

Parker, I. (2019) 'Foreword', in Parker, I. and Siddiqui, S. (eds) (2019) *Islamic Psychoanalysis and Psychoanalytic Islam: Cultural and Clinical Dialogues*. London and New York: Routledge. [ISBN: 9780367086749], <https://www.routledge.com/Islamic-Psychoanalysis-and-Psychoanalytic-Islam-Cultural-and-Clinical-Dialogues/Parker-Siddiqui/p/book/9780367086749>

## **FOREWORD**

**Ian Parker**

This book emerges from an international conference 'Islamic Psychoanalysis / Psychoanalytic Islam' which was organised by the College of Psychoanalysts in the UK, which is a professional body open to different traditions in psychoanalysis. We were fortunate to have the support of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Arts and Languages at the University of Manchester and Manchester Psychoanalytic Matrix. There were speakers and participants from Brazil, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Turkey, USA and UK. The idea for the conference sprung from a conversation with a psychoanalyst who visited us from Brazil last year, João Gabriel Lima da Silva. João was working on the impact of Christianity on psychoanalysis in Brazil. This is a particular cultural context in which psychoanalysis is very widespread and in which leading psychoanalysts have often come from ecclesiastical backgrounds, to the point where it has been claimed that youngest sons of the middle classes now go into training as psychoanalysts instead of as priests. It prompted a thought about the way that culture frames psychoanalysis, including the way that certain psychoanalytic ideas themselves become thinkable. João pointed out that Christian themes in some forms of psychoanalysis are powerful but go unnoticed by many practitioners.

That would seem to require us to make those connections explicit so that we could interrogate them, perhaps in a project called 'Christian Psychoanalysis / Psychoanalytic Christianity'. But we wanted to do something more radical than that. There have already been explorations of the link between Christianity and psychoanalysis, some of them concerning the question of adaptation, adaptation of psychoanalysis to society, beginning with Sigmund Freud's own attempt to make psychoanalysis more acceptable to his host culture by nominating the son of a Christian pastor, Carl Jung, as first President of the International Psychoanalytical Association. Jungians as well as Freudians have since tried to disentangle themselves from the consequences of that, including the complicity of Jung with antisemitism. As we know, Jung was willing to become President of the International General Medical Society of Psychotherapy under the control of the Nazis in 1933 (Sorge, 2012), while Freud's books were burnt and his work condemned as being a 'Jewish science'.

If we just track back for a moment we can see a number of questions embedded in that claim that psychoanalysis is a 'Jewish science', including the attempts to reclaim Freud as someone grounded in a particular marginalised sub-culture, as a Jew in what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Now, it does seem problematic to reduce psychoanalysis, whether that is done by its friends or its enemies, to a particular kind of culture. Freud himself was a secular Jew, and even his later writings on Moses and monotheism refused a religious narrative, they rather look designed to provoke Jews as well as gentiles. And, despite his tactical endorsement of Jung, he held true to psychoanalysis as a critique of every culture, including the way that overly rationalist versions of the Western Enlightenment were being installed in Europe. That critique of rationality was to be crucial to the work of the psychoanalytic social theorists of the Frankfurt School, of course.

A Japanese psychoanalyst commenting on the supposed colonial role of psychoanalysis in the East once asked whether it was really indeed the case that Freud was European. What he was getting at was Freud's place as, we could say to use a Scottish term, 'outwith' culture, both of the dominant Christian culture of the time and of his own Jewish culture. And this Japanese analyst was also getting at the status of psychoanalysis not as part of a culture, but as 'liminal' to it, simultaneously part of it and as reflexively critical of it, both in it and at a distance from it. We can see this liminal status of psychoanalysis in Japan where some analysts are part of the very marginal Christian sub-culture there, and are able to use that position to reflect on dominant cultural assumptions about childcare, dependency and the development of the self. And we can see it in the work of analysts who forge a link between Freud's ideas and Japanese Buddhism, using that link to open up contradictions between commonsense Buddhism and a deeper reading of it as a metaphysical frame to grasp the evanescence of subjectivity.

If we take the buried, hidden nature of culture inside different contradictory forms of psychoanalysis around the world seriously, and if we treat psychoanalysis as such as something that is never actually psychoanalysis 'as such' but is always necessarily internally divided, then that gives a different vantage point on the relationship between religion, any religion, and psychoanalytic theory and psychoanalytic practice. It means that we tell the story, well, stories of the emergence and development of psychoanalysis in a different way, and it means that we see other possible combinations of psychoanalysis with other cultural forms in a different light. So, even as we elaborate a narrative about the entanglement of psychoanalysis with culture, we have to bear in mind those complications. Take this narrative, for example, as one that we came up with, with João's help, to frame this research project.

The unconscious was invented by Freud at a particular cultural-historical moment, was produced by and so then able all the more effectively to key into and unlock the way that the self was constructed in the nuclear family. Elements of the theory of subjectivity that Freud patched together, and patched together differently in different writings, drew on

Judaism, not deliberately but as a function of his engagement as an outsider with the Christian culture around him and around his family and sub-cultural networks. And that meant that there was indeed something 'Jewish' about this science of subjectivity and clinical practice that was able to function, not a prescription for how individuals should be but as a critical description which aimed at transformation of who they could be. I am summarising and condensing a range of reflections on the early nature of the psychoanalytic movement as possibly, in some way, rooted in the position of the Jews who comprised it. Notice here also the political stakes of Freudian theory and practice. It does not confirm but subverts taken-for-granted forms of life. In that sense the Nazis were right to see it as a threat to order, as a threat to the capitalist order they were dedicated to save from 'Jewish Bolshevism' or 'Judeo-Bolshevism', their specific formulation to describe the enemy.

Psychoanalysis did then break into mainstream culture in the West, through sensationalist mistranslations of Freud's work into English, through the arrival in the United States, and other parts of the world, of psychoanalysts, many of them Jewish, fleeing Nazism, and through the popularisation of themes of the ego and the id and dreams and the unconscious through literature and film which was suited to its more surrealist aspects. And, paradoxically, at the very moment that Christian culture was become secularised, psychoanalysis as a secular practice had to adapt itself to that culture. That adaption to US culture, which then became one of the transmission belts for the popularisation of psychoanalysis throughout much of the rest of the world, involved the suppression of many of Freud's colleagues' links with the political left, what was referred to as 'the repression of psychoanalysis'. What was accepted, though, was rendered acceptable and tailored to a culture that was still by default Christian.

Some forms of psychoanalysis fared better than others, and one complaint levelled against Jacques Lacan in France, who became popular in a culture that was ostensibly secular but still suffused with Christian imagery and institutions, was that he Christianised psychoanalysis. Then we come in a loop back to where I started, for it was that Lacanian psychoanalysis that pitted itself against the predominantly Jewish International Psychoanalytical Association and that arrived in Brazil to become so influential there. Of course, things play out differently in other parts of the world, and that's where the suspicion that psychoanalysis is part of a colonial and then postcolonial globalisation of Western culture takes root. Whether or not Freud himself was or was not really European, and whether or not psychoanalysts endorsed either the ideological compromise formation sometimes named as 'Judeo-Christian' culture, which is actually one in which Judaism is explicitly or implicitly assumed to have been superseded by Christianity, or the tradition of the Western Enlightenment that likes to pretend that it has transcended both Judaism and Christianity, is rather beside the point.

The point is that psychoanalysis is hosted by and carries with it a complex series of debates around these questions, a package structured by those oppositions, Western cultural

preoccupations. Then the standard mode of engagement with the rest of the world and with other cultures by psychoanalysis tends to be structured by, and work alongside, so-called 'transcultural psychiatry' or 'intercultural psychotherapy'. That is, when psychoanalysts reflect on the dangers of colonial imposition of their frame of reference as if it was a worldview, they often replace it with an attempt to translate their practice into the terms used in other cultures or respectfully accede to other frameworks. Incidentally, Freud himself never saw psychoanalysis as a worldview, but as closest to the worldview of science, which, given the role that scientific rationality has played in versions of the Western Enlightenment, does not solve but rather gives another twist to the problem. Coming back to the question of transcultural psychiatry or intercultural psychotherapy, this is precisely one of the reasons why we did not frame the title of this book in terms of psychoanalysis and Islam, as if the task was simply one of conjoining the two, respecting each and leaving both intact.

Instead, for all of the problems of recuperation, the neutralisation and absorption of versions of psychoanalysis by its host cultures – something I have stressed so far in my narrative about the development of psychoanalysis in relation to Judaism and Christianity – we first of all hold to the critically reflexive and even subversive nature of psychoanalysis. And, just as psychoanalysis worked because it was inside as well as outside its host cultures, our bet is that something more radical can be produced by active engagement now with Islam as something that operates adjacent to and against 'Judeo-Christian' culture and secular forms psychoanalysis, 'outwith' both. Just as Islamic science, the mathematics and medicine of the Islamic Golden Age, was crucial to the development of what we like to think of as 'Western' science, so we wager that asking what Islamic psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic Islam might look like forces a question not about others, the rest of the world, but about us.

I say 'us' advisedly. This conference took place in Britain in 2017 with international visitors to help us work on these questions at times of increased segregation of communities, of what we often refer to using the psychologised shorthand term 'Islamophobia'. When we discussed the idea for this conference in the College of Psychoanalysts there was some anxiety. Someone suggested that it might be provocative, and another suggested that we invite the police. We discussed, along the way, how this might be complemented by another conference which engaged with the neuropsychological turn and concern with evidence-based practice called 'Scientific Psychoanalysis / Psychoanalytic Science'. That too would serve to force a question through the compression of terms, to make visible connections that usually operate outside our immediate awareness, but operate nonetheless.

The conjunctions, compressions that we posed in the title of the conference and now this book are designed to avoid either the usual attempts to give psychoanalytic readings of Islam or to invite Islamic scholars to tell us what is wrong with psychoanalysis. Rather, the task is much more difficult, and perhaps it is impossible, and none the worse for being

impossible – remember that psychoanalysis is an impossible profession – to do at least two things. First, and there are political stakes to this, to welcome into psychoanalysis Islamic traditions and reflections on tradition, not as complementary but as intimately part of the project of psychoanalysis as a critical description and transformation of contemporary subjectivity. And, second, to ask whether the next historic wave of psychoanalytic work, after the first two waves of Jewish and Christian-inflected theory, will come from Islam as a growing cultural force.