Psychoanalysis and Religion

Fall 2015    Fordham University

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I. Course Description

This course is geared to exploring the relationship between psychology, particularly psychoanalysis, and religion. Before the birth of psychoanalysis, religion had been a main resource to explore the psyche of human beings. The resource was religious and theological. Yet, the birth of psychoanalysis started to challenge the monopoly of the religious approaches on human psyche. Since then, on one hand, both of them have been unwittingly in rivalry or competition in dealing with human psyche, faith, religion, and theology. On the other hand, there has been a movement to see both of them complementary rather than competitive in understanding human psyche and religion. This course attempts to articulate the movements of the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion historically, theoretically, clinically, and hermeneutically based on the writings of several psychoanalysts, classical and contemporary, such as William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, D.W. Winnicott, W.W. Meissner, and Ana-Maria Rizzuto.

II. Course Objectives

1. Explore a variety of religious experiences and phenomena from the viewpoint of psychoanalysis
2. Trace back the historical change of psychoanalytic perspectives on religion through studying various psychoanalysts
3. Demonstrate that it is possible to make a dialogue between psychoanalysis and theology
4. Articulate how God-image is established from the perspectives of psychoanalysis
5. Develop insights on how psychoanalytic elements affect the formation of faith or theology
6. Learn how to think critically on the inter-dynamics between psychoanalysis and religion
7. Identify and become familiar with various terms, jargons, vocabularies, concepts and theoretical approaches on the issues in the course

III. Course Grading
1. **Attendance (30%)**

   Attendance is the most important factor for grading. Even if the paper and oral presentation are completed successfully, the student will not attain a good grade if he/she is unable to attend classes.

2. **Case Study Paper (30%)**

   Each student must submit a final paper. The paper will be a research paper on a religious phenomenon, such as mysticism, conversion, prayer, fundamentalism, cults, or brainwashing, etc. The paper is to be based on the issues, themes, and insights which are discussed during classes. The paper needs to be written with socio-cultural, psychological, psychoanalytic, or theological implications. Each student is expected to present the outline of the paper on 10/27/15 during class. The paper should be approximately 15 pages (double-spaced). Each student is expected to present his/her research or case study paper briefly at the final class.

3. **Presentation (20%)**

   Each student is required to choose from required textbooks and prepare a presentation. He/she is expected to summarize the book and add his/her own opinions on the book in a one or two-page paper to be distributed to other classmates. The time for the presentation is 15-20 minutes.

4. **Constructive Participation in Class Discussion (20%)**

IV. **Texts**

1. **Required Texts**


2. **Supplemental Reading**


V. **Course Schedule**

1. **09/08/15** **Introduction to the Course**

   a. Introduce primary and secondary texts
   b. Share course description, objectives, criteria for grading, and assigning reading presentations
c. Share the religious experiences of professor and students briefly

2. 09/15/15  The first psychological approach on religious experience I (William James)

a. The pioneering and historic first step to approach religion in terms of psychology
b. Paying attention to the approaches of William James to various religious phenomena, such as sick soul, divided self, conversion, mysticism, etc.

Reading Assignment:

William James. The Varieties of Religious Experience: pp. 53-188
Lecture III -- The Reality of the Unseen
Lectures IV and V -- The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness
Lectures VI and VII -- The Sick Soul
Lecture VIII -- The Divided Self and the Process of Its Unification

3. 09/22/15  The first psychological approach on religious experience II (William James)

Reading Assignment:

Lecture IX -- Conversion
Lecture X -- Conversion (concluded)
Lectures XVI and XVII -- Mysticism

4. 09/29/15  Religion as Illusion (Sigmund Freud -- I)

a. Religion as illusionary projection
b. God as a father figure which results from the Oedipus Complex
c. Science as an replacement of religion

Reading Assignment:

Sigmund Freud. The Future of an Illusion

No Class 10/06/15

5. 10/13/15  God as exalted father-figure (Sigmund Freud -- II)

a. How earthly father becomes exalted father-figure in terms of totem and taboo
b. Similarity between totem meal and communion
Reading Assignment:

Chapter IV -- The Return of Totemism in Childhood

6. **10/20/15**  **God as primordial archetype in the unconscious (Carl Jung)**

   a. God-image: ingrained archetype in the unconscious
   b. God image as a religious symbol

Reading Assignment:

Carl Jung. *Psychology and Religion*
Answer to Job

7. **10/27/15**  **Psychoanalytic experiences as the main resource of religious or theological formation (Erik Erikson)**

   a. How Martin Luther formulated God-image in his familial environment
   b. How Martin Luther was challenged by identity crisis
   c. Exploration of how the psychoanalytic elements of Martin Luther influenced his theological formation and reformation

Reading Assignment:

Erik Erikson. *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*: pp. 23-97, pp. 170-222
Chapter II -- The Fit in the Choir
Chapter III -- Obedience – To Whom?
Chapter VI -- The Meaning of “Meaning it”

8. **11/03/15**  **Religion as creative illusion (D.W. Winnicott)**

   a. Religion as constructive and creative illusion
   b. Search for self through creative illusionary identification
   c. Religion as transitional object

Reading Assignment:

D.W. Winnicott. *Playing and Reality*
Chapter 1 -- Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena, pp. 1-25
Chapter 4 -- Playing: Creative Activity and the Search for the Self, pp. 53-64
Chapter 6 -- The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications, and
Chapter 7 -- The Location of Cultural Experience, pp. 86-103

9. **11/10/15** Ingrained God-image (Ana-Maria Rizzuto)

   a. Exploring how people build God-representation
   b. Clinical research on God-image

**Reading Assignment:**

Ana-Maria Rizzuto. *The Birth of the Living God:* pp. 87-173
   Chapter 5 -- Introduction to the Clinical Research
   Chapter 6 -- A God without Whiskers
   Chapter 7 -- A God in the Mirror
   Chapter 8 -- God, the Enigma
   Chapter 9 -- God, My Enemy

10. **11/17/15** Beyond Freud, Searching for correlative relationship between psychoanalysis and religion (W. W. Meissner)

   a. Focusing on correlative contribution of psychoanalysis and religion in the understanding of human beings
   b. Searching for dialogue between psychoanalysis and theology

**Reading Assignment:**

W.W. Meissner. *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience:* pp.185-240
   Chapter 8 -- The Images of Man
   Chapter 9 -- The Religious versus the Psychoanalytic Perspective
   Chapter 10 -- Freedom in Psychoanalysis and in Theology

11. **11/24/15** No Class

12. **12/01/15** Searching for a new paradigm of relationship between psychoanalysis and religion (James Jones)

   a. Recovering relational dialogue with religion beyond reductionism of psychodynamics
   b. Revitalizing constructive dialogue between psychoanalysis and religion by briefly reading various psychoanalysts and theologians

**Reading Assignment:**
Chapter 4 -- Transference and Transformation
Chapter 5 -- Toward a Psychoanalysis of the Sacred

12. 12/08/15   Sharing Research Paper I

13. 12/15/15   Sharing Research Paper II