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REVIEW — JESUS, TRAUMA & PSYCHOANALYTIC TECHNIQUE

By jointly reviewing Bruce Fink's *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique* together with Marcus Pound's *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, my aim is to ask what Lacanian psychoanalysis might teach us about religion. To set the stage, I offer a brief psychoanalytic reading of a passage from the Gospel of Mark.

## I. Overture

Curiously, in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is willfully secretive about being the messiah. He speaks in parables so that his audience "may see and not perceive . . . hear and not understand" (Mark 4.12). He miraculously heals a leper and then sternly warns him "to say nothing to anyone" (1.44). He orders unclean spirits to be silent about his identity (3.11-12). And even Jesus' own family, bewildered at his actions, think "he has gone out of his mind" (3.21).

Especially of note, though, are the events surrounding Peter's identification of Jesus as the messiah. On the road to Caesarea Philippi, Jesus questions his disciples: 'Who do people say that I am?' They in turn respond with the local, speculative laundry list — John the Baptist, Elijah, or some other of the prophets — that says more about the speculators than it does about Jesus. Jesus then asks: "'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And Jesus sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him" (8.29-30).

Jesus' response to this bold confession is bluntly anti-climactic. He neither accepts nor rejects Peter's identification. Rather, he silences it. In short order, the reasons for Jesus' reticence become apparent: Peter's answer may be technically correct, but the logic that animates it remains damningly human (cf. 8.33). Jesus is not the messiah Peter imagines him to be.

Avoiding Peter's nomination, Jesus instead responds by referring to himself as "the son of man" and begins to teach the disciples that he must "suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (8.31). This description is so deeply at odds with his image of the messiah that Peter immediately pulls Jesus aside and

begins to rebuke him. Peter will have none of it: Jesus' oracle disavows rather than fulfills the messianic dream of triumph, glory, and satisfaction invested in him by Peter's identification.

Jesus, in turn, rebukes Peter. Peter may have uttered the truth about Jesus, but he has no right to presume any mastery of that confession's meaning. Systematically, Jesus upends messianic expectations: "If someone desires to follow after me, let them deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow me" (8.34). Jesus, as the messiah, has not come to confirm us, fulfill our fantasies, or normalize our inadequacies. Instead, he comes to provoke desire, induce self-denial, and incite a reassessment of the crosses that we bear. In refusing us the balm that an easy identification with his divinity might provide, Jesus offers instead the difficulty of something real. Rather than mirroring Peter's self-congratulation, Jesus plainly prophesies what that mirror image is meant to hide: the imminence of suffering, rejection, and death.

However, in doing so, Jesus means to turn the tables on death. "Those who want to save their lives will lose them, and those who lose their lives for my sake and for the sake of the good news, will save them. What does it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their own lives?" (8.35-36) Jesus is not going to play the game. He's not going to abide by the rules of everyday discourse. He's not going to project or confirm any images of wholeness or sufficiency. Rather, his intention is to lose what is found and find what is lost. When identified, he'll sidestep the identification. When speaking, he'll speak in such a way as to provoke misunderstanding. When spoken to, he'll show the speaker what they didn't mean to say. Throughout, Jesus' aim is to shift the register of discourse away from "human things," from the shelter of images that invite only rivalry or identification, and toward the defenseless divinity of the real (8.33).

Eluding facile reciprocity, Jesus gives us to hear precisely what everyday discourse means to silence: alienation, suffering, and death. But, in salvific disequilibrium, he means for alienation, suffering, and death to be heard otherwise than we fear. He means for us to hear them as openness, grace, and life itself.

## II. The Fundamentals of Technique

Lacanian psychoanalysis resonates with and separates out a certain kind of religious discourse. It induces this difference because its theoretical categories and clinical methodologies pose a definitive question about the relation of any religious discourse to the desire that animates it. Lacan's work forces the question: is a given religious discourse a reactionary defense against the real or does it tend toward an exposure of it? In brief, is a given discourse oriented by the imaginary or the symbolic?

Classically, the psychoanalytic line on religion has been numbly consistent. Religion is taken with little equivocation as an obvious example of how to avoid the "real" through an imaginative fabrication of unity and sufficiency. God, the

religious equivalent of an infinitely applicable band-aid, comes to save the ego from an endless variety of fragmentations and impending dissolutions. However, as accurate as this assessment may generally be (and we ought to be very careful in cavalierly dismissing the importance of such palliatives and band-aids), it is not difficult to see – especially in light of the *efficacy* of the psychoanalytic critique – that something essentially religious remains unaccounted for and, more importantly, that this something persists precisely because it wanders free among the very concepts and practices that psychoanalysis has reserved for itself.

The contours of this shared religious/psychoanalytic space come into sharper focus when the clinical rather than theoretical dimensions of Lacan's work are emphasized. Here, Bruce Fink's substantial and accessible explications of Lacanian practice are invaluable. While Fink's *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis*[1] is without peer in providing the necessary background, his recently published *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique: A Lacanian Approach for Practitioners* is similarly useful. Though *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique* lacks the theoretical heft of either *A Clinical Introduction* or Fink's *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*,[2] its more practical and popular aims have their own virtues. Fink explicitly casts the new book as intended for clinicians who may have little or no prior acquaintance with Lacan and devotes it to "elementary technique" rather than "long theoretical explanations."[3] Though the losses incurred by such foreshortening are predictable, the lightness of Fink's theoretical touch nonetheless produces the welcome effect of clearing a practical path directly into the heart of Lacan's work. In short, Fink's descriptions of the aims and techniques of actual Lacanian practice go a long way toward showing why one might care about Lacan (despite his famed inaccessibility) in the first place. In itself, this effect is no small accomplishment.

Fink organizes his treatment of the most common psychoanalytic techniques[4] around the difference between two ways of hearing: one way of hearing attends to the imaginary dimension of what is said, the other gives itself to the symbolic dimensions of those same statements. All discourse is intelligible in either of these registers. Where the imaginary mode settles meanings into predictable and univocal patterns, the symbolic mode of listening proliferates meanings, calls the imaginary into question, and opens onto the real. Though the give and take of everyday discourse occurs primarily in the imaginary register, the aim of the psychoanalyst is to confront the patient (or analysand) with the symbolic dimensions of what typically goes unheard in their own discourse.

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[1] Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[2] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[3] Bruce Fink, *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique: A Lacanian Approach for Practitioners* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), ix.

[4] It should be noted that my discussion of psychoanalytic techniques, like Fink's, deals almost exclusively with those that are appropriate to the treatment of neurosis.

To facilitate this, analysts must themselves learn to listen in a way that is not simply reflexive. They must learn to see something other than their own image in what the analysand says in order to point out or punctuate this same something "other" for the analysand. As Fink explains:

> Our usual way of listening is highly narcissistic and self-centered, for in it we relate everything other people tell us to ourselves. We compare ourselves to them, we assess whether we have had better or worse experiences than they have, and we evaluate how their stories reflect upon us and their relationship with us, whether good or bad, loving or hateful. This, in a word, is what Lacan refers to as the *imaginary* dimension of experience. The analyst as listener is constantly comparing and contrasting the other with herself and constantly sizing up the other's discourse in terms of the kind of *image* it reflects back to her.[5]

Most discursive exchanges are dominated by this imaginary dimension. Everyday discourse largely consists of mutually oblique feedback loops structured dyadically by identification or rivalry in which participants primarily register only their own concerns. Further, Fink argues, this short-circuiting of intersubjectivity by the imaginary extends even (and, perhaps, *especially*) to moments of "empathy" and "understanding" where we identify the feelings or experiences of the other person with our own. Thus, he claims, therapies that are guided by this kind of imaginative "empathy" and "understanding" are, ironically, much more likely to be about the analyst's self-image than the analysand's symptoms because, "at the imaginary level, the analyst's own personality takes center stage."[6]

The aim of analysis, then, is not to reshape the analysand in the image of the analyst. Nor is it to break-through the recursive mirror play that characterizes our relationships in order to facilitate an "objective" perspective or an "authentic" connection with other people. In this context, "objectivity" and "authenticity" are nearly always imaginary lures.

Rather, by attending to the symbolic dimensions of the analysand's discourse, the aim of the analyst is to draw attention to those formal features of language (puns, metaphors, conflations, mispronunciations, etc.) that mean more than the analysand apparently intended. By persistently foregrounding the ubiquity of the formal or symbolic excess of the analysand's discourse (i.e., the signifier's freedom to produce meaning far beyond the scope of any intended signification) the analyst aims to induce in the analysand a new relation to the images or fantasies that order their experience of the world.

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[5] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 4.
[6] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 188.

The induction of this new relation is broadly therapeutic. As noted, the imaginary is problematic insofar as it attempts to fabricate, through exclusion, a misleading sense of closure, unity, and wholeness. On Fink's account, an analysand's choice to enter analysis is often prompted by a negative experience of this imaginary "unity" as a stifling limitation or oppressive compulsion. As a result, "the analyst's concern is to emphasize the partiality of the image – in other words, the degree to which the image includes only a part of [the analysand]."[7]

Those thoughts, dispositions, and desires unaccounted for or actively excluded by the ego's image (i.e., those thoughts, dispositions, and desires that are "repressed" by the ego's sense of who it is or what it ought to be) can be illuminated by the analytic work of drawing attention to the symbolic excesses of the analysand's own discourse. Progress is made in analysis when the excess of an analysand's verbal equivocation connects with and articulates the excess that is "repressed" or excluded by the imaginary.

It is the analyst's job to listen for and then draw attention to these unconscious verbal equivocations. Primarily, the analyst draws attention to the symbolic dimensions of an analysand's discourse with techniques of "punctuation:" "The analyst's task is to provide a slightly different punctuation, a punctuation that brings out meanings in the 'text' of the analysand's speech that had not been visible before."[8] An analyst might punctuate an analysand's statements through a simple but well-timed "hmm," through the reiteration of key words or phrases with an alteration of emphasis that draws out the formal ambiguities of the construction, or, more emphatically, through the technique of "scansion" in which an analyst abruptly ends a session, "effectively placing a period, exclamation mark, or question mark not just at the end of a sentence or at the end of a paragraph, but rather at the end of a section or chapter of text."[9] Each of these methods of punctuation are "explicitly designed to shake-up, call into question, or deconstruct a neurotic analysand's self-conception."[10]

These interpretive punctuations hit the mark when they connect with an analysand's "symptoms." "Symptoms," Fink explains, "represent the return of the repressed"[11] and they arise wherever an analysand represses the threat of something foreign or disruptive. Here, symptoms should be understood as any repetitive way of dealing with the nagging persistence of what exceeds the ego's short grasp. Essentially, a symptom is an iterated stance adopted by the analysand to deal with the excess of what is "other," whether this "other" is a threatening object, another person, or some kind of internalized yet foreign desire. In this sense, an ego is nothing but a crystallized collection of symptoms, an image of coherence produced by a person's more or less coordinated set of

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[7] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 81.

[8] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 37.

[9] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 49.

[10] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 53.

[11] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 15.

symbolic strategies for dealing with both the external and internal excesses of their world.

The analytic process draws out what has been repressed by more starkly defining the contours of an analysand's symptoms. Rather than presenting and defending a self-image and thereby engaging analysands at the level of the imaginary, analysts attempt to situate themselves primarily in the symbolic register by presenting an image that is elusive and enigmatic. They attempt to present themselves "more as a blank screen or 'mirror' than most other people in [the analysand's] life do, which presumably allows him to project and repeat more aspects of relationships and situations from the past with [the analyst] than he is able to do with colleagues, friends, and lovers."[12] By providing an occasion for the analysand to repeat in condensed fashion crucial aspects of their relationships with family, friends, colleagues, etc., the analyst is able to identify the basic coordinates of these iterated stances (or symptoms) and systematically call into question their partiality.

As Fink indicates, Freud famously defined this analytic process of repetition as "transference." According to Freud, transference names that process where "a whole series of psychological experiences are revived, not as belonging to the past, but as applying to the person of the physician at the present moment."[13] In the course of analysis, the analysand will assign the analyst to any number of "preexisting positions" in their psychical economy, identifying the analyst as a friend, enemy, colleague, parental figure, potential lover, etc. The assignment of the analyst to these preexisting positions corresponds in the analysand to the variety of iterated stances or symptoms the analysand has adopted over time for the sake of dealing with the repressed excess of the other.[14] (Further, as is well known, Freud classically identified the most important of these repetitive stances with those that are originally and Oedipally shaped by our relationship to our parents.) Thus, in transference, the analysand "transfers" a series of positive and/or negative reactions into their relationship with the analyst (depending on the symbolic structure of the symptom) to which the analyst's assigned position then correlates. Essentially, the analysand assigns the analyst a role and in response to this assigned role the analysand then plays out their own designated part.

It is in the interpretation of this transference that the unconscious, symbolic dimensions of the analysand's discourse are put to work for the sake of truth. In relation to analysis, the term "truth" has a very precise meaning. Here, Fink argues, truth "is not so much a property of statements as it is a relationship to the real."[15] Fundamentally, the "real" is simply the unsymbolized. The real is both what the univocity of the imaginary excludes and what the equivocation of the symbolic suggests. As a relationship to this real, truth occurs when a new

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[12] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 135.
[13] Quoted in *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 126.
[14] See *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 148.
[15] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 77.

relationship is produced for the analysand between what has been repressed and what has gone unheard in their own speech.

*Truth, as experienced by the analysand in the analytic context, has to do with what remains to be said, with what has not yet been said*. What has already been said often seems empty, whereas what is being said now, for the first time, is what has the potential to shake things up, is what feel important, truthful. To the analysand, *the truth is always elsewhere*: in front of him, yet to be found. Insofar as it concerns "what remains to be said," truth in psychoanalysis has to do with the experience of symbolizing what has never before been put into words. With Lacan, I refer to "what has never before been put into words" as "the real."[16]

A psychoanalytic interpretation is true when, noting the position of an analysand's symptoms, it "hits" the unsaid real and makes a connection between the previously unheard excess of what the analysand had already been saying and that repressed excess that the analysand's image excludes. Analysis is "true" when the analysand sees the truth of what they had unintentionally said. The production of this new connection with the real has the potential, depending on the situation, to either subtly or dramatically reorganize the symbolic coordinates that pattern an analysand's relational dispositions. In other words, hitting the real can reorganize an analysand's symptoms.

In the end, the work of producing this "truth" must be performed by the analysand and can only be facilitated the analyst. The analyst, as Socratic midwife, simply aims to induce in the analysand the birth of a truth by prompting a connection, however partial, between the real and the symbolic. Indeed, the only power at the disposal of psychoanalysis is this power of speech to distract our preoccupation with the imaginary and connect the real with the symbolic. The "talking cure" must be a "*talking* cure" because its efficacy rests in its ability to get the analysand to shift discursive registers and hear the unintended truths that their symptoms have been pronouncing. Fink continues:

It is in the impact that speech is able to have on the real that lies the power of psychoanalysis. Left to its own devices, the real does not change over time; like a traumatic war experience, it persists, insistently returning in nightmares or even waking life . . .. It is only by symbolizing it in words – and in many cases it must be articulated a number of times in different ways – that one can begin to shift positions with respect to it.[17]

The real, unassimilated by the diachronic narrative that unfolds in our daily interactions, desires, and fantasies, has a kind of eternal or synchronic power of persistence. Unspoken, it continues, out of time, to unconsciously shape our relationships and prompt the repetition of our symptoms as we avoid it.

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[16] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 76.
[17] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 77.

Lacanian psychoanalysis hypothesizes that there is typically an underlying pattern that organizes, in general, our symptoms or fantasies and that this underlying pattern "defines the subject's most basic relation to the Other."[18] This underlying pattern is called a "fundamental fantasy." Fink's description of what constitutes a fundamental fantasy is particularly clear:

Neurotics each have a fundamental fantasy that organizes their relation with others and with the world in general. While we each have many different conscious fantasies, the majority of them can be seen to follow a similar scenario in which we cast ourselves in a particular role, as a victim of other's punitive passions, as an object desired by or used by others, as a user of other people, or as a hero who saves victims, for example. Our individual fundamental fantasy colors the way we see the world and interact with it, leading us to create and recreate the same kind of scenario, the same kind of relationship with others again and again.[19]

The work of analysis draws to a conclusion when a sufficient number of new connections have been made for the analysand to be fundamentally resituated in relation to the real. This shift in relation to the real allows new kinds of relationships and interactions to unfold between the analysand, the analysand's own desires, and other people.

It is important to remember, though, that this kind of analysis does not end when the patient is judged by the analyst to finally be whole, healthy, or normal. To judge the outcome of an analysis in these terms would amount to re-immersing the analysand in the imaginary. Rather, the transformation of an analysand's fundamental fantasy involves a basic acknowledgement of their *essential* incompletion. Traversing a fundamental fantasy involves a shift in the analysand's relation to the desires that de-complete them: rather than simply attempting to satisfy their desires once and for all through the fulfillment of specific demands, the analysand comes to take desire itself as something to be claimed and desired. Or, rather than simply fabricating an imaginary wholeness, the analysand comes to confess the imaginary for the image that it is. In this sense, the aim of analysis is not to eliminate all of an analysand's symptoms but to reorganize them in such a way as to include their partiality as a feature that the system itself takes into account.

### III. Divine Trauma

Thus far, I have only obliquely indicated the connection between Lacanian psychoanalysis and certain kinds of religious discourse. Mark's exemplary description of Jesus as a willfully secret messiah and Bruce Fink's elaboration of psychoanalytic techniques have only been roughly juxtaposed. Fortunately, much of the work needed to explicitly thread them together has already been done by Marcus Pound's new book, *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*.

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[18] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 123.
[19] *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique*, 227.

Pound's work is much needed in light of the interest that Slavoj Žižek's engagement with Christian thinking has generated over the past few years and his book offers a clear, concise, and well-documented argument that, in order to appreciate the significance of the space shared by religion and psychoanalysis, it is important to read Lacan in light of Kierkegaard. Pound's position is that Lacan's often facile critique of religion as a neurotic defense against the real obscures the substantial debt owed by psychoanalytic practices to Christian theology. A reconsideration of Kierkegaard's treatment of faith, anxiety, and repetition draws out both the direct and indirect genealogical debts of Lacan's project. Pound argues that "where Lacan takes religion as a knee-jerk reaction to semiotic uncertainty and the ensuing anxiety, Kierkegaard takes Christianity as the only means by which one can be truly uncertain."[20] In short, "Kierkegaard's aims and methods are commensurate with Lacanian analysis inasmuch as both employ an indirect approach to the subject aimed at cultivating the subjective appropriation of truth."[21] As a result, in order to adequately address religion, psychoanalytic thought must take into account the way that many religious practices are self-consciously designed to break with the imaginary and generate the anxiety that accompanies contact with the real. Here, Pound holds, "Christ's traumatic intervention is the paradigm of the analytic intervention."[22]

Pound squares Lacan with Kierkegaard on two fronts: (1) he aligns Lacan's triumvirate of basic theoretical categories (the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real) with Kierkegaard's own conceptual trinity (the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious), and (2) he reads clinical psychoanalysis as a secular version of the classically Christian practice of typological repetition.

The first set of alignments is straightforward and the fit is relatively convincing. Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage is dominated by the play of passions, the dyadic mirroring of rivalry or identification, and the expression of desire in terms of specific demands in need of satisfaction. The milieu of the aesthete is the imaginary. The ethical corresponds to Lacan's symbolic in that both involve the primacy of law and language, the triangulation of relationships, and the rule of "universal" judgments. Finally, as Pound puts it, "the religious stage corresponds directly to the real, because in the religious sphere one identifies with the exception that grounds the rule; i.e., that which is ceded as condition of entry into the symbolic; the constitutive exception of the law."[23]

Here, however, it is Pound's reading of psychoanalytic practice as an attempt to induce a kind of typological repetition that is of particular interest. With an eye on Kierkegaard's notion of repetition, Pound describes Lacan's conception of the symptom in compatible terms. Symptoms, as we've already seen, are a repetition of past events or relationships. They circle back to and repeat in the present

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[20] Marcus Pound, *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma* (SCM Press: London, 2007), 94.
[21] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 154.
[22] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 142.
[23] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 104.

moment a previously adopted stance meant to stave off some traumatic excess. The structure of a symptom is such that, in its repetition, it often "sheds new light on a past event, illuminating meaning in different ways."[24] Or, even better, Pound describes the symptom's iteration as what "articulates the trauma through a difference."[25] Symptoms are the key to psychoanalytic treatment because they produce both similarity and difference: they repeat the same defensive stance again and again *but* they do so each time in a different context with different players. Through punctuation and interpretation, the analyst works to bring forward the excess of this difference already present in the analysand's iterated symptom and, thus, effect a connection with the real around which the symptom has been circling. Summarizing this point, Pound concludes: Just as a symptom is structured through repetition, so is the cure. Through analysis one challenges past meaning with a view to releasing one for action in the present. Indeed, the goal of analysis is for the analysand to repeat himself on the basis of a difference, that is, to act in a manner that is not circumscribed by his neurosis or a particular pattern of behavior.[26]

This freedom to act in a manner not circumscribed in advance by one's symptoms marks a shift in the structure of an analysand's fantasies and a transformation of their relation to the meaning of past events. In this way, analysis is fundamentally the work of "challenging the assumption that the past is irretrievably behind us."[27]

In a Christian context, repeating the past with a difference is called typology. According to Paul, for instance, Christ comes as a salvific anti-type who repeats with a difference the structure and meaning of Adam's originally traumatic dependence on God (see Romans 5.12-21). Taking this example as a pattern, typology comes to serve in general as "the basis for a Christian understanding of the relation between the Old Testament and the New Testament: the Old Testament is retroactively reconfigured by the presence of Christ."[28]

However, Pound's treatment of typology in the context of psychoanalytic therapy is especially productive because it clarifies the function of types: rather than being a hermeneutic parlor trick performed for the benefit of the faithful, types are fundamentally mechanisms for effecting salvific change. A retroactive reconfiguration of the past that frees an individual from the tyranny of their symptoms and shifts their relation to the real by repeating the past with a difference *is* an experience of grace and repentance.

Further, typology offers itself as a particularly appealing model of grace because it takes seriously the immanence and materiality of history. As Pound emphasizes, typological readings are *not* allegories: "Typology is distinct from

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[24] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 63.
[25] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 64.
[26] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 64.
[27] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 143.
[28] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 64.

allegory in that the historical significance of the narrative is not overlooked in favour of a spiritual or eternal truth."[29] In typology, both type and antitype are specific, concrete historical events. Salvation is not effected through the subsumption of a past event by a general and transcendent spiritual truth. Rather, our symptomatic relation to past events can be transformed only through the intervention of another concrete event. This new event may set in motion a systematic reordering of history, but such a reconfiguration works to produce a typological salvation *of* history rather than a kind of vaguely spiritual salvation *from* history.

In other words, as in analysis, a typological conception of grace does not save us from the uncertainty of our temporality or the anxiety of our perpetual incompletion; rather it relates us to this incompletion in a novel way that counts its own temporality as *essential* to life and freedom. A reordering of the symbolic coordinates, that structure our relation to the real, allows for a reevaluation of our lack of unity and completion. From this new position, "anxiety ceases to be a category of despair, taking instead the form of grace."[30]

Pound's book culminates with a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Eucharist. In the end, Pound says, "the wager of this work is that if the Church is to communicate the mystery of transubstantiation within our cultural milieu, then psychoanalysis, and in particular Jacques Lacan's postmodern variation, provides the most coherent language."[31] In the context of the Sacred Mass, God functions as an "arch-analyst" whose "love for man leads him to fashion an indirect yet incisive intervention into time through the work of Christ."[32] In what sense does the Eucharist figure a kind of psychoanalytic intervention? In the course of a Mass, the narcissism of the participants' imaginary identifications are called into question as a connection is forged between the symbol of the bread and the traumatic real of Christ's inassimilable body. Here, "Christ's repeated intervention in the Sacred Mass may be seen in terms of analytic intervention, and hence the Sacred Mass may be seen in terms of a social form of analysis."[33]

This last parallel, however, seems to function more by way of rough analogy than strict homology. The theoretical similarities between psychoanalytic techniques and a Christian understanding of typology are relatively tight and specific, but Pound's attempt to map – at a practical level – the experience of an individual analysis onto the shared experience of the Eucharist necessarily calls for a more creative fit.

As Fink's book makes clear, *the efficacy of analysis is grounded almost entirely in the sustained specificity of an individual's interaction with an analyst* whose entire aim is to position themselves in such a way as to incite a systematic reconfiguration of

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[29] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 65.
[30] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 75.
[31] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, xiii.
[32] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 141.
[33] *Theology, Psychoanalysis, Trauma*, 142.

their symptoms. Something analogous might take place in a Mass, but it is questionable whether or not anything like "a social form of analysis" could be individually efficacious and it is even more suspect that the power of the experience would derive from a participant who is left more or less to the work of *self-analysis* in the absence of a concrete interlocutor capable of pressing them *on the details* of their symptoms and transferences.

Most importantly, the analogy seems to fail in this respect: the beating heart of psychoanalytic practice is its demand that the analysand *speak*. To what extent would a "talking cure" remain essentially psychoanalytic if it did not require the analysand to talk, and this in immense detail and at great length? In the context of the Eucharist, however, there is no such occasion for speech.[34] If one were to look for something more specifically like a psychoanalytic practice in the context of Christian worship, it may be more readily identifiable in the difficult and detailed work of being confronted by what exceeds us in performatively reading (and even writing) sacred texts.

## IV. Conclusion

Nonetheless, Pound's work makes a convincing case for what I take to be the central issue: that there exists a theoretical – and, perhaps, practical – space that is shared by a certain kind of religious discourse and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The mapping of this space is productive in that it (1) situates the aims and practices of psychoanalysis within the broader context of our common traditions while (2) simultaneously illuminating the extent to which the psychoanalytic critique of religion does (and does not) hit the mark. However, it is in this latter respect that mapping their overlay can be of the greatest practical use. The ability of psychoanalytic theory to separate out a certain kind of religious discourse whose aim is to expose us to the real may prove extremely valuable in a broad assessment of which religious practices should be cultivated and which should be left aside.

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[34] A final note: if, as I mentioned in an earlier footnote, most everything discussed here in terms of Lacanian technique applies primarily to the treatment of neurotics, then what of everyone else? Granted, most people may fit the category of neurosis, but in what sense might religious practices (or, say, the Eucharist in particular) induce the intervention of grace for psychotics? This is not a problem peculiar to Pound's work but marks, instead, a problem of broad importance that will eventually need to be addressed by anyone attempting to think about religious practices in psychoanalytic terms.