

# Payne Whitney Clinic

## Blue Team Grand Rounds

### May 9, 2007

## “Psychosis and Religion”: A Reading List

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This reading list was kindly compiled by Samuel L. Pauker, M.D., Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry – Weill Cornell University Medical College and Columbia University Center for Psychoanalytic Training and Research – Rado Advanced Psychoanalytic Study Group on “Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience.”

### 1. Religious Phenomenology

William James: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Penguin Books, 1985. Orig. pub. 1902.

Where the scientific/psychological study of religious experience begins.  
Lecture IV & V: “The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness,” pgs. 78--126.  
VI & VII: “The Sick Self,” pgs. 127--165.  
VIII: “The Divided Self & the Process of Unification,” pgs. 166--188.  
IX & X: “Conversion,” pgs. 189--258.  
XX: “Conclusion,” pgs. 485--519.

Mircea Eliade: *The Sacred & the Profane: The Nature of Religion—The Significance of Religious Myth, Symbolism & Ritual Within Life and Culture*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. San Diego, New York 1987 (orig. pub. 1957).

“Religious man can only live in a sacred world, because it is only in such a world . . . that he has a real existence. This religious need expresses an unquenchable ontological thirst.” Perhaps psychoanalysis is a subset of “religious man’s” sense that healing involves a return to “the beginning” by engaging the origin myth. And this return to the origins in primitive ritual or contemporary psychotherapy creates an altered mental state –a trance—which is transformative.

### 2. On the Differential Diagnosis of Faith and Delusion

Joseph M. Pierre, MD: “Faith or Delusion? At the Crossroads of Religion and Psychosis,” *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, May 2001, pgs. 163--172.

An excellent overview of the difficulty trying to distinguish between belief and delusion when looked at in strictly phenomenological terms. In a word, there's a lot of overlap.

Dr. David Layoff: The Spiritual Competency Resource Center -- an online course at <http://www.spiritualcompetency.com>.

“DSM-IV Religious and Spiritual Problems”  
Lesson 1: Background DSM-IV Religious or Spiritual Problem (V62.89)  
3.1: Spiritual Emergence  
3.3: Mystical Experience  
3.5: Meditation & Spiritual Practices  
4: Co-occurrence with Mental Disorders  
5.1: Differential Diagnosis  
6.1: Therapeutic Intervention: Spiritual Crises

Eric Marcus, M.D.: *Psychosis and Near Psychosis: Ego Function, Symbol Structure, Treatment*. Springer-Verlag, New York, 1992.

Chap. 2, "Psychotic Structure," pgs. 45—76, and Chap. 3, "Near Psychosis," pgs. 77— 116. Essentially, we know psychosis by the psychological "company it keeps." The patient/person often, though not always, fails the "coffee-counter test."

### 3. Freud's Understanding of the Psychosis/Religious Interface

"Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" (The Schreber Case) 1911, in *The Standard Edition*, Volume XII, pgs. 3 - 84. Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, London, 1958. Translated by James Strachey.

Schreber seems normal in every respect except that "he believed he had a mission to redeem the world, but first had to be transformed into a woman." Plus, he had significant love-hate relationships to his Doctor Flechsig and to God. Freud has a field day with this, as it seemed made to order to extend the psychoanalytic technique, from hysteria, the neuroses, dreams, jokes etc. to psychosis. We get to see him develop his, now outdated, understanding of paranoia as repressed homosexual yearning. The formulations are a touch "Un-PC," but the case description is quite illuminating and in Freud's wonderful discursive writing style. Freud's earliest reflections on religious experience and psychosis.

Interestingly, essentially similar points are made 85 years later by:

Jacob Arlow: "Commentary" (pgs.. 245--254) to a discussion of "Sexual Metaphor and Praxis in the Kabbalah" by Moshe Idel ( pgs. 217 - 244) , Chap. 7 in Mortimer Ostow, M.D. (ed): *Ultimate Intimacy: The Psychodynamics of Jewish Mysticism*, International University Press, Madison, Conn. 1995.

Brief, to the point and a model of clarity, any Arlow on religion is worth reading.  
Also in the volume –

Mort Ostow, M.D.: "The Dimensions of mysticism," Chap. 1, pgs. 3-39 and  
"The apocalyptic complex," Chap. 2, pgs. 45 - 80.

Ostow, a psychoanalyst and psycho pharmacologist, for many years ran the pastoral counseling center at the Jewish Theological Seminary and was a member of the Columbia Psychoanalytic Center. He had a lifelong interest in the integration of psychodynamic and neurobiological understanding of religious experience. His case examples distinguish between grades of psychotic and non-psychotic religious/spiritual experience. He sees affective state as heavily determining the nature of the experience.  
Also interesting for how he analyzes dreams and fantasies of apocalyptic destruction.  
Published posthumously his:

Mort Ostow, M.D. *Spirit, Mind & Brain: A Psychoanalytic Examination of Spirituality and Religion*. Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.

### 4. Freud's Other Work on Religion

Ana-Maria Rizzuto, M.D.: *The Birth of the Living God: A Psychoanalytic Study*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979.

Chapter 2, pgs. 13-39, summarize well Freud's "Totem and Taboo," "The Future of an Illusion," and "Moses and Monotheism."

Post-Freud contributions are also well summarized by her in Chap. 3, "Beyond Freud," pgs. 41—53, and Chap. 4, "The Representations of Objects and Human Psychic Functioning," pgs. 54--84.

Rizzuto's Chap. 10, "Conclusion" (pgs. 177--211), summarizes her pivotal reevaluation of religious experience and representations of God, from a predominantly "Winnicottian" perspective. God is a universal transference grab bag which resides in the "transitional" mental space of imagination. Rather than pure neurosis or psychosis, God representations and religious experience represent developmental capabilities. Problematic upbringings and psychopathology, far from facilitating belief and spirituality, detract from or prevent it.

William Meissner's "The Role of Transitional Conceptualization in Religious Thought," Chap. 6, pgs. 95—116, in Joseph H. Smith, M.D., and Susan A. Handelman, Ph.D. (eds): *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. Forum on Psychiatry and the Humanities of the Washington School of Psychiatry. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1990.

## 5. Meditation & the Relaxation Response as Models of Religious/Spiritual Experience

Herbert Benson, M.D.: "Four Decades of Mind/Body/Spirituality Findings," December 2, 2006, presentation (~ 89-minute CD) at The Harvard Medical School and the Mind/Body Medical Institute Symposium on Spirituality and Healing in Medicine, December 2-3, 2006, Boston, Mass. Conference Recording Service Inc. at [www.conferencerecording.com](http://www.conferencerecording.com).

Benson, one of the first to study the "relaxation response" and meditation, summarizes 40 years of work and gives a 5 to 10-minute brief relaxation exercise so the audience and listeners can "experience" it first-hand. He contends that the relaxation response is at the core of every spiritual experience in every religion, though they will cognitively understand it/spin different mythologies about it. In another session, Ann Webster, Ph.D., director of the Mind/Body Medical Institute, discusses how she uses meditation with guided imagery in a variety of challenging, clinical, medical situations and the impressive therapeutic value that patients with serious and terminal illnesses derive from it. People tend to experience something religious or spiritual about these exercises. She also gives two brief guided meditations.

Jon Kabot-Zinn, Ph.D.: *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness—The Program of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center*, Delta Trade Paperbacks. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, New York, 1990.

Kabot-Zinn worked with Benson on the cardiac care/biofeedback studies and went on to pioneer an adaptation of "Mindfulness," the basic Buddhist tenant of "being in the moment" in the "here and now" with a concomitant detachment from worries, care and concerns. *Full Catastrophe Living* is a good, easy read, which introduces the technique and practice.

## 6. On What Different Religious Tradition Can Offer Clinicians

Paul Marcus, Ph.D. : *Ancient Religious Wisdom, Spirituality and Psychoanalysis*. Praeger: Westport, Conn., 2003.

Marcus, an analyst, takes eight main, though perhaps not well understood, religious traditions and in thirty pages or so, using one of the central texts of the religion/tradition, teases out a basic understanding of each. Especially worthwhile are his Chap 2: "Hinduism: The Bhagavad Gita," pgs. 15 - 34. His "Introduction," pgs. 1 - 12, is useful for his attempt to define terms like spirituality, and transcendence. Also see his Chap 10: "Conclusions: Toward a Spiritually Animated Psychoanalysis," pgs. 177 - 200. Also—a monograph of the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry's Committee on Psychiatry and Religion: *Mysticism: Spiritual Quest or Psychic Disorder?* pgs. 705 - 822, Vol. IX, #97, Nov. 1976.

## 7. An Examination of Religious Interests, Identities, and Influences

Janet Liebman Jacobs, & Donald Capps (eds.): *Religion, Society & Psychoanalysis: Readings in Contemporary Theory*. Westview Press, Division of Harper Collins. 1997.

- Chap 1: "Freud & Hasidism" by Dan Merkur, pgs. 11—22, and
- Chap. 8: "Childhood Fears, Adult Anxieties & the Longing for Inner Peace: Erik Erikson's Psychoanalytic Psychology of Religion," pgs. 127--162.
- Chap. 14: "Julia Kristeva and the Psychoanalytic Study of Religion; Rethinking Freud's Cultural Texts," by Diane Jonte-Pace, pgs. 240--268.

## 8. The Spiritual/Mystical Aspects of Psychoanalysis

Michael Eigen: *The Psychoanalytic Mystic*. Free Association Books, London & New York, 1998.

Eigan, an analyst, and editor in chief of the *Psychoanalytic Review*, has some of the most cogent discussions of Bion, Lacan and Winnicott. Especially useful are his Intro., pgs. 11—26, and Chap. 1: "The Psychoanalytic Mystic," pgs. 27—44. Chaps. 3: "Infinite Surfaces, Explosiveness, Faith," pgs. 45—60, and 4: "Musings on 0," pgs. 81—94, are on Bion and his idea of "faith" in therapy. Also Chaps. 5: "Originary Jouissance," pgs. 135—144, and 6: "Serving Jouissance," pgs. 145—152, are excellent discussions of Lacan.

(For help with Lacan see:

Philip Hall: *Lacan for Beginners*. A Writers & Readers Publishing Inc., New York, NY, 1997.)

Jeremy Safran: *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism*, Wisdom Pub. Boston, 2003

Especially the "Introduction": Jeremy Safran, pgs. 1—34.

Chap. 2: Mark Fin: "Tibetan Buddhism and a Mystical Psychoanalysis," pgs. 101—114.

Neil Altman: "Commentary: Psychoanalysis as a Spiritual Quest," pgs. 115—121.

Mark Fin: "Reply: The Persistence of Spiritual Shyness in Psychoanalysis," pgs. 122—130.

## 9. The Biology of Religious Experience

Jeffrey L. Saver, M.D. and John Rabin, M.D.: "The Neural Substrate of Religious Experience," *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 1997, vol. 9, #4, Summer, pgs. 498—510.

Andrew Newberg, M.D., Eugene D'Aquili, M.D., Ph.D., and Vince Rause: *Why God Won't go Away*. Ballantine Books, New York, 2001.

A popularly written summary of 30 years of research into the neurobiological bases for a wide array of religious/spiritual/meditative and mystical experiences. A sort of "unified field theory." Especially interesting re: how both excitatory and quiescent activities can yield similar transcendent states. A simpler version of their more challenging

*The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1999, by D'Aquili, M.D., Ph.D. & Newberg, M.D.

A tour de force in the burgeoning field of "Neuro-Theology."  
Simpler by far is

Time Magazine, "The Brain: A User's Guide," January 29, 2007, including articles by Sharon Begley, "How the Brain Rewires Itself," pgs. 72—77, and J. Madeleine Nash, "The Gift of Mimicry," pgs. 109—113.

Findings include: Experienced Buddhist monks, who practice a form of meditation known as "Compassionate Love," on PET scan light up a part of the brain that correlates with empathy and love. Novice monks, light it up a

little. College student controls brains' show none of it. The idea that, something like meditation can effect neuroplasticity will move meditation from the realm of the "touchy feely" to hard science. Folks who learn piano and play hours daily light up another area. Very interestingly, those who "just think" about the playing—i.e., practice in their imaginations only—also light up the same area! Mental rehearsal of activities help. Couple this with a third finding, that there are areas of the brain that light up just by watching someone else do the activity! This may, therefore, be one basis for the mechanism of psychotherapy—i.e., rehearsing mentally, and observing the therapists use empathic attunement etc. as well as how and why "guide imagery" meditation works.

## 10. Controlled, Time-Limited Psychosis and Religious Experience

Walter Pahnke: "LSD and Religious Experience," in Richard C. DeBold & Russell Leaf (eds): *LSD, Man and Society*, Wesleyan Univ. Press, Middletown, Conn. 1967, and online at <http://www.psychadelic-library.org/pahnke3.htm>.

## 11. Psychoanalytic Application to Religious Texts

Avivah Zornberg: *The Particulars of Rapture: Reflections on Exodus*. Doubleday, New York, 2001.

One of the most interesting "applications" of psychoanalysis to religious texts is the work of Avivah Zornberg. Zornberg has a doctorate in literature and has spent the last 20 years teaching Bible (Old Testament) in Israel, Europe and the US. She uses a means of exegesis known as "midrash"—meaning she goes to the stories that Bible commentator's have told over the centuries to explicate the holes in Biblical narrative. This material is often a repository of all sorts of fantastical elements. Zornberg says that the "unconscious" material is retained in the "midrash," a sort of collective free association to the text.

She uses depth psychological ideas to flesh out what are essentially "case studies" of Biblical characters that most people have at least a passing acquaintance with (Abraham, Adam and Eve, Joseph, Moses etc.); especially those moments of searing emotional conflict, when character is tried in the crucible of life and spiritual truth is both revealed and circumscribed in the self.

Her writing is lyrical, and her public lectures/teaching, always from notes, are mesmerizing, more like riveting theatre. She believes in facilitating an "intimate encounter of self and text" that should and can induce, if not character change, moments of epiphany.

In this era of skepticism about Freud and psychoanalysis, not least of all by religionists, it's ironic that one of the most persuasive demonstrations of the value of psychoanalysis should come from the exploration of religious/spiritual moments, characters and text.

She speaks tonight, May 9<sup>th</sup>, at William Alanson White.

## 12. On Man's Inhumanity to Man

Vamik Volkan, M.D.: *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships*. Jason Aronson, Inc., Northvale, New Jersey, 1994.

A "Kernberg-ian" Object relations view of why there will always be an "Other."

## 13. Miscellaneous

Kristeva's *In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith*. Translator Arthur Goldhammer, Intro by Otto Kernberg, M.D. Columbia University Press, New York, 1987.

It's a surprisingly easy to read, for Kristeva. In it, she answers Lacan's provocative and controversial statement that "Catholics can't be analyzed." In fact, Kristeva argues, like Rizzuto, for the importance and therapeutic potential of "religious transferences." She thinks Christianity's Trinity is especially resonant with the psyche.

Joseph Smith, M.D.: "On Psychoanalysis and the Question of Non-defensive Religion," Chap. 2, pgs. 18—42 in Joseph H. Smith, M.D., and Susan A. Handelman , Ph.D., (Des): *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. Forum on Psychiatry and the Humanities of the Washington School of Psychiatry. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1990.

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