

## Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through<sup>1</sup>

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### **Introduction**

I borrow my title from the 1914 “methodological” essay of Sigmund Freud<sup>2</sup>, and not merely because I shall in some respects be imitating his method, but because I shall also be drawing on certain contemporary strands of psychoanalytic thought insofar as I think they have something useful to offer us in the on-going struggle for Orthodox-Catholic reconciliation.<sup>3</sup>

In that 1914 essay, Freud, still grappling with the question of how an analysis works, talked about the analysand’s unwitting and unconscious remembering of trauma which manifests itself in the repetitive acting out of strange, harmful, or otherwise problematic behaviors. The memories of the trauma, while forgotten by and thus unavailable to the conscious me-

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<sup>1</sup> The following essay was delivered as a keynote lecture in June 2017 at the Russian Byzantine Catholic Congress in San Felice del Benaco, Italy.

<sup>2</sup> In vol. XII of the *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), 145–57.

<sup>3</sup> I can assure those brought up on jejune attacks on Freud, thinking him some kind of “enemy” of Christian faith, that he is not an enemy but in fact an ally, for reasons I have argued in several places. See, e.g., Adam DeVille, “We Have Nothing to Fear from Freud,” *Catholic Herald*, November 16, 2017, accessed December 4, 2018, <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/issues/november-17th-2017/weve-nothing-to-fear-from-freud/>, and idem., “Orthodoxy and Freud: Is a Conversation Possible?” *Orthodoxy in Dialogue*, November 21, 2017, accessed December 4, 2018, <https://orthodoxyin-dialogue.com/2017/11/21/orthodoxy-and-freud-is-a-conversation-possible-by-a-a-j-deville/>. A longer and more complete treatment is in progress in a book I am working on, tentatively titled “Theology After Freud.”

mory, are nonetheless remembered in a disguised or unconscious way insofar as they are often acted out repetitively. These traumatic memories must be worked through (via their transference) in order for the memories to be deprived of their power, or at least for that power to be lessened as much as possible. This three-fold process is a helpful heuristic for conceiving of Orthodox-Catholic relations today in an East-Slavic context. In what follows, I begin by noting what we unhelpfully repeat but must remember anew in a different way, and then look at what issues still must be worked through.

### ***Remembering and Repeating***

For more than a decade, I have worked on some of the ecclesiological questions still dividing Orthodoxy and Catholicism.<sup>4</sup> But over the last two-to-three years I have become increasingly unconvinced – as the philosophers say – that theological dialogue is neither sufficient nor even necessary for unity. If both Catholics and Orthodox can recite the Niceno-Constantinopolitan symbol of faith together, it is mischievous to suggest we need further theological dialogue before celebrating a common Eucharist. What we need instead, above all in the context of relations between the Russian Orthodox and Catholic Churches – both Latin and Eastern – is to grapple with our historical memories, to remember anew our dolorous past and to subject it to necessary analysis, especially in those places where, instead of scholarly history objectively and serenely told,<sup>5</sup> we have substituted subjective and suspect memories that are little more than chosen traumas and chosen glories, to use the concepts of the Turkish-Cypriot psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Adam A.J. DeVille, *Orthodoxy and the Roman Papacy: Ut Unum Sint and the Prospects of East-West Unity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> I have in mind here the methods and example of Robert Taft, especially in his “Ecumenical Scholarship and the Catholic-Orthodox Epiclesis Dispute,” *Ostkirchliche Studien* 45 (1996): 204–226.

<sup>6</sup> See, inter alia, Vamik Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), as well as the many articles on his website, <https://www.vamikvolkan.net/en/>.

The esteemed organizer of this conference, Fr. Lawrence Cross, has himself addressed this question in an important essay, “Escaping from a Polemical History.”<sup>7</sup> There he notes, as I did above, that history is often used to justify present-day divisions, but that new historical methods, beyond what Cross calls historicist or positivist, might allow those divisions to be overcome. The problem with existing methods is not just their role in perpetuating divisions; the problem is further to be found in their maintaining a “static theological world-view” at a superficial level of historical “facts” and events, while ignoring a deeper structural unity between Catholics and Orthodox.

In calling us to go beyond such a static view, Cross is at one with the International Theological Commission’s important 1999 statement, “Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past,” which calls on Christians explicitly to move towards the creation of new memories so that “the memory of division and opposition is purified and substituted by a reconciled memory, to which everyone ... is invited to be open and to become educated.”<sup>8</sup> We may think that this is a rather artificial and thus dubious prospect: can we really engineer new forms of memory, and swap them out for old ones? But for more than two decades, research into the functioning of human memory has been revealing that this is what we do all the time. Memory, like history, is a process of regular revision. And memory is only partly about the past. As Adam Phillips, easily the most perceptive and important psychoanalyst writing today in English, has argued, “memories always have a future in mind.”<sup>9</sup> The life we are moving towards, the life, in Phillips’ term, that is to be preferred, always comes with its own “set of preferred memories.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Cross, “Escaping from a Polemical History,” *Ecumenical Review* 54, no. 1 (2002): 172–78.

<sup>8</sup> International Theological Commission, “Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past,” The Holy See, December 1999, accessed December 4, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20000307\\_memory-reconc-itc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000307_memory-reconc-itc_en.html), par. 5.1.

<sup>9</sup> Adams Phillips, *Side Effects* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 136.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*