God in History:Collapsing Divine and Human Agency in John Paul II's Memory and Identity

Natalie Smolenski

Abstract: The late John Paul II's theology of history involves some collapse of the agency of divine objects and of human beings. A close reading of his last book, Memory and Identity, shows that John Paul's divine objects are multiple and that he describes them most frequently using metaphors of close kinship, particularly parents and children. For this reason, it is useful to read his work with psychoanalytic theories of "self-objects," which are objects (primarily caregivers) used by small children to develop a sense of self. In addition, given the collective nature of John Paul's divine objects, I draw on anthropological theories about collective participation in imaginal phenomena to move the focus to the larger scale of the Polish nation-state. I show that the theologico-political claims in Memory and Identity reflect a troubling exclusivist grandiosity which must be addressed by Catholic thinkers interested in shaping the moral work of a global Church.

This measure, appointed to evil by divine goodness, became, through Christ, a share in human deeds, and especially in the deeds of Europe. Christ, then, cannot be separated from the deeds of mankind. I said the same thing during my first visit to Poland, in Warsaw, on Victory Square. I said then that Christ cannot be separated from the deeds of my nation. Can he be separated from the deeds of any nation? Can he be separated from the deeds of Europe? It is after all in Him that all the nations and all of humanity can cross the 'threshold of hope!'"
John Paul II, *Memory and Identity*[1]

Introduction

As John Paul's epigraph (above) shows, the late pope's theology of history involves some collapse of, or at least lack of distinction between, the agency of God and the agency of human beings. This line of thought, in which the human subject is to a certain extent indistinguishable from the divine object of her worship, is crucial for understanding John Paul's political theology. Yet, as a close reading of his last book, *Memory and Identity* (henceforth *Pamięć i Tożsamość*), shows, John Paul's divine objects are multiple, and the

ways human agency is collapsed with theirs is multiple as well. These divine/human objects are described most frequently using the metaphors of close kinship, particularly those of parents and children. For this reason, I have found it useful to think with psychoanalytic theories of "self-objects," which are objects (primarily caregivers, but also others) used by infants and children to develop identities throughout early life.

The idealization evident in John Paul's discussions of some of these objects, characterized by a splitting in which only good qualities can be associated with the "parentified" divine/human objects, points to the creative functions they serve in constituting and maintaining his own sense of self, particularly in the wake of significant traumas in his early life, including the loss of both parents and siblings. In addition, given the collective nature of John Paul's divine objects, I have drawn on anthropological theories about collective participation in imaginal phenomena to move the focus from the small interpersonal scale of psychoanalysis to the larger scale of a modern nation-state: that is, Poland. I show that collapsing subject/object boundaries in imaginal spaces, whether as part of explicitly-demarcated religio-magical practice or in other contexts in daily life, is not only extremely commonplace, but does reparative work in social contexts characterized by conflict and dislocation. In this sense, John Paul's intense investment in particular collective divine/human objects of veneration, and the nature of that investment, must be understood in the light of not only his personal history, but the history of 20 th century Poland and Europe more broadly.

The theme of loss permeates John Paul's young life. His mother passed away when he was nine years old; his only living sibling, an older brother, died three years later (his sister Olga had died before he was born). His father died during the War, when John Paul was twenty-one years old.[2] He recalls that his mother had the expectation that one of her sons would become a doctor and the other a priest—his older brother became a doctor. John Paul remembers that his love as a young man was literature, and that it was only after the death of his father that he really heard a calling to the priesthood. However, in the many years before that, he describes a profoundly religious childhood, work as an altar boy, meetings with bishops, and the intense mystical spirituality of his father, which deepened significantly after the death of his wife. John Paul remembers that people regularly commented to him that he ought to become or would make a good priest. His devotion to his parents and community is evident in his sensitive descriptions of human suffering during the War. His writings from the period reflect the profound connection he felt, particularly with the working classes, during his time as a laborer in a rock quarry and chemical factory under the Nazi occupation. Thus for John Paul, religion was not merely an idealistic commitment, but embodied the connections he felt with the entirety of his social world. When he emphasizes the presence of God in history, then, he is describing not just a theological stance but a lived experience. In other words, John Paul's desire to heal himself is deeply connected with his desire to heal a nation, continent, and ultimately world ravaged by war, state oppression, and vast economic inequality.

Yet John Paul's commitment to healing casts a long shadow. The theologico-political claims that his commitment maintains are both world-historical and highly circumscribed and reflect a troubling exclusivist grandiosity which, I would argue, must be seriously

addressed by contemporary Catholic thinkers interested in shaping the moral work of a global Church. By bringing psychoanalytic and anthropological theory to his theology of history, I am making my own contribution to that endeavor. I do not mean to suggest, of course, that John Paul's profound religious experience (or religious experience in general) is a simplistic outgrowth of trauma or kinship relations. Rather, it is heavily inflected by them in ways that are accessible, albeit preliminarily, to the methods of the social sciences.

In what follows, I first sketch out a few psychological and anthropological theories about the human experience of collapsed subject/object distinctions. Then I move to an outline of John Paul's historical theology in *Memory and Identity*. Finally, I discuss John Paul's contemplation of the historical relationship between God and human beings in Europe, and particularly in Poland, in light of the theories I have outlined.

Collapse of the Subject/Object Distinction: Psychoanalysis

The relationship between human subjects and the objects with which they interact and form relationships has been a longstanding concern of psychoanalysts and psychologists. In his landmark 1951 paper, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott made a seminal contribution to the object relations school of psychoanalysis.[3] In this paper, Winnicott argued that children undergo a stage of development which facilitates " the infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother[4] to a state of being in relation to the mother as something outside and separate" (14-15) . This period is characterized by the child's intensely affective relationships with transitional objects, which are both *extensions of* the infant and *not* the infant. The transitional object thus exists in an "intermediate area" which bridges human interiority and exteriority:

the third part of the life of a human being [in addition to inner and outer reality], a part that we cannot ignore, is an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated (Winnicott 2).

This "intermediate area" is characterized first and foremost by creativity (Winnicott calls the content of this creativity "illusion") which serves as a kind of "bridge" between subjectivity and objectivity and therefore is the basis of relationship:

The intermediate area to which I am referring is the area that is allowed to the infant between primary creativity and objective perception based on reality-testing . The transitional phenomena represent the early stages of the use of illusion, without which there is no meaning for the human being in the idea of a relationship with an object that is perceived by others as external to that being (Winnicott 11).[5]

The fact that the experiences located in the intermediate area are not challenged establishes an infant's trust in the reality of its *own* existence by way of its *own* experience. Thus, Winnicott shows that the reality of what is external to the subject can only be confirmed *after* the reality of the subject is established—and this can occur only at the hands of devoted caregivers who are adequately present to satisfy the infant's needs and desires—which find expression in this intermediate space. However, during the transitional stage, these "illusions" run up against the limits of subjects and objects existing outside the subject which constitutes them. Winnicott calls this "disillusionment," and he argues that it is crucial for validating reality at the stage of mother-infant separation. Winnicott writes, "exact adaptation resembles magic and the object that behaves perfectly becomes no better than a hallucination" (Winnicott 10). In other words, through careful attunement to and validation of the infant's subjective world, the mother empowers the infant to assimilate her own inevitable "failures" and intentional lack of provision, and thereby the limitations of its own experience and power. This follows a natural trajectory in which at first the infant needs to have its omnipotence confirmed in order to foster a connection to reality; in the next stage, it is precisely the limitations of the infant's power that buttress its sense of what is real. Therefore, Winnicott concludes that it is this "transitional" stage which empowers the infant to accept social difference as such: "the term transitional object, according to my suggestion, gives room for the process of becoming able to accept difference and similarity" (6).

Crucially, as Winnicott emphasizes, this intermediate area is constituted *by* the subject: To the observer, the child perceives what the mother actually presents, but this is not the whole truth. The infant perceives the breast only in so far as a breast could be created just there and then. There is no interchange between the mother and the infant. Psychologically the infant takes from a breast that is part of the infant, and the mother gives milk to an infant that is part of herself. In psychology, the idea of interchange is based on an illusion in the psychologist" (12).

Thus, Winnicott's theory accords with a Husserlian notion of the subject as transcendental ego, which I have outlined elsewhere (Smolenski). It also suggests some of the mechanisms by which the notion of an "objective" world is accepted by the very young subject. However, Winnicott stresses that this transitional stage does not result in a simple and unproblematic reality, featuring a fixed boundary between subjective and objective, but rather that reality is constantly negotiated throughout human life:

It is assumed here that the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from this strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience (cf. Riviere, 1936) which is not challenged (arts, religion, etc.). This intermediate area is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child who is 'lost' in play (13).

Winnicott's references to religion here begin to address the fraught question of the relationship between religion, imagination, illusion, and the development and maintenance of human subjectivity. He spells out his view even more clearly in the following passage:

I am therefore studying the substance of illusion, that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion, and yet becomes the hallmark of madness when an adult puts too powerful a claim on the credulity of others, forcing them to acknowledge a sharing of illusion that is not their own. We can share a respect for illusory experience, and if we wish we may collect together and form a group on the basis of the similarity of our illusory experiences. This is a natural root of grouping among human beings (Winnicott 3).

Thus, in Winnicott's view, it is the *relational nature* of the distribution of imaginal content that signals madness: when subjects are able to share similar experiences of their own imaginal content in relative mutuality, he labels this religion; when a subject *demands* that others accept the reality of her own idiosyncratic imaginal content, or imagines that they have already done so or must necessarily do so, we have madness. In other words, for Winnicott madness is a kind of violence against the mutuality of intersubjectivity in the name of an individual's own creative experience. The idiosyncratic nature of individual religious experience, however, ensures that it is never finally and completely "shared" by two or more individuals. Indeed, it is the indeterminacy of religious experience—hovering just over and around the boundaries of madness—which, I argue, results in its highly contested political nature and which is evident in the writings of John Paul.

I now turn to another psychoanalytic theory dealing with the collapse of subject/object distinctions: Heinz Kohut's theory of the "self-object." A little over a decade after the publication of Winnicott's essay, psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, founder of the school of self psychology, developed his theory of the "self-object," a category which he proposed could subsume Winnicott's transitional objects. According to Kohut, self-objects are "archaic objects cathected with narcissistic libido . . . which are still in intimate connection with the archaic self (i.e., objects which are not experienced as separate and independent from the self)" (3). The self, in turn, he defined as an enduring content of the mental apparatus cathected with instinctual energy (Kohut xv). Kohut, however, did not spatialize his theory of the self-object as did Winnicott; they do not exist in a specific "area." Rather, he posited that self-objects are invested with different qualities of energy, some healthy, others pathological. In narcissistic disturbances, self-objects "trap" the subject's energy in ways that render it unavailable to the rest of her bio-psychological system. This is because the subject is continually seeking to create and maintain the narcissistic supply and mirroring it needed, but did not receive, from its caregivers at a very early age of development. It is this mirroring which allows the small child to build up a steady sense of self; without it, the child is ever in search for a self—in objects. The goal of psychotherapy is, therefore, to "de-cathect" archaic libidinal drives from pathologically invested self-objects, so that the subject's flow of biological and emotional energy is brought into balance (Kohut 100-01). In other words, it is the freeing up of energy from self-objects that, in Kohut's theory, allows creativity, empathy, humor, and wisdom to blossom. While some degree of narcissism is vital and healthy in human life (self-object needs never fully go away), it becomes problematic to the extent that it produces psychopathology.

In short, Kohut's theory of self-objects holds that a collapsing of the subject-object duality, whether through "mystical" states of merger or expectations of direct control, is a fundamentally narcissistic dynamic. He extends his theory to non-human objects: activity or work, for instance, can be a self-object, as can inanimate objects, animals, or even an over-wrought and rigid notion of self. Anything that could potentially be an object of cognition could also become a self-object. Kohut does not, however, openly discuss religious experience, so we don't have a sense for whether his theory is meant to encompass *all* experiences with spirits or deities and all experiences classed as mystical, or whether it is limited only to those conceptualizations of religious phenomena that serve as substitute selves or maintainers of narcissistic equilibrium.

As Winnicott and Kohut have both shown, the content of a person's imaginal world is profoundly influenced by his or her own social needs and incurred injuries. In the next section, I zoom out to consider these needs from a collective perspective.

Collapse of the Subject/Object Distinction: Anthropology

Within the anthropological tradition, perhaps the most eloquent early articulation of a set of experiences in which human subjects and potential objects of cognition are experienced as indistinct or merged was Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's theory of "mystical participation." In his 1926 opus *How Natives Think*, Lévy-Bruhl argued that what separated European scientific rationalism from the "primitive mentality" characterizing other parts of the world was the "participatory" way in which other people related to their "collective representations" (basically, shared objects of understanding) (Lévy-Bruhl). Although Lévy-Bruhl summarily rejected psychological approaches to making sense of collective representations, arguing that a focus on individual subjects could never begin to comprehend what was in fact a collective phenomenon (13-14), his definition of mystical participation bears a striking resemblance to Kohut's theory of narcissistically cathected archaic self-objects, only magnified at a collective scale. He writes, "Myths, funeral rites, agrarian practices and the exercise of magic do not appear to originate in the desire for a rational explanation: they are the primitives' response to collective needs and sentiments which are profound and mighty and of compulsive force" (Lévy-Bruhl 25). Elsewhere he states,

The collective representations of primitives . . . express, or rather imply, not only that the primitive actually has an image of the object in his mind, and thinks it real, but also that he has some hope or fear connected with it, that some definite influence emanates from it, or is exercised upon it. This influence is a virtue, an occult power which varies with objects and circumstances, but is always real to the primitive and forms an integral part of his representation. . . . I should say that this mental activity was a mystic one (Lévy-Bruhl 37-38).[6]

This is because relationships between people and their objects in "primitive" cultures are not based on association (analogy), but on direct connection or identity (contiguity and metaphor). Lévy-Bruhl proposes that as individualization progresses, the road to

"scientific" thinking opens wider: people increasingly dissociate themselves from their objects and hold them as abstractions to contemplate rather than realities in which to participate:

In proportion as the individual consciousness of each member of the group tends to declare itself, the feeling of a mystic symbiosis of the social group with surrounding groups of beings and objects becomes less intimate and direct and less constant. . . . Bonds which are more or less explicit tend to take the place of the feeling of direct communion. In a word, participation tends to become ideological (366).

To some extent, then, this parallels the process of "de-cathecting" which Kohut sees as central to psychoanalytic healing. Both theorists also hold that the process they are describing is never (or at least very rarely) complete. However, while Kohut stresses the importance of balancing and redistributing formerly overly concentrated affects which, because of their pathological distribution in the human energy system, also produce cognitive distortions, Lévy-Bruhl valorizes affective dissipation as such; for him, it is affect itself that distorts cognition because it causes subjects to identify too strongly with the objects of that affect. It seems that the "collective needs and sentiments which are profound and mighty and of compulsive force," which he identifies in primitives, simply no longer exist for people who have learned to think rationally and scientifically.

Lévy-Bruhl also has trouble with whether or not to classify primitive mentality as "religious:"

For we might say equally well that the mentality which expresses itself in their collective representations is wholly religious, or, in another sense of the word, that it is hardly at all so. In so far as a mystic communion with, and actual participation in, the object of the religious sentiment and ritual practice is of the very essence of religion, primitive mentality must be declared religious because it does realize a communion of such a nature, and indeed to the highest degree it is possible to imagine. But in other respects it does not seem correct to speak of it as 'religious,' at least to this extent, that by reason of the direct character of this participation it does not recognize as an ideal outside and above itself the beings with whom it feels itself united in mystic and intimate communion (367).

In other words, Lévy-Bruhl understands that the Christian religion posits a wholly other object (God), with whom believers nevertheless may enter into inseparable communion. The paradoxical nature of Christianity, which he encounters here, will later be salient in understanding the historical theology of John Paul II.

Like Kohut but unlike Winnicott, Lévy-Bruhl does not spatialize his theory of subject/object collapse. However, Bruce Kapferer, an anthropologist writing nearly a century later, does. In his ground-breaking book chapter "Outside All Reason," Kapferer follows Lévy-Bruhl to a certain extent, arguing that magic, sorcery, and witchcraft cannot be mapped on a continuum of logic and illogic, but rather defy our attempts to rationalize them. Nevertheless, he stresses that they are profoundly social, and so we can attempt to understand them, however imperfectly. He agrees with many anthropologists that magic,

sorcery, and witchcraft exist in spaces of social discontinuity and conflict as attempts to overcome, instrumentalize, or shape such breaks. He also suggests that "they may yet elaborate further what can be called their own phantasmagoric space, an imaginal field whose force derives not so much by what it is representative of external to itself, but in the potentialities, generative forces, linkages and redirections that it opens up within itself" (Kapferer 22). Paralleling Winnicott's theory of "intermediate spaces" whose logics are not externally challenged, Kapferer writes that magic operates within its own emergent spaces whose cosmologies do not necessarily have any relation to the world outside of those spaces (23).[7] Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's notion of virtuality, Kapferer asserts that these *imaginal* spaces are not representational but rather embody, contain, and *create* their own realities. Hence they cannot be falsified. They are thus paradoxical spaces in that they both contain and stand outside of themselves: "The potency of much magical practice is this virtuality, which stands outside of all reason—even, perhaps, its own" (Kapferer 23). It is this notion of magic as an essential and non-rational source of human creativity which also allows it to challenge "conventional understandings of what it is to be a human being" and thus to advance anthropological knowledge beyond its received understandings of human rationality (Kapferer 25).

Kapferer's characterization of imaginal spaces indicates that they are generated by subjectivities which to some extent "stand outside" of themselves in the process of that generation. However, the subject's "standing outside" of itself does not mean that it is inhabiting other subjects; rather, as Husserl has argued, it is exercising its transcendental function to constitute within itself an external reality (Smolenski). What is conjured in the imaginal space is thus real for the conjurer(s), though likely not (immediately) real for those who stand outside that space. Following Kapferer's argument, the reality of imaginal content gets translated to others only as it affects social relationships—in other words, through the intersubjective effects of creativity. In this his theory overlaps with Winnicott's theory of transitional spaces in significant ways.

Each of these theories offers some analytical purchase on the social dynamics—internal and external to the individual subject—which influence the flow of affect and its cognitive correlates in people working through tremendous lived difficulties in historical context. In what follows, I listen carefully to the words of John Paul II to "hear" what social injuries and needs reveal themselves through his own theory of the interpenetration of God and man, as well as the healing and rectifying impetus behind much of his historical theology.

Memory and Identity
Transcendent history is embodied

Memory and Identity was John Paul's last book (published about a month before his death), although it was not directly written by him. Rather, it is a highly edited version of a series of conversations between the late pope and two of his friends, Polish theologian Józef Tischner and Polish philosopher Krzysztof Michalski, at Castel Gandolfo in 1993 (John Paul II, *Pamięć i Tożsamość;* Michalski, " O *Pamięci i Tożsamości* (Cz. 1)" ; Michalski, " Przygotowywanie Książki *Pamięć i Tożsamość* (Cz. 22)"). The editing was done mostly by members of John Paul's inner circle at the Holy See. Despite being so

heavily curated, however, the contents of the book resonate strongly with statements the late pope made in countless other places, some of which are invoked in the text itself, but which I will not have occasion to delve into here. For this reason, I consider *Memory and Identity* to be an instructive distillation of John Paul's historico-theological thinking.

John Paul's main historical concern is the salvation of mankind, which, for him, is the only process that can give history meaning. Therefore sacred history, expressed as a universalist salvific narrative, is the "true" history to which all historical actors contribute, even from beyond the Christian community. However, the economy of salvation which John Paul illustrates is multifaceted, with many different actors, human and nonhuman, all playing different roles in bringing it about. These actors exist in relationship to one another, and John Paul frequently expresses these relationships in kinship terms. In what follows, I explore the contours of this transcendent-earthly family, asking how the ideals with which John Paul invests its members do the work of redeeming a lost and fallen humanity.

I begin my analysis with a chapter which falls toward the end of the book, "The Vertical Dimension of the Deeds of Europe." John Paul introduces the chapter as follows:

As we know, human history unfolds in a horizontal dimension of space and time. However, a vertical dimension also intersects it. For it is not only human beings who write history. God writes it along with them. The Enlightenment decisively distanced itself from this dimension of history, which we may call transcendental. The Church, however, continuously returns to it: an eloquent example of this return was the Second Vatican Council (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 157).

The point of departure for this theology of history is, for John Paul, Biblical sacred history, as interpreted by Catholic tradition:

In what way does God write human history? The Bible gives a reply to this question from the first chapters of the Book of Genesis up until the last pages of the Book of Revelation. God reveals Himself[8] from the beginning of the deeds of mankind as a God of the promise. This is the God of Abraham, about whom St. Paul says that he 'believed against hope (Cf. Rom. 4:18)" (John Paul II, *Pamięć i Tożsamość* 157).

John Paul then proceeds to recount Biblical history, not exactly in chronological order, beginning with God's covenant with Abraham, then moving to Adam and Eve, the introduction of sin into the world, and the promise of messianic redemption and its fulfillment in the Book of Revelation. Afterwards, he emphasizes the salvific, messianic role of Christ, and ends the chapter by citing a poem he wrote during Easter Vigil in 1966. That was a climactic year for postwar Poland—it was the millennial anniversary of the baptism of Poland's first king, Mieszko I. While the Polish United Workers' Party intended to celebrate this event as the founding of the Polish state, the Church emphasized that the event represented one thousand years of Polish Christianity. Beginning in 1956, the Polish Episcopate had initiated the "Great Novena of the Millennium," a nine-year, nationwide ritual cycle designed to "claim the rhetorical field"

from the communists and define the terms on which the battle for the allegiance of Poles would be fought (Osa). John Paul, then Archbishop of Krakow Karol Wojtyła, played a leading role in directing the Novena for the Krakow faithful.

John Paul's poem invokes Christ as "Human," with a capital H, emphasizing his incarnation and the fact that only "in Christ" does human history take on its "fullest sense:"

It is You I call, Human, You I seek – in whom
human history can find its Body.
Toward You I move, and I do not say, "come,"
but simply, "be."
[. . .]
Human, in whom every human may uncover the deepest purpose
and root of his own[9] deeds: a mirror of life and death gazing into the human current,
to You – Human – I continually push through the shallow river of history,
moving in the direction of every heart, moving in the direction of every thought
(history – a jumble of thoughts and death of hearts).
I seek Your Body for all of history,
I seek Your depth (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 159-60).

I highlight here the universalist emphasis of John Paul's quest for the embodied Christ—for *all* of history, for *every* heart and *every* thought, since, without Christ, history can be nothing but a jumble of thoughts and the death of hearts. Truly, sound and fury, signifying nothing. Christ, the "mirror of life and death gazing into the human current," is what reveals the purpose—significance—of human life and deeds. In this way, Christ is the "hermeneutic key," so to speak, to human history: "This then is the answer to the essential question: history's deepest sense goes beyond history and finds its full illumination in Christ, the God-Human. Christian hope stretches across the boundary of time" (John Paul II, *Pamięć i Tożsamość* 160).

The transcendence of embodied meaning in John Paul's thought points to one of the decisive paradoxes of Christianity: human history, like Schrödinger's cat, is both dead (without a body; the "death of hearts") and alive (a moving "current"); redeemed already and unredeemed. God is always working through all of the deeds of human beings—good and evil—to achieve the teleology of redemption; nevertheless, Christ must also be sought. Redemption, as John Paul writes, is a *task* that has been assigned to humankind (John Paul II, *Pamięć i Tożsamość* 33-37).

The "birth" of nations and the divine/human family

This paradox leads John Paul to posit, in places, a kind of "splitting" of history into eschatological-salvific history and mundane history—the former, of course, as the history which carries meaning. This is largely in line with an orthodox Catholic theology of history going back at least to Augustine of Hippo (Löwith). John Paul is in tension with this tradition, however, when he suggests that each nation is a collective historical actor on par with individual human beings, each with its ability to choose to join eschatological

history or to remain in essentially ahistorical meaninglessness (although still being guided by God according to His salvific plan). While Augustine's historical theology, which is still a major template for Catholic theologies of history, outlines clearly a role for the Jewish nation in the salvation of the world (albeit an abjected one), Augustine does not refer to different Christian nations as separate actors; rather, their national distinctions are subsumed under a shared Christian commitment. John Paul, on the other hand, adopts a decidedly modern view of nations as ethnolinguistically (and religiously)-defined and bounded historical actors. This view, which received its clearest articulation during the 19 th century, was only accepted by the papacy at the beginning of the 20th.[10] Moreover, a historical theology in which each nation bears a sacred destiny has its roots in a Polish tradition of heterodox nationalist messianism which was decidedly rejected by the Vatican during the initial stages of its development (Porter). Thus, John Paul's phrasing of his commitment to nationalist sacred history includes both an invocation of Catholic dogma and the acknowledgement that his own interpretation sits rather awkwardly with it:

The history of every human being, and through the human being the deeds of all the nations, carry in them a particular eschatological purpose. The Second Vatican Council said much about this in the entirety of its teaching, but especially in the Constitutions *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*. This is a reading of history in the light of the Gospels, which has major import. The eschatological reference says that human life has meaning and that the deeds of nations also have meaning. Of course people, not nations, will stand before God's judgment, but after all, in this judgment of individual people somehow nations are also judged (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 80).

Indeed, for John Paul, a nation's "entry into history," by which he means eschatological history, occurs with the Christianization of its people through the baptism of its rulers, a process which simultaneously defines the nation and gives it identity. Thus he does not posit eternal, unchanging nations, but rather nations that are "born" with the birth of baptism, which also creates them as *historical* actors. He writes:

In my UNESCO speech I referred to the experience of my fatherland, which was particularly well-understood by representatives of societies who find themselves at the stage of shaping their own nations and creating their national identities. We, Poles, were at this stage at the turn of the 10 th and 11 th centuries. We were reminded of this by the Millennium, or the Thousand Year Anniversary of the Baptism of Poland. For speaking of baptism, we do not only have in mind the sacrament of Christian initiation undertaken by the first historical ruler of Poland, but also an event that was decisive for the emergence of the nation and for the formation of its Christian identity. In this light, the date of Poland's baptism is groundbreaking. Poland as a nation leaves behind the prehistory of its acts and begins to exist historically. Individual Slavic tribes created prehistory (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 81).

The metaphor of birth suggests the existence of parents. Indeed, familial metaphors become prominent when John Paul discusses the meaning of the term "fatherland" (*ojczyzna*). He writes,

The word "fatherland" is connected with the concept and reality of the father. The fatherland is in part the same thing as patrimony, that is, that stock of resources which we have received as inheritance from our fathers. It is significant that it is often also said, "the fatherland-mother" [*Ojczyzna-matka*]. We know from our own experience to what extent the transmission of spiritual inheritance occurs through the mediation of mothers. The fatherland is, then, inheritance, and simultaneously the resulting state of ownership that results from that inheritance – including land, territory, but even more so the values and spiritual content which make up the culture of a given nation (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 66).

Yet this nation-as-father (and, to a lesser extent, mother)[11] is not only terrestrial, but also eschatological:

Since we have already brought under analysis the concept of the fatherland itself, we must now connect it with the Gospels. After all, in the Gospels, on the lips of Christ, it is precisely the word "Father" which is fundamental. It is virtually the most frequently used . . . [he cites a number of examples]. The teaching of Christ contains within itself the deepest elements of the theological vision of the fatherland as well as culture. Christ, as the Son who comes from the Father, brings with him a particular patrimony, an extraordinary inheritance, for humankind" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 67-68).

In these passages, we see the figure of the father being connected hermeneutically both to God and to the nation. In the following paragraph, however, the mother takes center stage:

Christ says, "I came from the Father and entered the world" (John 16:28). This entering occurred through the mediation of a Woman, a Mother. The inheritance of the eternal Father was conducted, essentially, through the heart of Mary, and in this way filled with all of those things which the extraordinary feminine genius of the Mother could bring into the patrimony of Christ. All of Christianity, in its universal dimension, is this patrimony, in which the participation of the Mother is very significant. And that is why the Church is sometimes called mother – *Mater ecclesia*. Speaking in this way, we have in mind that Divine inheritance, which became our share thanks to the coming of Christ (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 68).

Thus we have a symbolic pairing of father-nation and mother-Church. Yet, the nation, thanks to Christ's advent, is not merely a terrestrial father, but an actor in eschatological history, always connected to an even greater fatherland, which subsumes it. As John Paul writes, "The patrimony which we owe to Christ directs that which pertains to the inheritance of human nations and cultures toward the eternal fatherland" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 68-69). The universalism of this vision is made clear in the following passage:

The fatherland as patrimony is from God, but it is simultaneously from the world in some sense. Christ came into the world in order to confirm the eternal rights of the Father, the Creator. At the same time, however, he initiated a completely new culture. Culture means cultivation. Christ, through his teaching, his life, death, and resurrection "cultivated," so to speak, this world created by the Father. People themselves became the "cultivated soil

of God," as St. Paul writes (Cf. 1 Cor. 3:9). Thus this Divine patrimony transmuted itself into the form of "Christian culture." It exists not only in Christian societies and nations, but to some extent it came to exist in the entire culture of humankind. It transformed, to some extent, this entire culture (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 69-70).

Thus we see the historical duality-in-universality recapitulated: all of humanity participates in the salvific drama, and to that extent is called "Christian," while the explicitly Christian subset of humanity takes an active historical role in transforming the world toward the teleology of universal salvation. This takes place under the auspices of great parents—God, nation, church—who give their children (individual human beings) the resources (inheritance) with which to make their lives fruitful and meaningful. Indeed, without these parents, history literally cannot be born—it lacks a body—and so the thing which animates the body, the heart, also cannot live. Indeed, it is not that non-Christians are orphans, but rather they lack parents in a more primal sense: they have not yet truly been born.

Theodicy: or, the (transcendental) parents are Good

What are some of the political implications of this historical theology? The salvific teleology which posits God as guiding history, indeed as somehow being present *in* the human actors who populate historical narratives, foregrounds the problem of agency itself —namely, the problem of good and evil (theodicy). After all, European nations that had entered into eschatological history executed some of the most horrific violence the world has ever seen—violence which the pope personally witnessed in occupied Poland. For this reason, John Paul's book begins with a lengthy excursus into good and evil in the "deeds of Europe." He defines evil, following Augustine and Thomas, as "the absence of some good, which should be found in a given entity; it is a lack" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 11). He goes on to say, "Evil, then, in a realistic sense, can exist only in relation to good, particularly with relation to God, the greatest Good" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 18-19). Therefore the presence of God is a prerequisite for avoiding evil. When discussing the crimes of fascists and communists, therefore, he concludes that it was the strand of Enlightenment thinking which rejected God that is to blame: "Why is all this happening? What is the root of these post-Enlightenment ideologies? The answer is unambiguous and simple: it is happening simply because God has been rejected as Creator, and thereby as the source for deciding about what is good and what is evil" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 20).

Thus it is the European rejection of its divine paternity and inheritance which has led it astray. John Paul doesn't blame entire nations for this rejection, however; he doesn't remove the nations of Europe from eschatological history. Rather, he blames those who propagated "ideologies of evil," as he calls them. Similarly, the fact that the rulers of the German and Soviet empires espoused these ideologies doesn't create moments of foundation or inheritance in the same way that baptism does. Indeed, the transcendentalized father—whether as nation or as God—can only be good. The ideologists of evil, in John Paul's though, can be understood as, on the one hand, prodigal sons and daughters, and on the other, as human (non-transcendental) parents perpetuating Adam and Eve's inheritance of sin, as we shall shortly see.

Since God is absolute Good, evil cannot be of God. Thus John Paul's explanation for how evil can exist relies on several foundations: First, God tolerates evil—allows it an apportioned share. Second, God makes good out of evil, perhaps even as part of an unknown Divine plan. Both of these theses are set out in a passage in which John Paul describes his attempts to make meaning out of the horrors he has witnessed:

Later, after the end of the war, I thought to myself: The Lord God gave Hitlerism twelve years of existence, and after twelve years this system collapsed. Evidently that was the measure which Divine Providence accorded to this madness. In truth, this was not only madness – it was some kind of "savagery", as Konstanty Michalski wrote (Cf. *Between Heroism and Savagery*). Therefore, God's Providence allotted this savagery only twelve years. If communism survived longer, I thought, and if it has before it some prospect of further development, then there has to be some sense in this (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 23).

He continues, describing his realization that communism would last longer than fascism had:

It was possible to think that even this evil was in some sense necessary for the world and for the human being. It happens, after all, that in a concrete, realistic system of human existence, evil, in a certain sense, appears as needed – it is needed to the extent that it is an occasion for good. . . . Ultimately, contemplating evil, we come to recognize a greater good (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 23-24).

If all-good parents are allowing evil to take place, then there must be some greater sense to it which children cannot yet understand. Indeed, self-blame becomes the third foundation of John Paul's theodicy. He holds that the responsibility for evil lies entirely within the individual human being, whose nature is more prone to evil than to goodness. He writes,

The Book of Genesis specifically describes the punishment meted out to the first parents after their sin (Cf. Gen. 3:14-19). Their punishment transferred to the entirety of human history. Original sin is, after all, an inherited sin. As such, in signifies a certain inborn sinfulness of human beings, an inclination towards evil rather than good, which lies within him. There is, in the human being, a certain inborn weakness of moral nature which goes hand in hand with the fragility of his existence, with his psychophysical fragility (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 26).

Here we see, then, that the inheritance from merely human children of God is one of evil, while the Divine inheritance is one of good. Therefore, rejecting Divine inheritance can only result in the proliferation of sin as man lives out his inborn inclinations. The universalism of this theology posits that human beings all partake of a mixed inheritance, whether or not they choose to reject the good one. Therefore man is constantly engaged in a struggle to liberate himself from his negative inheritance by taking up his place in the salvific one, by allowing the good inheritance to win out over the bad. And John Paul is confident, based on the experience of Central and Eastern Europe, that the good inheritance does win out in the end: "If we then look more closely at the deeds of peoples

and nations which passed through the trial of totalitarian systems and persecution for faith, we will discover there the clear, victorious presence of the cross of Christ" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 27).

Which brings us to the final part of our investigation: John Paul's characterization of Poland. This is a nation which, in his view, stayed true to its divine inheritance and therefore serves as a paragon for others. In a chapter titled, "Lessons from Most Recent History," he writes,

The fifty years of struggle with totalitarianism constitutes a period not devoid of providential significance: society's need to defend itself against the enslavement of the entire nation was expressed within it. It was about self-defense, which functioned not only negatively. Society not only rejected Hitlerism as a system aiming to destroy Poland, or communism as a system imposed from the East, but in its resistance held fast to values with great positive content. I want to say that it wasn't a matter of simply rejecting those enemy systems. In those times it was a recovery and confirmation of fundamental values which the society lived and to which it desired to remain faithful. I am referring here to the relatively short era of the German occupation as well as to the forty plus years of communist rule in the time of the People's Republic (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 52).

On what basis was Poland able to "hold fast" to these "fundamental values?" It seems it was largely instinctive:

Was this an in-depth process? Or was it a process that was, to a certain extent, instinctive? It's possible that in many cases it exhibited a rather instinctive character. Poles, in their opposition, expressed not so much a kind of choice based on theoretical motivations, but rather simply the fact that they couldn't not resist. It was a matter of some kind of instinct or intuition, although it also favored processes of deepening a consciousness of the religious values and social ideals which constituted the foundation of this resistance on a scale heretofore unknown in the deeds of Poland (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 53).

John Paul continues with an anecdote illustrating the "spiritual strength" of Poland. He tells of a young Belgian priest, involved with the *Jeunesse Ouvri è re Chr é tienne* , whom he met during his studies in Rome:

My colleague said more or less this: "The Lord God has allowed the experience of the evil that is communism to fall on you. But why has he allowed this?" And he gave an answer himself, which I believe is telling: "We in the West were spared this, maybe because we would not withstand a similar trial, but you will withstand it." This statement from a young Fleming has engraved itself in my memory. To a certain extent, it had a prophetic significance. I frequently return to it in my thoughts and see more and more clearly that these words contain a certain diagnosis (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 53).

John Paul then continues with the assertion that he is not trying to be overly simplistic; that Western Europe has an even more ancient history of Christianity than does Eastern Europe, and that it was the site for Christian culture's reaching its greatest heights.

However, much of Western Europe has forgotten these noble roots and succumbed to ideologies of evil. Indeed, toward the end of the chapter, John Paul writes,

What can we learn, then, from these years dominated by "ideologies of evil" and the battle with them? I think that we must learn first and foremost to reach to our roots. Only then can the evil inflicted by fascism or communism in a certain sense enrich us, lead us to good, and this is undoubtedly the Christian agenda (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 56).

"Roots," of course, means the transcendental inheritance of the baptized nation, God the Father, the fatherland-mother, and *Mater ecclesia*. Not all nations may have been able to follow the example of Poland's filial piety, but the greater message of *Memory and Identity* is precisely for them to do so.

Discussion

My intent in delving into John Paul's historical theology is not to unmask or denounce religious kinship metaphors as such. Rather, it is to illustrate the all-too-human ways in which family dynamics of idealization, favoritism, and the desire for approval creep into a kin-based theological language, which then becomes a political discourse. The collapse of the subject/object distinction between the human and an all-Good Divine, while potentially serving as a site of personal or collective empowerment and even the capacity to empathize with social others, can also become a process by which Divine Goodness is recognized only in demarcated cultural, institutional or political forms. This results in a moral hierarchization of historical actors and the cultivation of a corresponding exclusivism and grandiosity in those accorded the privilege of occupying the higher ranks in this hierarchy.

Bruce Kapferer has offered the following definition of sorcery:
sorcery is that imaginal formation of force and power that is to be expected in social circumstances that are disjunctive or in some sense discontinuous. Its concept in many different ethnographic contexts revolves around its magical capacity to work with the very potencies of difference, differentiation, division, opposition, contradiction and transgression. It gathers the force of such potencies, harnessing them to the purpose of destruction or to conjunction. Sorcery makes the disjunctive conjunctive, the discontinuous continuous, the weak powerful . . . In this sense, sorcery is a thoroughgoing force of the social and the political (14).

I would argue that "religion" is also an "imaginal formation of force and power" and that it also seeks to do reparative work "in social circumstances that are disjunctive or in some sense discontinuous." John Paul's characterization of the fascist and communist eras in Poland as eras which "favored processes of deepening a consciousness of the religious values and social ideals which constituted the foundation of this resistance on a scale heretofore unknown in the deeds of Poland" (*Pamięć i Tożsamość* 53), while certainly not accurately descriptive of a society riven by divisions, well-expresses the way a large swath of Poland's population remembers its past. Indeed, the myth of social unity, of unity of purpose, was given material expression in the millions of Poles who thronged to see John Paul on his pilgrimages to Poland in the 1970's and 1980's (Kubik). Both as pope and as a

member of the Polish Episcopate, John Paul embraced a vision of Polish Catholicism which attempted to repair society by way of powerful institutions—his religion was, to use I.M. Lewis's term, a "cult of the center" rather than the periphery (Lewis). Rather than upholding an ultimately theological distinction between religion and sorcery, then, I suggest that social scientists focus on the social functions performed by different manifestations of cultic ritual and veneration. John Paul's religion attempted to do socially reparative work by exalting and revering idealized collective representations and encouraging "mystical participation" with them on the scale of the modern Polish nation-state and the international Polish diaspora.

Individual "access" to these collective representations occurs within the "intermediate space" within which self-objects are constituted by subjects who are always reaching beyond themselves in attempts at accessing the world around them. Indeed, collective representations can come to function as self-objects for the many people who identify with them. These need not necessarily be grandiose; processes of identification are always ongoing, and collective representations can be the recipients of many different forms of affective and cognitive energy. Nevertheless, the need for ideal, grandiose self-objects, as Kohut has shown in his work on narcissism, becomes pressing under circumstances in which the self is threatened or faced with annihilation—and the annihilation of "Polishness" was certainly a trope of nationalist discourse under fascism and under communism, as well as during the partition period, which ended only in 1918.[12] Thus narcissism is actually a reparative dynamic in which weakness and fragility are disavowed so that the self—that enduring content of the mental apparatus cathected with instinctual energy (per Kohut)—can survive under arduous social circumstances. John Paul's emphasis on identity—in the very title of his book, no less—bears witness to his concern that the self he constructed within the lifeworld of his youth—a deeply religious, nationally-conscious small town and family in prewar Poland—is in danger of being relegated inexorably to the past as new "ideologies of evil" render it incomprehensible for future generations. By identifying himself with his Church and with his nation, he hoped to "mystically participate" in all-Good, transcendent objects who, in their embodied forms, possessed the historically agentive power to preserve the context of subjectivity formation which he had loved and lost.

It is crucial to take into account the ways in which collective representations shared by vast groupings of people, for instance modern nation-states, resonate with personal experiences of community and kin. These resonances are what confer upon these representations their cathected affective-cognitive energy and what render them potential self-objects for individual subjects. It is only by honoring the multi-layered forms of embeddedness within which individuals find themselves situated that we can begin to understand how their cartographies of history are drawn.

John Paul felt that his individual destiny was tied up inextricably with the salvation of the world and the moral valor of a faithful fatherland. Yet his theology ended up placing him at the apex of a global hierarchy of virtue whose preservation was made the *sine qua non* of a moral humanity. It is clear that his reparative vision for a world healing after the horrors of fascism and communism carries its own abjects in those individuals and

communities who do not identify as children of the transcendental Father with whom John Paul identified himself, his Church, and his nation. This article calls upon Catholic theologians of history, going forward, to imagine a transcendental kinship structure in which there are no abjects—or at least one in which they cannot be identified using the cognitive and affective criteria of memory and identity.

Natalie Smolenski is a Doctoral Candidate in Anthropology and History at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her broader work investigates how people make sense of experiences of the sacred, while her dissertation focuses on the cult of John Paul II (venerated as a saint) in contemporary Poland. In 2013, she was a Józef Tischner Fellow at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna.

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1. All translations from the Polish are my own.

2. See John Paul II's autobiography (in fact a compilation of autobiographical reminiscences): *Jan Paweł II. Autobiografia*.

3. The roots of the object-relations school go back to the earliest years of psychoanalysis, to Freud's colleagues Sándor Ferenczi and Otto Rank. However, it was later generations of psychoanalysts, particularly Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and Ronald Fairbairn who developed the theory as it is most recognized today.

4. Winnicott uses the term "mother;" however, as he notes, this does not need to be "the infant's own mother" (10). Contemporary psychological and psychoanalytic literature generally uses the term "caregiver."

5. Italics in original.

6. Lévy-Bruhl hastens to add, " In default of a better, I shall make use of this term—not referring thereby to the religious mysticism of our communities, which is something entirely different, but employing the word in the strictly defined sense in which 'mystic' implies belief in forces and influences and actions which, though imperceptible to sense, are nevertheless real" (38). However, I don't think hi s distinction between Christian mysticism and the mystical participation of primitives is tenable, even within the structure of his own argument. By the end of the book he has argued cogently that the "prelogic" (indifference to the law of noncontradiction) that characterizes mystical participation is widespread among European Christians as well.

7. Of all the theorists discussed here, Kapferer is the only one who draws attention to the material construction of these phantasmagoric spaces in ritual and other kinds of solitary or collective action—whether simply through techniques of the body, or with the aid of objects and signs. However, he only indirectly alludes to this in the cited chapter.

8. Note that the Polish reflexive pronoun "się" is gender-neutral. I have translated it as "Himself."

9. Note that the gender of the Polish adjective "własny" corresponds to predicate (what is owned) not the subject (the owner). I have inserted the pronoun "his" here.

10. See, for instance, Benedict XV's address to the warring nations of Europe during the First World War, "To the belligerent peoples and their leaders," (dated 28 July 1915) in which he declares, "Nations do not die" (Mazurkiewicz 39).

11. Although beyond the scope of this study of *Memory and Identity*, John Paul's personification of the nation as parent emerges strikingly in his appeal to outlaw abortion during his 1991 pilgrimage to Poland—his first after the fall of communism in 1989. Jarosław Gowin describes the event as follows: "The most dramatic words John Paul II ever uttered to his countrymen pertained to this [the abortion] question. Calling for an examination of conscience . . . and comparing the victims of abortion to the victims of the Holocaust, the pope departed from the prepared text of his homily and, with a face aflame with anger, turned to the crowd: 'Maybe I speak the way I am speaking because this is my mother, this land! This is my mother, this Fatherland! Those are my brothers and sisters! And understand, all of you who approach these matters lightly, understand, that I cannot not care about these matters, they cannot not pain me'" (397)!

12. The Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth underwent three partitions—in 1772, 1793, and 1795—in which the Habsburg (later Austro-Hungarian), Prussian, and Russian Empires divided its territory amongst themselves. The Commonwealth became the conceptual basis for a Polish state during the partition period.