

PETAR JEVREMOVIĆ

UNIVERSITY OF BELGRADE
FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
BELGRADE
pjevremo@f.bg.ac.rsУДК:316.647.7:2
2-184.25:159.97ПРИМЉЕНО: 11.11.2018.
ОДБРЕНО: 23.11.2018.

PSYCHODYNAMICS OF RADICALISED FAITH

Abstract: Being radical in the matters of faith implies being absolutely in possession of the Divine Knowledge. There is here a symptomatic mirroring between this kind of knowledge (pseudo-divine-knowledge) and the pathological ideal of power. Basic problem is the necrosis of the the Paternal function. There is no radicalism without some kind of (pathological) charisma. Being fundamentalist implies domination of the unrecognized drive for establishing a special kind of relation with Father. This (necrotic) father will be recognized (in his idealized form) in the face of some (pathogenic) charismatic leader. ► *Key words:* radicalized faith, narcissism, paternal function, group pathology.

Radicalized faith is predominantly — *group phenomenon*. It always happens within the group of *co-believers*, among *brothers and sisters*. They share the same passions and the same (*dogmatic* or *pseudodogmatic*) *beliefs*. They share the same *enemies*.

Radicalized faith is never a *starting point*. It is never simply — *just given*. It is always a final outcome of *complicated process*. Faith that is radicalized is the fruit of *progressive radicalization of (common) faith*. Common faith is (mainly unreflexive, naive) faith of the common people. Of wider community. Or it could be seen as *the theology of main stream theologians*.

Radicalization of faith is followed by *special kind of mobilization*. This mobilization happens among the members of the group. It is *irrational* but it is not *aimless*. It is deeply related to the important matters of subject's identity, his (*mental*) stability and instability, affectivity, his (*floating*) conceptions and representations of the Self and the Other, life and death, good and evil, of God Himself.

For humans, the Other is always a problem. For those among believers who are radicalized, the status of the Other is radically problematic. Radicalized persons are *easy to hate* and *ready to act*. Radicalized faith is always active. Practical. Striving for authenticity of faith easily becomes fighting for the *right to hate*, to *fight and to foreclose the Other*.

The Other who is — *enemy*.

Excessive radicalization in the domain of faith (*sadly*) indicates the prevalence of pathological processes within the group. Logic of radicalization is *the logic of differentiation*. Being extreme (being radicalised in the matters of faith) implies *being different from all others*. Being better than them...

Fundamentalist believers consider themselves as being *elite*. They are chosen. In their world there is no place for dialogue, for other perspective, for love, for humor. They are always serious. Their *episteme* is *absolute*.

Being absolute, it is (absoluteltely) *normative*.

* * *

Radicalization of belief has nothing to do with God. Strictly speaking, it is a human affaire.

Radicalization of the faith is the *offspring of (deep) crisis*. We can consider it — *symptomatic*. It is never *ephemeral*. Its being is *not accidental*. On contrary, important relations with the formative (*symbolic* and *imaginary*) figures (such as Paternal figure) and with the formative discursive (*textual*) and ritual structures and praxes stands (*hidden*) in background of this process.

It happens when times are hard, *uncertain*.

When everything important comes *under the question*.

Religious fundamentalism (fundamentalism of radicalized faith) is — *reaction*. This reaction (being *symptomatic*) might be excessive, nonreflexive, resolute. Destructive, even — (*pseudo*)apocaptyptic. Seductive. Primitive modes of mental functioning are here at work: psychotic anxieties, paranoid processes, excessive agitation.

The group of believers is confronted with something unbearable — *uncanny*.¹

Something — *traumatic*.

Subject(s) *re-acts* because there is no (*real*) capacity in him (in *them*) to stand and (somehow to overcome) *traumatic (uncanny) experiance*.

* * *

It is hard today to be a (*decent*) atheist. It is not easy to be a- *believer*. Global (western) society is in deep crisis. It has tragically lost its *aims* and *values*. The (Christian, Orthodox) Church is (*also*) in seious crisis.

It is (*desperately*) hard to find in it *something more then just institutional or traditional faith*. So many people from clergy (*really*) are confused, historically disoriented, unconvincing. So many believers just pretend that they believe.

There is a lack of (*real*) personal authority within the family today. The same is with the Church.

¹ Cf. Sigmund Freud, The 'Uncanny', in *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII, 1919), 217–256.

Radicalised position (in the matters of faith) reflects subject's desperate need for being somebody, for being authentic. For being — *real*. And — *accepted*. For finding — *authority*. For being *somebody's* (symbolic) *offspring*. For being *alive*. And, for — *being part of something bigger*. Something — *important*. For being on the *right side*.

The fundamentalist (explicitly) intends to be a *purist*. He wants to be on the firm ground when the matters of faith are concerned.

This task is far from being easy.

It implies (somehow) being capable for overcoming (*everpresent*) persecutive pressures of — *uncanny*.

It demands a good balance between *being*, *believing* and *thinking*.

Speaking about *uncanny* (within the family, within the Church) is, in our time (first of all) an experience of *the fragility of the paternal figure*. Together with it goes everpresent dissolution of *mothering function*. Father is *frail, fragile, demasculinized*. If there is no functional father, there could be no functional mother. Mother is *desubstantialized*. The group (family, Church) is being (tragically) addressed *from the edge of nothingness*. This (ontological) *nothingness* is the *locus of uncanny*. Speaking about the (Mother) Church, ordinary personifications and functions of ecclesial authority, *her* symbols and formulas, are far from being enough.

The group of believers is in a big problem. Some of its crucial symbols are eroded.

You cannot fight with this *uncanny* using *empty words* and *old formulas*. Tradition is not enough.

We need something stronger.

* * *

Real charismatics are rare. So it is with (*real*) fathers...

Radicalised faith (within the Church) tragically mirrors subject's fundamentally disturbed (historically destabilised, eroded) relation with the paternal figure(s). With its *sinchrony* and its *diachrony*.

With — Christ Himself.

There is always a problem (more or less serious) with *the symbolic function of the father* within the scope of the fundamentalists (group or individual) mind. Being radical in the matters of faith strongly implies being unstable in the matters of (individual and group) life.²

As we shall see, the radicalized act of faith is subject's (group's) attempt to solve these problems, the problems with *paternal figures and functions*. Fundamentalist radicalization of faith (his radical re-arrangement or relation between historical actuality and presupposed tradition) strives (somehow) to establish for him some new (phantasmatically revitalised) relation with the (strongly idealised) *paternal figure*.³

² Cf. Ruth Stein, *For Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism* (Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, Stanford University Press, 2009).

³ Cf. Jacques Lacan, *L'Envers de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

Psychodynamically speaking, this kind of (unconscious) radicalization (*radicalization of common faith*) could be seen as (predominantly *unconscious*) outcome of *subject's* (or *group's*) *desperate need for competent, (ontologically) potent and actually present paternal figure*.

Fundamentalism is a way of the group *self-help*. Insecured (personal or group) identity strives for something dogmatically ultimate, real, practically effective, narcissistically elitistic, historically apocalyptic.

Being exposed to radical threat of *uncanny*, the group reacts radically: with passion.

Symbolic function of the father cannot provide a firm basis for subjective identity. Something has to be done.

Imaginary father provides a necessary basis for such an enterprise.

* * *

Times are changing. We are living in the alienated (*secular*) world, in the world of *fatherless children* and *impotent (castrated) fathers*.

In the world of — *uncanny*.

All we have is technology. And — economy. Immorality of political life is followed by seductive hypocrisy.

The Church is full of *impotent (castrated) fathers* and *fatherless children*. These *fatherless children* are *anonymous*. Real fathers (even in Church) are weak, often they are (historically) defeated and depressed. Disoriented and castrated. Anonymous.

Being *fatherless* (being *anonymous*) implies being *faceless*.

Being *faceless* reduces humanity of man to his tragical emptiness. The *faceless being* is — the *senseless being*. This *senseless being* is no more than a *simulacrum of human being*.

Being *faceless* can be the common destiny of an individual and of group, of male and female. Of believers and unbelievers. Even the Church can become *faceless*. There is tragical possibility for the Church to become *faceless* and *senseless*, to become *necrotic* and *empty*.

Even — *impotent*.

Castrated.

* * *

Christian (*Orthodox*) radicalism is particular *Christian phenomenon*. It has to be considered in its own historical (even theological, discursive) context. It cannot be fully equated with some other (Islamic, Judaic, Buddhistic) forms of religious (or political) radicalism.

Christian radicalism is not an *ahistoric phenomena*. On the contrary, during the course of (historic) time it manifests itself differently. It has different forms. These

different forms produce substantially different effects. One is, just for example, (*ecclesial/ideological*) radicalism of St. Ignatius of Antioch, other is (*political*) radicalism of Teophilus of Antioch, and other is (*extreme stylite*) radicalism of Syriac ascetic tradition.

It can be seen as (desparately) rebellious act against alienated institutional Church. This alienated Church is the (paralogic) *topos* of the *alienated power*.

(Orthodox) Church of our days (especially Orthodox Church in postcommunist countries) is dangerously intoxicated with its own bureaucracy and rigidity, anachronistic feudal mindset, doctrinal gaps between theory and practice, *her* synchrony and diachrony, secularism, even nihilism, immorality and (mostly on the part of its leading elite) *will of power*.

The real charisma has been fading away.

* * *

As it usually happens, (sooner or later) the *will of power* manifests itself as mostly dangerous and destructive driving force within the group dynamics.

Apart from nostalgic romanticism that is (phantasmatically) related to the (pre-supposed) celebrity past, with all known and unknown (holy) fathers, Christian Orthodoxy today is mostly preoccupied *with its own institutional trivialities*.

With its own (institutional and spiritual) *emptiness*.

Higher clerical structures are more involved in their (*mostly egocentric*) performances of power than they (really) have anything to do with (presupposed) mystical dimensions of the Church. Lower clerical structures are mostly devoted to their particular (*economic*) survival, to their own (*egocentric*) ambitions.

It all makes inner dynamic of the Church very often full of intrigue, conflictual tensions and of various kinds of manipulations, group and individual pathology.

Speaking in hegelian terms, there is a great number of reasons for being seriously concerned with special kind of *master-slave dialectics*. It can easily be detected within the relation between *bishops* and their *clergy*.

Rather complicated game of power is manifested here within the framework of numerous mirroring relations. It includes various strategies such as brutality, seduction, instrumentalization, manipulation, demagoguery, idolatry...

* * *

There is no radicalization without *mirroring*.⁴

Radicalization of faith is allways — *narcissistic*. Topologically speaking, it is allways located in front of some mirror. When it happens, it happens within the group of children (sons and daughters). As individuals (and as a group) they are

⁴ Cf. Heinz Kohut, *The analysis of the self* (New York: International Universities Press, 1971).

ontologically destabilised, anxious and disoriented. And this is the *tragical outcome of their fathers being (symbolically) castrated*.

The castrated father (defeated father, depressive father) cannot fulfil his symbolic obligation, his institutionalized mission. He cannot make (*spiritually*) a potent male or female human being from his (*unfinished*) offspring.

Ontologically speaking (not biologically), he is — *impotent*.

He is — *castrated*.

Imaginary father is not castrated. He is always fresh and new. He is believed to be strong and potent. Authentic. He finds his ontological *arche* within the framework of imaginary past. He loves history. History (*tradition*) approves of his deeds and actions. Unreflective (*noncritical*) idealization of this imaginary past functions as the virtual foundation for establishing this imaginary father as a narcissistic (*imaginary*) function.

He is close to God. He knows perfectly well what is His (God's) will. He is ready to act. And he is ready to be followed.

* * *

There is in the work of André Green (clinically well testified) notion of the *death mother*. In this case, according to Green, mother is being *caught in the empty frame of negative hallucination*. Negativity of this hallucination produces a gap in reality, or vague impression of unreality. Of — *death*. Or — *emptiness*. There is a problem (disbalance) within mother-child relation. Mother's detachment from her child is related to child's disillusionment with his mother, loss of love (maternal love) is followed by child's loss of meaning. This *loss of meaning* is this gap in the reality of subject-object relation. It is a psychotic phenomenon.

Green's *death mother*, contrary to what one might think, remains (physically) alive and present, but she is, being analogous to our death (castrated) father, psychologically dead (also *impotent, castrated*) in the eyes of her child. She is an (*initial*) locus of a *gap*. Of — *emptiness*.

She functions as an empty frame for developing of something Green calls *the blank psychosis*, psychosis of subject's being tragically lost in his own (and object's) emptiness.⁵ Emptiness in the maternal object becomes emptiness in the subject. And *vice versa*. Death object becomes a correlate of death subject. Again, *vice versa*, as well.

It is obvious, Green is not talking about group dynamics. Mainly, he is concerned here with the individual pathology. But, I really do believe, Green's *blank psychosis* (on individual level) mirrors the group phenomena of *the blank Ecclesia*.⁶ These

⁵ Cf. Andre Green, *Life Narcissism Death Narcissism* (London – New York: Free Association Books, 2001), 170–200.

⁶ These are the words of Green himself: “The dead mother had taken away with her, in the decatexis of which she had been the object, the major portion of love with which she has been cathected before her

phenomena are isomorphic. Mother is Church. Church is mother. As I have already said: there is no mother without father. And *vice versa*. Green is talking about *disillusionment*. For him, it is an important word. Here too we have a *disillusionment*, disillusionment with Mother Church. And, with — symbolic father.

Physically, everything is present, everybody is here, but nothing really works. Nothing is real. Nobody is alive. Ancient symbols are present, transparent but actuality of their presence and transparency is (dangerously) eroded.

Everything *that is, is* nothing more than just a *simulacrum*. As if pathology of individual is mirrored in *as if* pathology of group. Empty frame is preserved, but there is nothing (nobody) else. Symbolic dimensions of fatherhood (even in the Church) are reduced just to *her* (*faceless*) institutional functions. To the *will of power*.

It never goes without confabulation of (highly idealised) tradition, and (various) simulations of authenticity. Of — charisma.

Often it goes with (blind, even magical) ritualism.

These are (pathological) consequences of *the blank ecclesiology*. And of *the blank Ecclesia*.

* * *

Inner logic of this kind of radicalization functions as a narcissistically inaugurated logistics for subject's own (*virtual*) effort to compensate this (*symbolical*) castration that comes from the paternal side.

A fatherless child needs a *father*. A new father. This father will be an *imaginary father*.

Subject needs somehow to overcome just mentioned state of disillusionment. Of emptiness. He needs some new exaltation, new vitality. New and deeper faith, new (implicit or explicit) theology. New theory and praxes.

New (radicalized) community.

And it (*really*) happens; thanks to identification with mirroring Other subject (virtually) gains new base for his living.

* * *

Disturbing weakness of the *symbolic father* is (narcissistically) compensated via identification with the *imaginary father*.⁷

bereavement: her look, the tone of her voice, her smell, the memory of her cares. The loss of physical contact carried with it the repression of the memory traces of her touch. She had been buried alive, but her tomb itself had disintegrated. The hole that gaped in its place made solitude dreadful, as though the subject ran the risk of being sunk in it..."; Green, *Life Narcissism Death Narcissism*, 182.

⁷ In this text I will strongly insist on the difference between two paternal formations: symbolic and imaginary. Imaginary father functions as a focal point of mirroring relation between subject and idealised other. Symbolic father transcends this imaginary relation. His being is deeply rooted in the symbolic exchange, which makes mirroring suppressed by language.

This imaginary father is a nodal point of this process of radicalization. He is (thanks to various forms of narcissistic idealizations) somebody *who is* and *who knows*. He functions as *an imaginary matrix* for subject's (or group's) narcissistic (compensatory) identifications. He is a (*virtual*) supporter of (group's or individual's) *imaginary identity*. His imaginary being is deeply related to the (various possible) virtual (very often controversial) outcomes of his (*radical*) ideological *re-factoring of the doctrine and of the past (of tradition, history)*.

He is the man who knows what the tradition is. He knows what the truth is. He presents himself as *an authentic spokesman of tradition*. His (*radical, apocalyptic*) understanding of canonical texts and actual historical (*political*) situation, his pseudo-charismatic way of self-fashioning, makes him more convincing and more powerful than all of the other clerical bureaucrats and castrated (*faceless*) pseudo-fathers.

Thanks to the mirroring relation with the narcissistic other, with the imaginary (*pseudo-charismatic*) father, the son(s) of castrated father(s) can feel saved from his (*symbolic*) father's unbearable original state of being. He (their imaginary father) is engaged with mostly important matters of life, he behaves like (narcissistic) ideal should behave.⁸

He functions as a simulacrum of (virtual) authenticity. He is the *personification of power*.

This *power* is desired by the members of the group.

It is how he makes them — *radicalized*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ЛИТЕРАТУРА

- Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'" In *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, 217–256. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII, 1919.
- Green, Andre. *Life Narcissism Death Narcissism*. London – New York: Free Association Books, 2001.
- Lacan, Jacques. *L'Envers de la psychanalyse*. Paris: Seuil, 1991.
- Kohut, Heiny. *The analysis of the self*. New York: International Universities Press, 1991.
- Stein, Ruth. *For Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism*. Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics, Stanford University Press, 2009.

⁸ This kind of (predominantly) narcissistic arrangement can produce a special kind of ideological formation that can parasitically live in the body of the Ecclesiological traditions and doctrines. Christological status of the bishop and analogous axiological status of the elder easily can sink in the realm of pathologically motivated (alienated) power. Followers and admirers (being supposed believers) can enjoy in their *mirroring reflections* received *from the topos of the Other* (bishop, elder). In reverse, there is a process of *mirroring* between bishop (or elder) that happens in the (fragmented) collective face of the group.

ПСИХОДИНАМИКА РАДИКАЛИЗОВАНЕ ВЕРЕ

ПЕТАР ЈЕВРЕМОВИЋ
Универзитет у Београду
Филозофски факултет
Београд
pjevremo@f.bg.ac.rs

Резиме: Бити радикализован у стварима вере имплицира апсолутно бити у поседу Божанског знања. Посреди је симптоматично огледање између таквог знања (псеудобожанског знања) и патолошког идеала моћи. Основни проблем је некроза очинске функције. Нема радикализма без (патолошке) харизме. Бити фундаменталиста у стварима вере имплицира превласт непрепознатог порива за успостављањем нарочитог односа са оцем. Тај (некротични) отац бива (у својем идеализованом виду) препознат у лику неког (патогеничног) харизматика вође. ► *Кључне речи:* радикализована вера, нарцизам, очинска функција, патологија групе.