



Gender of the Abrahamic God: A Psychoanalytical Perspective

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Abstract

Recent developments in the determination of natural grounds for nonbinary gender identities unavoidably lead to related religious fundamentals. In pagan, traditional paternalistic religion systems, the binarity of actors and objects is presumed by default. The same is true for Christianity, where the paternity of God is unequivocally postulated. Freud explains the emergence of the idea of God by the atonement of guilt for the "primary crime"—hypothetical murder of the forefather of primitive horde by his sons. In that concept of God, the "law of the father" is objectified for all traditionalist religious experiences of mankind. However, upon closer examination, the Old Testament concept of monotheism does not fit into the Freudian scheme since it opposes the very tradition by default. The radical opposition to pagan systems lies not so much in the singularity of Elohim but in his transcendent and therefore nonbinary nature. However, psychoanalysis presupposes only two primary mental instances—the instances of the Mother and the Father. There are no and cannot be any gender-neutral, nonbinary images, except as a product of the repressed incestuous desire. The gender neutrality of the Abrahamic God, expressed in his transcendence, has no other grounds than in the repression of the incestuous urges of the infante. Psychoanalytical review of the Fall defines God as the dominant Mother, who prevents the initiation and socialization of Adam-infant, while the instance of the initiating Father is represented by Tempter Serpent. We are dealing with the objectification of the mother's desire as a way of justifying the Subject's infantile narcissism.

Keywords: psychoanalysis, gender, nonbinary, Abrahamic, incestuous

1. Introduction

Continuous attempts to formulate conceptual proof and moral foundations for nonbinary gender identities or gender-neutral behavior—one way or another—have led to the analysis of religious fundamentals as the ultimate background for final verification. However, not all religious concepts show a unanimous approach to the matter. In traditionalism, which is essentially pagan and paternalistic by nature, the religious justification of human binarity has been set by default; the orthodox Abrahamic concept introduces the gender-free One God,

which, in turn, evokes ambiguity in the issue of freedom for the Subject in gender determination.

The major problem here might be expressed in two questions: First, to what extent is it possible to accept the nonbinarity of God, if ever? More importantly, how does the revealing of the hidden gender belongingness of God influence the same gender self-identification of the Subject and its desires? Is the gender of the ultimate instance determined by the unconsciousness of an author, and if so, why?

Discussions on the gender articulations of God in the Abrahamic system (Aslanov, 2023), as well as in modern society in general (Winter, 2019), are just unfolding. Even Christianity, where the paternity of God is unequivocally postulated, is currently undergoing revision of this issue (Holpuch, 2023).

Our research objectives are to identify the primary psychoanalytic grounds for gender articulation of God in the first books of the Old Testament and, based on the legacy of S. Freud, C-G. Jung, and J. Lacan, to discover the extent to which the very emergence of monotheism (i.e. a non-binary conception of God) is determined by psychological reasons and provides for individual egocentricity.

The key point focused on here is the reason for the creation of Adam “to His image and likeness” as a nonbinary being and the consequent Fall in light of basic Oedipal relations between the main actors in Eden: God, Adam with Eve and Serpent with the Tree. We analyze the issue from two points of view—the theological one, assuming Scripture to be the source of ultimate truth, and anthropocentrism, which postulates that Moses authored the text and that, therefore, human psychological attributes applied and represented in the description of the Fall.

2. God is not the Father

In classical psychoanalysis, the gender articulation of God is determined by the Oedipus complex and is necessarily derived from the sense of guilt for the crime committed. By the remorse and atonement of guilt for the "primary crime," Freud explains the emergence of a numinous feeling for all traditionalist religious experiences (Freud, 2018). This hypothetical murder of the forefather of the primitive horde by his sons later determines the gender of God, in which the "law of the father" is objectified.

Upon closer review, however, the Old Testament concept of monotheism does not fit into the Freudian paternalistic scheme because the very nature of the Abrahamic system opposes the whole experience and customs of paternalistic tradition by default. According to Freud, psychoanalytic studies show evidence that everyone creates God in the image of his own father, and the totem itself is nothing else but the image established in "longing for father" (Freud, 2018). If so, then who is the God of Moses, who commanded the Israelites to abandon the traditional social order of Pharaoh and instructed them to destroy the molten calf, i.e., paternal totem erected? Obviously, God is not the father by nature.

If we review the story of the Fall, it seems that the Oedipal plot was twisted around the Tree of Knowledge, with a tree being a symbol of the mother in traditionalist myths. Jung explains the symbol of the tree entwined with a snake as "a mother being protected from incest by the means of fear" (Jung, 2009, p.430). Furthermore, the prohibition of eating from the Tree of Knowledge may seem like a classic prohibition of incest imposed; then, God forbidding certain actions of Adam and Eve is the father here, playing his paternal social role.

However, at first glance, this obvious Oedipal picture contains significant inconsistencies. The point is that there is no need for any prohibition on incest since the first man is initially asexual,

which means that he cannot be afraid of castration, which the prohibition of incest is based upon. Since Adam has no sex and hence no fear of castration, there is no need for the father for this story to restrict contact with the Tree. Adam has been placed into Paradise, i.e., the inner world in possession of his mother, where every Subject finds protection—in Jung's words, "protection from the dangers that threaten his soul from darkness" (Jung, 2003).

3. Suppression of Incestuous Desire

We assume that the most radical opposition to paganism lies not in Elohim's jealousy but in his singular and transcendental and therefore nonbinary status. This status may never be adequate and applicable for traditionalism, where sacred actors engaged in anthropogenesis always represent binarity and where Oedipal relations are immanent.

In the theological paradigm, where the unconditional authenticity of the narrative of the first two chapters of Genesis is accepted unquestioningly, the gender identity of God is not articulated. The very Abrahamic version of anthropogenesis excludes gender from the outset. Initially, Adam was created by God "in His image and likeness" but acquired the male sex later. Moreover, there is no society in the garden of Eden, and thus, there are no gender roles to be adopted by Adam.

Psychoanalysis presupposes the existence of only two primary mental examples—the instance of the Mother and the instance of the Father. These instances are immanent to the psyche of the Subject, which means that real objects relevant to these instances may not exist at all. The Subject may objectify primary instances in created, phantasmic images. There are no and no gender-neutral, nonbinary images created, except as a product of the displacement and repression of desire. In addition, the desire in that case is incestuous.

The objectification of primary instances by the Subject is determined by the dynamics of his libido, which can be transgressive and object-oriented or regressive and incestuous and therefore narcissistic. In both directions, the dynamics of libido are determined by the incestuous desire to return to the primary object—the mother. In the first case, this dynamic leads to extraversive projection of the mother's instance onto an external, heterogamous object. In the second case, the dynamic is inversive, and the projection is narcissistic.

In the traditional, paternalistic paradigm, the path of libido regression is blocked by the instance of the father. The institution of initiation in traditional society is designed to help infants experience the danger of death without the presence or help of the mother's instance. As a result, the infant's libido becomes transgressive, aiming at or creating an external object of attraction (Jung, 2009). By that, the Oedipus complex is overcome, and the infant loses the womb of paradise and acquires his gender—socially conditioned sex.

Only the primary instance, which is the mother, is able to resist her infant's initiation – a) objectively (call it theological paradigm), by keeping the infant safe with her, as an object of the acquired resolution of penis envy; or b) subjectively, in the infant's own phantasmic projection (anthropocentric paradigm). In the last case, the infant, appealing to the mother's desire, creates an alibi for himself to avoid the danger of the father-castrator (initiation). Thus, we witness the infant replacing his own *incestuous* desire through manifestation of the concept of a single abstract object, the Compassionate and the Merciful absolute. This repression deprives the new object of any gender articulation and assigns it transcendental status. This is how we approach the question of the emergence of One God, deprived of gender attributes, which appeared to not be the God that Freud shaped out in his "Totem and taboo".

4. Substitution of Father's Law

In the theological paradigm, the psychoanalytic aspect of the Fall into sin reveals that God appeared to be the dominant mother who prevents Adam-infant from initiation and socialization. The instance of the initiating father appears in the image of the Tempter Serpent. However, from the perspective of anthropocentrism, we may conclude that the concept of a transcendent, out-of-gender God is invented by the Subject to justify his own infantile existence. Adam needs support to realize self-uniqueness—the mirror. The psychological significance of the creation of Eve as a "helper", paired but also asexual, lies in the manifestation of the vegetative, nonbinary, and therefore permanent incestuous existence of Adam in the womb—the Paradise. Initially, Eve was created to prevent Adam from becoming a man.

The hypothetical infant (the author of the Abrahamic narrative) excludes actual binarity for himself and replaces it with the ideal concept of an androgyne couple devoid of gender. The purpose is to ensure full protection by the maternal instance, which is incestuous. By that, the new "revolutionary" (Jemal, 2003), transcendental image of God is created to symbolize the infant's incestuous appropriation of maternal desire. The Old Testament narrative delivers the psychological concept of displacing the instance of the father (along with all traditional paternalism). From now on, the forbidding "Law of the Father" has been replaced here by merciful "Law of the Mother". Accordingly, the threatening ritual of initiation is also eliminated in the narrative about sacrificing Isaac on Mount Moriah, where the sacred victim (i.e., the firstborn who is to be initiated) was substituted by the lamb, which Lacan determined to be the "tribal totem" (Lacan, 2006). Isaac symbolically avoided the risk of initiation, the risk of being castrated. The "fear of castration" was also overcome by the rite of circumcision performed by Sephora over Hershon (New International Version Bible, 2011, Exodus 4:24-26).

These symbolic but hence psychologically significant replacements of the Father's law by the merciful "Mother's law" also exclude patriarchal sacrificial ethics to implement applied morality and consequently establish the relativity of punishment. Such a permissive law provides an alibi for any activity that the infant tends to perform. Here lies the explanation of the thesis put forward by Lacan: "If there is no god, then nothing is allowed at all" (Lacan, 2002, p. 184).

5. Conclusion

The gender neutrality of the Abrahamic God, expressed in his transcendent status, may have no other grounds but in the suppression of the incestuous urges of the infant. Psychoanalysis, applied to narratives of Genesis and Exodus, reveals the meaning of the unprecedented concept of God with hidden, repressed gender articulation. This God performs as the object of mother's instance in both paradigms: in the theological paradigm – as objectivizing protective desire of the "saving mother", and in the anthropocentric paradigm – as justification of narcissistic intentions of the infant. In both cases, the Oedipus complex is not solved, and psychological incest is committed since the object of the father has been repressed. The repression of the paternal instance results in the negation of the "law of the Father", along with the entire paternalistic tradition, declared pagan.

We observe the objectification of the mother's desire as a way of justifying the Subject's permanent incestuous narcissism. Adam, while in Heaven, is not in the outside world, where he needs his father as a protector against external forces; rather, he is in the safe womb. According to Jung, "The mother is not only the physical but also the psychic precondition of

the child" (Jung, 2007). Here, Adam successfully escapes from paternalistic threats and fear of castration.

The entire paradise mystery of Genesis has purely and exclusively psychic connotations, and Adam has no choice in perceiving God other than maternal authority. In the anthropocentric paradigm, Moses, as an author, secures human egocentric desires by providing an immortal reference and proof for them—One God, the maternal protection.

All of the above allows us to conclude that, despite the transcendental status of God, gender articulation is implicit and undeniable. In this way or another way, the Subject and other actors meet the corresponding gender roles of father and mother, regardless of which religious system they are framed by. Second, the gender of the Abrahamic God is maternal in nature and, more specifically, represents the desire of the mother for the infant to follow. In the anthropocentric paradigm, an infant unconsciously projects his own desire to appear as imposed by her mother-God.

This provides for behavioral freedom under the essential Abrahamic tradition and freedom in the gender determination of individuals. The ultimate ideal existence is referenced to paradise, the gender-free environment, and the denial of pagan tradition, which provides exemptions from any risky obligation to prove gender through initiation and to overcome the Oedipus complex.

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