissner, W. (2001). Transitional phenomena in religion. In Capps (Ed.), *Freud and Freudians on religion*, pp.220-225. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Rizzuto, Chapter three—Beyond Freud.

Winnicott, D. W. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena—A study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, Vol. 34, pp.89-97.(pdf.)

Discussion Questions:

What are some of the key differences between Winnicott's notion of the religious object and Freud's? How does Winnicott understand neurosis or psychopathology vis-à-vis religious experience? What is Winnicott's view of reality, health/sanity, and neurosis? What are transitional phenomena and how do they relate to religious objects and experience? How would Winnicott's perspective effect analytic interpretation?

Week 5 Relational Perspectives and Religion

Readings:

Aron, L. (2004). God's influence on my psychoanalytic vision and values. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 21(3), 442-451. (pdf)

Blass, R. (2006). Beyond illusion. In D. Black (Ed.) *Psychoanalysis and religion in the 21st century: Collaboration or competition*, pp.23-43. London: Routledge Press.

Rizzuto, Chapter four—The Representations of Objects and Human Psychic Functioning.

Discussion Questions:

How does Rizzuto understand the idea of objects/representations and how does this differ from Freud's? How does this perspective alter how she approaches religious experience? What is Rizzuto's understanding of psychopathology and how does this shape her understanding of religious experience? What would Rizzuto hypothesize about an adult's antipathy toward or rejection of religion?

Week 6 Relational Perspectives and Religion

Readings:

Bollas, C. (1987). *The shadow of the object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
[Read chapter one—The Transformational Object]

Eigen, M. (1981). The area of faith in Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 62, pp.413-433.

Rizzuto, Chapter five.

Discussion Questions:

How does Eigen understand faith? How is faith depicted in Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion? How do these perspectives shape how an analyst listens to, understands, and responds to a patient's religious narratives? How might we envision religion in terms of transformational objects ala Bollas? How would this shape analytic approaches to religious conversion?

Week 7 Erikson and Religion

Readings:

Erikson, E. chapters 14&15 in Freud and Freudians on Religion (Handout)
Rizzuto, Chapter six

Sorenson, R. (1994). Therapists' (and their therapists') God representations in clinical practice. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, vol.22, pp.325-433. (pdf.)

Discussion Questions:

What are god representations and how are they linked to one's psychological development? Does everyone have god representations and if so why? How does a therapist's god representations shape his/her work? What were your thoughts about the case Rizzuto discusses? What are some of the functions of religious ritual vis-à-vis Erikson's perspective?

Week 8 Self Psychology and Religion

Readings:

Kohut, H. chapters 21&22, in Freud and Freudians on Religion (Handout)

Rizzuto, Chapter seven

Discussion Questions:

What were your thoughts about the case Rizzuto discusses? How would Kohut understand god representations and religious experience? What are self-object functions and how might they help us understand religious experience? How would Kohut's perspective shape analytic interpretations?

Week 9 Kristeva and Religion

Readings:

Kristeva, chapters 26&27 in Freud and Freudians on Religion (Handout)

Rizzuto, Chapter eight.

Discussion Questions:

What were your thoughts about the case Rizzuto discusses? What other psychoanalytic perspectives may be used to interpret religious experience? What is Kristeva's view on religious experience/faith and psychoanalysis? How would these views be understood and used in clinical settings?

Week 10 Epstein, Rizzuto, and Religion

Readings:

Epstein, M. (2005). The structure of no structure: Winnicott's concept of un-integration and the Buddhist notion of no self. In Black (Ed.), *Psychoanalysis and religion in the 21st century*, pp.223-233. London: Routledge Press.

Rizzuto, Chapter nine & Appendices.

Discussion Questions:

What were your thoughts about the case Rizzuto discusses? What are your thoughts about Mark Epstein's integration of a Buddhist and Winnicottian concept? How would you use these in clinical settings?