

The Phenomenon of Demonic Possession: Definition, Contexts and Multidisciplinary Approaches

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Abstract

Starting from the classical definition of "demonic possession" as a psychophysical condition in which a person becomes a victim of a supernatural being, be it a spirit, a demon, an angel, a divine creature or a family ancestor, the analysis continues with the examination of theoretical and practical profiles of this particular event, with an emphasis on approaches that tend to explain it, according to the most significant guidelines: ethno-psychiatric, the socio-anthropological, the cultural, the religious, the esoteric, the psychoanalytic and the clinician, to then re-elaborate everything in an integrated key, according to the neurobiological model, also with the help of the sophisticated investigation techniques used in criminal law.

Keywords: psychology; neuroscience; neuropsychology; brain; prefrontal cortex; temporal lobes; frontal lobe; limbic system; pineal gland; paranormal faculties; extrasensory faculties; perception of the sacred; medium; demonic possession; demon; demons; god; bible

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1. The phenomenon of demonic possession: definition and general contexts

The "possession" generally understood: << [...] is a psychophysical condition in which a person considers himself or is considered inhabited by a supernatural being, eg. a spirit, a demon, a divine being or a family ancestor. [...]>>. ¹

<<[...] This generic definition allows us to introduce the theme by emphasizing the constituent elements of the object under examination:

a) animals and people that are interpreted as symptoms of an ongoing possession in the social and religious context of reference. Some esoteric scholars consider it possible to possess even non-living and inert objects, such as the walls and furniture of a house and the means of transport in general;

c) the "internal" (or projective) element; or the presence of a spirit entity capable of possessing the physical body of a living being, even without its consent;

d) The "external" (or extensive) element; or the loss of psychophysical control of one's body, due to an external force capable of overcoming one's will.

In general, therefore, when we speak of "possession" we must refer to the condition that leads the subject to perceive an intrusion into his intimate, personal, emotional and vital sphere, on the part of a spirit entity.² The point, therefore, is to try to understand how this is possible and what the scientific implications of this phenomenon are. These steps, therefore, are possible only if the phenomenon "possession" is analyzed and studied according to all possible multidisciplinary aspects, using scientific laws to find the explanations that best fit the analyzed tests and the description of the phenomenon itself, according to the results of the investigations carried out.

It is therefore essential, in this field, to abolish the "prejudice" that would lead us not to evaluate even those "border" tests; on the other

The term "paranormal" over the decades has found an erroneous place in the collective imagination: if for all it is the term that describes "something inexplicable, something science cannot justify"; in reality, it should take on a completely different and certainly more coherent meaning or "what surpasses the normal beyond", understood as "something that science struggles to explain because it lacks objective knowledge".

Nothing mysterious therefore the "paranormal" is nothing but the container that contains polyhedral phenomena, some fruit of the suggestion and the collective imagination, others of "something to be defined".

The cardinal principles to be fully satisfied in this survey must be seven:³

- 1) The correct answer is usually the most logical (c.d. Logic principle or Occam's razor);
- 2) The observed phenomenon must be reproducible, according to technical profiles (c.d. Scientific principle);
- 3) The subject that observes the phenomenon to be investigated must be able to understand and want, to the point of not having compromised judgment (c.d. Socio-psychological principle);
- 4) The event must be the result of a precise conduct, logically connected causally to the action or omission put in place (so-called juridical or conditional principle or "condicio sine qua non");
- 5) The event realized must be the result of an action or omission by a "tangible" entity; therefore a presence that has a physical body or that can interact with physical and chemical forces causing a displacement (so-called principle chemical-physical or materialistic);
- 6) The event carried out must leave significant consequences in the group to which the passive subject belongs (c.d. Anthropological principle);
- 7) The phenomenon realized must be explained using the analytical method typical of the investigative investigation (c.d. Investigative principle).

Let us try then to think about the single principles, explaining the individual corollaries.

First of all, we talked about the "logical principle" (1) or Occam's razor; focusing on the need to search for answers to the questions we ask ourselves according to the parameter of logic and likely probability.

The "razor" is the name used to describe a methodological principle expressed in the 14th century by the English Franciscan religious philosopher William of Ockham; remembered in Italy as William of Occam. Rightly among the thoughts of the modern scientific world; in its essential form; this principle suggests the following schematisations:

- a) with the same factors; the simplest explanation is the one to be preferred;
- b) the elements that must be taken into consideration are all those strictly necessary, avoiding to multiply them unnecessarily and to consider plurality when singularity is sufficient;
- c) it is useless to do more with what you can do with less, using simplicity, essentiality and conciseness. Of course, it is true that point b) and c) suffer from a "certain" bucolic approximation, in fact, during an investigative investigation, it is essential to examine all the elements; even the hidden ones. (...)

Therefore; the following points are corollaries of the first (logical) principle: a) simplicity; b) the essentiality; c) conciseness. The principle of logic also includes a whole series of considerations related to the experience, such as: a) avoiding to find truth or lies in people, as these are potentially able to camouflage reality through artifices and scams. Instead; the arguments must be taken into consideration first, because these can be analyzed with the use of logic; b) not use the "particular" to represent the "general"; c) do not assume that one or more items evaluated have a higher or lower value than the others. All the elements are placed on the same level and all have equal dignity; especially if there are interpretative difficulties; d) not assume that the conduct A necessarily caused the event B; e) the topic A may not always be evaluated as "white" or "black"; f) abolish the prejudice in the evaluation of elements that may not be explained immediately; g) ensures that the burden of proof always rests with the investigator and not with the accused, whether the elements end up confirming or denying the thesis analyzed; h) the popularity of information is not necessarily a reliable or worthy source of truth.

Let's move on to the "scientific principle" (2). We have said that to be recognized as a scientific phenomenon; it must be reproducible. But that is not all. It must still be objective; reliable; verifiable and acceptable. In other words; the observed phenomenon; to be scientific:

a) must be able to be repeated with the same manifestation (c.d. corollary of reproducibility). (...); b) must be objective, ie identical for all and not based on pre-established subjective parameters after the actual manifestation of the phenomenon in question (corollary of objectivity). (...); c) it must be reliable, that is to reflect those characteristics of authenticity and security that only a scientific phenomenon can give (corollary of reliability). (...); d) the phenomenon under examination must be verified, according to the scientific parameters used in the common science or according to protocols suitable to the specific case; starting from the empirical data and laws of science known at the time of the manifestation of the phenomenon (so-called corollary of verifiability) . (...); e) the phenomenon in question must be shared, therefore widespread in the community of reference and made available to all those who have an interest in learning the scientific mechanisms involved (corollary of shareability). (...).

Let's move on to the "socio-psychological principle" (3). We have said that the phenomenon must be reported by one or more subjects who are in the fullness of their psychic and mental faculties, therefore in the full integrity of their capacity to understand and want (or natural ability), in order not to see themselves compromised their objectivity. Corollaries of this principle are: a) objectivity; b) psycho-physical integrity; c) possession of the natural ability to understand and want, free from defects of conscience, mental alterations and psychiatric pathologies.

The "legal principle" (4); on the other hand; establishes the necessary connection between the conduct implemented by the person who triggered the phenomenon (so-called active subject), through action or omission and the event realized (so-called phenomenon).

The link between the conduct and the event is the causal link or etiological link or *conditio sine qua non*. The corollaries are: a) the natural potentiality of event B to action A; b) the adequacy of action A, the cause of event B; c) the highly certain probability of the realization of the event, therefore that the action A has caused the event B; in the absence of interruptive or suspensive phenomena; exceptional and unpredictable; directly or indirectly attributable to the agent.

The "chemical-physical principle" (5) or materialistic is expressed in the material realization of the event (so-called phenomenon), through the manifestation scientifically detectable, by a "tangible" entity, therefore a presence that possesses a physical body or that it can interact with physical and chemical forces causing a scientifically detectable shift. Corollaries of this principle are: a) materiality; b) the subjection to the laws of physics and chemistry, even those not yet known or knowable, but nevertheless studied.

The "anthropological principle" (6) is made concrete instead in the manifestation of the phenomenon itself; in relation with the surrounding environment and with the community to which the viewer belongs.

Finally; the "investigative principle" (7) helps us to explain the phenomenon starting from the scientific method, using c.d. "Analytical method" (c.d. logical-investigative process); according to the "inductive" and "deductive" channels (...). Before carrying out any investigative investigation, we need to deal with the elements that make up logical analysis, perhaps using the mental scheme devised and reasoned by the philosopher Hegel: in it, we can find many useful passages in understanding the phenomena that bind the individual to the thought and the phenomenal manifestation of the same.

In a nutshell, using some necessary steps to adapt the logical profiles to the topic under consideration; it is necessary to bear in mind that:

a) the object of logic, as the science of the pure abstract idea, is the set of "concepts" (understood as an expression of objective reality and not subjective thoughts) and "categories" (understood as mental functions resulting from determinations of the thought and reality);

b) the cause of logic is the study of thought; distinct from "metaphysics" as a study of being;

c) the logic is divided into 3 phases:

- Thesis (ie the logic of being);
- AntiThesis (ie the logic of essence);
- SynThesis (ie the logic of the concept);

d) from the poorest and abstract concepts we will pass to the use of reason and richer and more concrete concepts, such as quantity; quality and measure; to the point of forming the idea, ie the set of categories. It might seem complex: in reality, every reasoning must always pass through the mechanism of the thesis; the antithesis and the synthesis. Even in the investigative field; and even more so in esoteric criminology; these passages are obliged: a) in the thesis phase; we are thinking; b) in the antithesis phase, we meditate thought; making it pass from a phase of abstractness to a phase of concreteness, trying to look for elements and evidence that can in some way refute or disavow the original thought; c) in the synthesis phase, we find the idea created; the result of the mediation between the thesis and the antithesis, between the original thought and the fruit of research and analysis. [...]>>.4

2. Multidisciplinary approaches

2.1. The patient's global assessment

The global "evaluation" of the patient is a dynamic process aimed at determining the phenomenon of interest in its entirety, according to the predetermined parameters related to space (where it is); at the time (in which circumstance, for how long the episodes have occurred and according to which temporal modalities), to the execution (what happens during the episodes) and to the clinical aspect.

In particular; precisely in reference to this last step; the patient suspected of "demonic possession" must first of all be treated like any other patient, or studied according to the medical known at the time of the first meeting.

Not by chance, the analysis starts from a first clinical approach, both from a medical and psychological point of view, to leave nothing to chance: for this reason, the team must necessarily be composed of a general physician or internist; a psychiatrist and a psychologist. The presence of a priest belonging to the patient's religious faith is optional; according to the indications of the family members.

According to this perspective; in the first phase (moment I):

- a) the first professional (the general physician or internist) will have to proceed to the anamnesis of the patient and family members, expressing a first strictly clinical opinion, concerning the health aspects related to the physical body, and if it is necessary to prescribe clinical investigations such as blood tests, electroencephalogram (with and without hypnic deprivation), electrocardiogram (at rest and under stress), rx thorax and abdomen, tac (with and without contrast method) or magnetic resonance, establishing the degree of severity of the patient and the correct evaluation with reference to evolution of the symptompicture;
- b) the second (psychiatrist) and the third (psychologist) professional in agreement will have to proceed to the evaluation of the psychological and psychic profiles of the possessed, using where necessary the evaluation tools of the psychiatric investigation;
- c) the fourth figure is the priest; who will probe the religious profiles of the patient and family members looking for any useful signs to complete the diagnostic picture, then referring everything to the clinical professionals. It is common, in fact, in the family of the possessed, the obsession of one or more members close to the latter of radical or penetrating religious convictions, such as to succeed in generating in the patient the conviction of a possession as a consequence perhaps of a sense of guilt or need for punishment with respect to his approach to family expectations.

Immediately after the aforementioned investigation, in the second phase (II moment), the attention will be focused on the most representative parameters of the event: therefore, if the first evaluation has given a positive result about a possible clinical symptomatology linked to the body, the patient will be entrusted to the care of health professionals; if the positive outcome refers to the psychological / psychiatric situation, the work will be carried out by the psychiatrist and the psychologist, according to the directives of the former; if, on the other hand, the results are negative in both cases, the most useful perspective for the patient will be the reliance on the religious exponent, assisted in any case by the health professionals for any eventuality regarding the continuation of the targeted actions to resolve the affair.

During the meetings with the patient, the abilities of the professionals with respect to the interpretation of the non-verbal language of the body will play a primary role. The "non-verbal communication" is that part of the communication that includes all the aspects of the communicative exchange that do not concern the purely semantic level of the message or the strictly literal meaning of the words that make up the message itself, but which concern the language of the body, that is non-spoken communication between people. In this perspective, the interpretations of the messages contained in (and between) the words (c.d. read between the lines) in the tones and movements of the body are of particular interest not surprisingly Prof. Michael Argyle states, that in a face-to-face communication we simultaneously use facial expressions; eye contact, gesticulation, posture, touch and spatial behavior (so-called proxemics), while Albert Mehrabian showed that body movements (especially facial expressions) affect 55% of the message; the vocal aspect (ie volume; tone and rhythm) 38% and words used only 7%. Usually, non-verbal communication is divided into four main components:

- I) the paralinguistic system called "non-verbal vocal system", indicates the set of sounds emitted in verbal communication; regardless of the meaning of words, such as tone, frequency, rhythm and silence;

- II) the kinesic system, which includes all the communicative acts expressed by the movements of the body. Eye movements, facial expression, gestures and posture are therefore considered;
- III) the proxemics, which analyzes the messages sent with the occupation of space. Each of us tends to divide the space that surrounds us into four main areas: a) Intimate zone (from 0 to 45 cm); b) Personal area (from 45 cm to 1.20 m); c) Social area (from 1.2 to 3.5 m); d) Public area (over 3.5 m);
- IV) finally, the haptic consists of communicative messages expressed through physical contact. In this case, the direct and indirect forms of communication deriving from the handshake to the kiss on the cheeks; from the embrace to the pat on the shoulder are codified.

With respect to the "possessed", therefore, the techniques of interpretation of his non-verbal language could really make the difference: a gesture, a facial movement or a posture (useful for identifying any psychological stress or a tendency for the patient to lie, to use the lie during the presumed state of possession) could reveal much more than a simple clinical visit, however necessary to exclude any pathologies underlying the presumed possessory condition.

Nor should the use of the proximal perceptual research technique, consisting of the use of stratagems to induce the patient into error, be underestimated either. Let us therefore imagine that we have already ruled out psychophysical pathologies and leave room for the ritual of exorcism: in this case, it is advisable to introduce a subject disguised as an assistant of the religious during the visit by the priest without really being a person; or to present the subjects interesting under a false name or use water and salt that are not holy or carry out a ritual of exorcism different from the one normally used. What has been described serves to evaluate the good faith of the possessed, to understand if he is alert, lucid or is manipulating the space and its elements, it will therefore be useful to observe the patient during the interaction with false tools "of the trade" or with the false "subjects", trying to understand if he really knows the real name or does not react to non holy water or false rite.

Beyond however which is the best therapy to follow, according to the objective and analytical evidence, the integrated therapeutic approach is fundamental: the fusion of all these techniques is in the opinion of the writer the best solution to work for concrete cases. We will omit here for thematic reasons the aspects closely linked to physical pathologies, focusing attention in the following paragraphs, on the theoretical approaches followed in psychology to explain the possessory phenomenon, in its entirety.

2.2. The ethnopsychiatric approach

The father of this approach is undoubtedly Tobie Nathan; who has allowed ethnopsychiatry, a discipline now independent of western psychiatry to have been known and studied for forty years placing the accent above all on the most consistent theories and techniques of psychoanalysis in relation to the anthropological knowledge currently available to the social sciences.

Not by chance; the Greek root of "psychiatry" is "Psyché" "breath of life, spirit" and then "Iatréia" as "art of taking care", therefore taking care of the soul.

According to Nathan; the complex psychic structure called "cultural mind" is the only one capable of ensuring the human being his psychic survival, when existential problems seriously jeopardize the mental balance of the person. Even Sigmund Freud in "Totem and Taboo" (which according to Nathan is "the first real ethnopsicoanalytic work") deals with this sector, but inspired by the physicist; psychoanalyst and anthropologist Georges Devereux, who studied the "culturally ordered psychopathologies" that they would then become the foundation of the nascent ethnopsychiatric discipline. The latter was also a source of inspiration for what became the "Nathanian methodology".

Even Carl Gustav Jung was attracted by the "irrational dimension" of human existence, but focusing attention on pragmatic and non-mystical profiles, precisely in Jung's words we find the ideal attitude for Nathan's research, which is the investigation of the complexity of human nature.

Considered more coherent in the academic field for the treatment of mental illnesses in patients coming both from non-Western cultures, giving space for the hypothesis "possession".

To intervene on the discomfort, the ethnopsychiatric approach also makes use of other disciplines, such as: anthropology, which studies the physical and cultural peculiarities of human groups, sociology, which deals with the organization of individuals in communities and societies and ethnology, which describes its uses and customs.

In ethno-psychiatry there are two main objects of analysis: a) the differences between "normality" and "disease"; b) the survey on the differences between different cultures. According to this approach, what for us appears pathological, for that particular culture could simply be an extremization of normal behavior (eg runners from Amok, in south-east Asia) or a real "cultural device" through which the individual has the possibility of socially sharing his despair, so that he can be immediately reintegrated into the community; restoring harmony with his own unconscious (and his own inner demons).

According to ethnopsychiatry, in the world there are in fact two types of healers, both worthy of dignity: 1) "formal therapeutic operators" (eg psychoanalysts); 2) "informal therapeutic workers" (eg healers). In both these categories; the success is in any case connected with two relevant factors: a) The "know-how" (which is learned in the school of specialization or by attending the expert shaman); b) The "social consensus"; which is indispensable for the construction of the image and the social role of healer.

Other interesting prerogatives of ethnopsychiatry are: the "provisional nature of the diagnoses", which would allow to adapt the psychotherapy "step by step" according to the conception of "a patient in continuous movement" and the concept of "permanent formation", already present in traditional cultures according to the axiom "knowledge is never over".

The western approach is different where the problem is delegated to the clinical specialist and to the use of the "miraculous" drug, while in traditional cultures the healer tries to proceed together with the patient and his group in the direction of the root cause of the disorder that has triggered disharmony.

Still; another important difference between ethno-psychiatry and psychiatry lies in the conception of the etiology of discomfort: according to ethnopsychiatry, "culture" puts suffering into shape by elaborating and legitimizing containers; or disease models ready to wear; while in the psychiatric conception the "pathogenic" dimension (of the production of the disorder) is exalted; to be attributed to the biochemical functioning of the person.

In light of these aspects, Tobie Nathan was an excellent performer of the ethnopsychiatric approach; a bit of a doctor and a bit of a wizard. Being himself an immigrant (born in Egypt from a Jewish family); he immediately understood that the solution:

a) had to be found in the integration between the two therapeutic traditions (the western and the traditional), so as to create a therapeutic "super-device" conceived as "a machine that creates (and destroys) ties": its multi-ethnic group uses a therapeutic device that predisposes to the use of "techniques of creating meaning" such as divination (which in traditional cultures almost corresponds to our diagnosis) or the reference to the healing rituals used in the patient's culture of origin, in this group, the operators can move their interpretation both towards the "hysteria" universe (western code) and towards "possession" (traditional code), so as to be able to perceive what frame of reference and which intervention tools are more appropriate to the case in question. The efficacy of the «therapeutic technical device» is directly proportional to the capacity of this mechanism to «influence» the patient according to the desired therapeutic goals;

b) consisted in "constructing a theory of psychotherapy renouncing any use of the concept of psyche", thus freeing the field from all that series of useless discussions that have little to do with the aims of the psychotherapeutic technique. Psychotherapy should in fact consist of: 1) producing a certain relief in the patient; 2) in facilitating his "being in the world" through a stable restructuring of his psychic life.

Avoiding any kind of definition of psyche, it is thus possible to hypothesize a peace agreement between those who believe in the psyche as a function of the biological organism and those who believe in the dichotomy "psyche / body".

Basically, this approach is based on the assumption that: if a certain patient was born in a particular culture for which there are "demons and goblins" capable of possessing and making the life of the victim a torment, creating problems and inconveniences, what right does the therapist have to treat these culturally predefined contents as if they were the hallucinations of a schizophrenic !?

Modern psychiatry is therefore the preferred target of Nathan's most critical pages, which conceive it as a "relativistically based construct on the ideological basis of the (western) cultural system", therefore, he proposes re-reading psychoanalysis with three new postulates:

- 1) If it is admitted that non-Western peoples possess a psychism and a culture, we must therefore consider "that metaphorical organ that Freud called" psychic apparatus "as a machine for creating bonds";
- 2) There is no "pure" psychoanalysis that is devoid of seduction influence or suggestion: even the medicines of non-Western cultures therefore deserve equal dignity;
- 3) "psychotherapy does not exist, strictly speaking, but only "self-therapies" that can be triggered by" inductors "or" operators ";
- 4) The presence of the "multi-ethnic group" is fundamental for three reasons: a) to allow the interrogative circulation of the word, which becomes "complex, indirect and allusive, sometimes disturbing, always productive"; b) "to validate his sometimes disturbed perceptions and feelings, especially when the system is starting up"; c) "protect him from the suspicions of witchcraft that he will necessarily prove to those who use similar techniques". The Nathan group is generally composed of no less than fifteen people and performs "static functions" and "dynamic functions": the first consist in the creation of "a hybrid container" capable of coagulating the members of the group in something similar to a "Extended family", but also to a "tribe assembly", the aim is to reach the etiology by means of dialogues in the interrogative form in a not too defined dimension in which the group mediates between the main therapist and the patient the latter instead consist in constructing a non-univocal interpretative discourse in which the group has a function of "psychic and cultural support" and is itself "an" active object "that deconstructs the representation that the patient wishes to offer of his own disorder through a sort of semantic bombardment of great emotional value".
- 5) Referring to Freudian thought the "word" becomes the essential therapy.

2.3. The cultural and socio-anthropological approach⁵

In this approach it is central to the work of Ioan M. Lewis "Ecstatic Religions: Anthropological Study of Spiritual Possession and Shamanism" (1971), which decided to publish it after having studied anthropological and sociological aspects related to beliefs for about forty years and rituals in cultures where ecstatic religions are practiced.

Lewis's purpose was precisely to carry out a comparative analysis of religious beliefs, according to the simple distinction between "central cults" and "marginal cults", always bearing in mind that "the mystical experience (...) is rooted in the social environment in which it is obtained and with it must be put in relation".

The divinity that takes possession of man is therefore certainly the most decisive religious drama, however, in all the religions we find references to the possession, whether it is made by "good spirits" or "bad".

Transcendent experiences of this type have given the mystic the singular claim to direct the experiential knowledge of the divine and the authority to act as a privileged channel of communication between man and the supernatural.

Possession would therefore also offer the mystic the possibility of having direct experience of phenomena ancillary to possession (eg speaking the languages, clairvoyance, prophecy, etc.), so as to strengthen the belief in the existence of such episodes as supernatural.

Even the trance, as a mystical phenomenon, represented for some the temporary absence of the soul for others a real possession by a "supernatural power": for Lewis; while recognizing the dissociative condition characterized by the absence of voluntary movement and often from automatisms in action and thought, he did not relegate the sociological evaluation of the phenomenon to the background, recognizing a clear distinction rarely made in those years between "trance" and "possession" (eg Apulian tarantule), not considering them necessarily linked to the one to the other.

Always according to Lewis, it was useless to discuss the authenticity of the phenomena of possession but it was necessary to focus more on the socio-ethnopsychiatric key or in terms of "culturally ordered neuroses", shifting the attention more to interpersonal and non-spiritual problems.

However, Lewis's work seems to focus more on the individual and collective role than on the trance itself, highlighting the "primary gains" (psychic) and the "secondary gains" (social), even affirming the substantial technical superiority of the shaman over our "Modern" psychiatrist: in fact, even if shamanism would not be totally aware of it, the shaman would also deal with the patient's purely organic disorders but only after considering psychogenic disorders and other mental disorders that have their origin in interpersonal conflict and social. Therefore, Lewis defines "possession" as a "philosophy of power", in which spirits are hypotheses that guarantee for those who believe in it, a philosophy of ultimate causes, a theory of social tensions and power relations.

2.4. The esoteric approach⁶

The esoteric approach takes its cue from those mystery doctrines having as a general character secrecy and confidentiality.

The term appears for the first time in French in 1828, but in reality the terminology has its roots in Ancient Greece: in fact, "Esoteric" derives from the ancient Greek word *ἑσώτερικός* (esotericos); derived from *ἑσώτερος* (esoterus; interior). Already in 348 BC Aristotle used the adjective "exoteric", intended as public discourses of Platonic inspiration; or fragments of works of youth that have now been lost, such as Eudemus, Philosophy and Prosthetic. Aristotle (or so it is thought) must always use the term "esoteric", establishing the conduct of esoteric studies in daylight hours; while exoteric studies were centered in the afternoon band, as Jean-Paul Corsetti recalls in the work "History of Esotericism and the Occult Sciences": <<the error derives in part from the fact that his works accessible to reading, collected by Andronicus of Rhodes around 40 BC, mentioned numerous subjects characterizing esotericism. The Latin glosses of Cicero and Aulus Gellius, in the 1st and 2nd century AD, take up the Greek adjective without translating it. We have to wait for Luciano di Samosata that around 166 AD creates the term "esotericos"; at least, we find this adjective for the first time in his writings, although he could have borrowed it from earlier doxographers, such as the peripatetic Dicearco (4th century BC) or Adrastus (1st century BC)>>.

It will definitely be Clement of Alexandria; in "the Stromata" to separate the words "esoteric" (before that the term "acroamatic" and "exoteric" was used giving the former the meaning of "what is secret, mysterious, teachings reserved only for a few chosen disciples).

Esoteric studies, from this moment, are inextricably linked to the search for knowledge of the internal nature of man which lead through introspection to the rediscovery of one's knowledge and Truth. They were studies within the reach of a few and only a select few, in contrast to the term "exoteric", a word that indicates a knowledge open to everyone, for everyone.

With time, the terminological connotations changed, the temporal characteristics were abandoned and a concept focused exclusively on the knowledge offered to a few was passed.

The Enlightenment definitely marked the transition from science to occultism understood as the study of the magical and mystery arts to the prerogative of a few and only of elected or in any case initiates to the practices of witchcraft and magical art.

Alchemical studies flourished with renewed vigor and disciplines such as astrology, cabal, numerology and palmistry were dusted off from the past.

In 1992, the holder of the chair of History of the Esoteric Currents, in modern and contemporary Europe of the *école pratique des hautes études* in Paris, Antoine Faivre, proposed the first historical-religious definition of the notion of esotericism: each doctrine or form is esoteric of thought that is based on the six fundamental principles:

- a) The existence of an analogical correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm (the human being and the universe are one the reflection of the other);
- b) The idea of a living and animated nature;
- c) The notion of angelic (or at least spiritual) beings, mediators between man and God, or a series of intermediate cosmic levels between matter and pure spirit;
- d) The principle of inner transmutation;
- e) The practice of confluence of doctrinal sources;
- f) The principle of initiatory transmission.

However, this approach, according to Kocku von Stuckrad, turned out to be difficult to understand, eliminating the characteristics of the new age neopagan currents, including the Masonic traditions and the many minority western and eastern mystical currents, which contributed greatly to founding the contemporary esotericism (which for truth's sake has little to do with classical esotericism and the cult of origins).

Several scholars have experimented over time in the definition of "esotericism", such as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, Rudolf Steiner, René Guénon, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, Mircea Eliade, Frances Yates, Alexandre Koyré and Charles Puech: none of them has been able to grasp, however the writer's warning, the exact essence of esotericism, since esotericism is nothing but the set of studies of nature according to the original perspective of the cult of origins.

The term "occult" thus blends erroneously with the term "esoteric", pushing in the wrong direction a real global science, a science that embraces all human sciences in theory, from medicine to psychology, up to technical ones and math.

Think of the not too distant past: the first "sorcerers" were nothing more than doctors, pharmacists, chemists and herbalists, all professions that today have their own dignity and that found the exact location in the use of the means that nature offered.

Used to using and abusing chemicals, esotericism has become the science that studies the occult, removing the culture of nature and remedies that have always allowed us to cure all known diseases (not surprisingly penicillin is derived from a green mold, the so-called *Penicillium Notatum*).

Occult, therefore, referring to hidden knowledge (from the Latin *occultus*; hidden), contaminates the cult of origins, genetically modifying a noble science by muddying it with the use of completely modern terms, such as "paranormal" and "supernatural", when (as already mentioned) there is no paranormal but only the "normal not yet known".

The study of new currents of thought of neo-paganism and of the new age, which have little to do with the cult of origins has completely enucleated the object of the matter violating the very essence of scientific study, recovering mystery materials from the cylinder like astrology and alchemy, voodoo and popular beliefs, magic rites and numerology, "stuffing" them with new surreal concepts, completely unrelated to ancient sacred texts.

The creation of the French term "occultisme", from which the scandalous terminological confusion originates, is due to Eliphas Lévi (1810-1871); around 1845 AD; who probably derived it from the religious cultural tradition of the XVI century AD and from the occult philosophy of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (15th century); which in turn referred to the 12th century AD tradition.

Occultism thus became in effect the study of the occult and hidden wisdom, completely absorbing "esoteric" science, consecrating the terminological union.

The work of mystification continued at the hands of Aleister Crowley, in the 20th century AD, founder of a new current of Satanism, up to being incardinated in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

From this moment on there will no longer be any difference between "occultism" and "esotericism" (at least in global culture). In truth, however, the transmutation process did not begin with Eliphas Lévi: more than anything else; he coined the term then used in later years. Indeed; the latter took up concepts already studied in the Greek Empire, in the Roman Empire, in the Middle Ages and in Humanism.

The historical; religious and anthropological roots are truly ancient: with the advent of the figure of Jesus Christ and the Roman Apostolic Church (now Vatican City-State), the interpretative "confusion" was deliberately created to favor the advent of monotheism; robbing certain pagan beliefs and demonizing polytheism. But let's go with order.

However, historical and religious analysis suffers from a difficult contextualization, since the satanic phenomenon is not characterized by elements of absoluteness and certainty; before the nineteenth century, the c.d. "Traditional Satanism" was entrusted to the esoteric tradition, daughter of myths and superstition, knowledge of alchemy and rudimentary chemistry. Even the doctors and pharmacists of the time suffered from a certain "occult" influence on the typical knowledge of their profession, often confusing science and herbalism with the occult and phenomena related to the paranormal.

Thus "cultural" Satanism will spread from the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks to the vicissitudes of the Vintrase Boullan priests, culminating with the birth of "Masonic Satanism" (political strand of modern Satanism) by Gabriel Jogand.

In particular, Vintras, after an apparition of the Archangel Gabriel in 1839, began a career as a heterodox preacher and priest, to the point of founding a Work of Mercy, which celebrates bizarre masses consecrating hosts where drops of blood, crosses appear, Kabbalistic hearts and symbols, but in 1851 he received excommunication from Pope Pius IX. After the excommunication, Vintras is thus replaced by the priest Boullan who organizes "The Work of Repair", taking an interest in the Demon, presented as the sole responsible for incurable diseases, which can only be solved thanks to the intervention of the Consecrated persons, who use preparations which contain their urine and faces, as well as relics and fragments of consecrated hosts.

The same secret society will be joined a few years later by Aleister Crowley, a very complex figure and father of "post-modern Satanism", in the footsteps of Maria de Nagłowska, esotericist and scholar of religions, founder of the "Temple of Satan" in the city of Paris; brought back to life after a brief decadent period, in the twentieth century, by the English esotericist Aleister Crowley; writer of a copious handbook on esoteric and satanic rituals which, however, reproached Satan's followers for believing that the Devil really existed as a person physical and not as a symbol of freedom.

Following in the footsteps of this important contemporary author, in the United States a real current of thought will open up, still present today:

- a) first of all, by John Whiteside Parsons, in the thirties and forties, who elaborated Crowley's ideas, transformed them into the cult of the Antichrist, as a liberator of the suffocating Catholic presence;
- b) in secundis, by Kenneth Anger and Anton Szandor LaVey (pseudonym of Howard Stanton LeVey), the "Magic Circle" and LaVey, a few years later, the "Church of Satan" will be founded in the sixties. In particular, LaVey called the "Black Pope" was the author of various texts that still today constitute the reference point for modern Satanist culture;
- c) finally, Micheal Equino, U.S.A. Army specialist in disinformation and psychological warfare; in the wake of his predecessors, he founded the "Temple of Set", on the basis of the fact that misinformation about Christianity and Catholicism in general was the tool to shape people's minds making them become puppets in the hands of power religious.

Starting from 1990, in the wake of continuous cultural initiatives and new studies on the new age, daughters of the 60s, 70s and 80s of the same century, a new academic discipline will come into force in the field of religious sciences: the study of esoterism. With arrogance and arrogance, religious scholars claim the right to study the scientific, methodological and epistemological profiles of such a complex subject; without bothering to break it down into the contents and key concepts of occultism and parapsychology.

We then rearrange the ideas and take stock of what was said in the introduction and in the first chapter of this work. We certainly know that:

- a) The "paranormal" does not exist but the "supernatural" and must be understood as something unknown (and therefore to be studied);
- b) "esotericism" is the science that studies human knowledge, from every point of view, according to methods typical of the place and time in which the phenomenon is studied;
- c) "esotericism" or "cult of origins" also embraces philosophical and religious cults that take care to deepen the most intimate and profound aspects of the human being;
- d) "esotericism" or "cult of origins" is a different container from that of "occultism" or mysterious and mystery phenomena, since, the former has ancestral origins and studies the phenomenon from a scientific and technical point of view the second has modern origins and is more influenced by the occultist tradition, superstitions and religious ignorance;
- e) from a certain historical period; "esoterism" or "cult of origins" is mistakenly equated with occultism; giving life to modern Satanism;
- f) Satan (and Lucifer; as we will see better) is a product of the Judeo-Christian and then Catholic religion;
- g) The technical and scientific study of the "X" phenomenon must be based on the laws known at the time and at the time of the investigation, deepening sociological, anthropological, psychological, legal, technical and scientific profiles in general (clinical, physical, chemical, mathematical, ...).

On the basis of what has been said; "satanic phenomenon", closely connected in the West with the demonic possessory phenomenon, embraces any fact or event; susceptible of observation that has as its ultimate goal the pursuit of the ideals of the satanic religion, a faithful belief centered in the figure of Satan; the fallen angel of God (according to Catholic worship). A verbal association that etymologically derives from the Greek -for the monomial "phenomenon"-; "Phainomenon" and from the Hebrew - for the "satanic" monomial - "Satan"; that is an opponent; with the suffix "-ism"; used for the formation of abstract words that indicate doctrines and movements of polyhedral origins. In particular, "Satanism" in the religious sense, for Introvigne, indicates: << (...) the adoration or veneration by organized groups in the form of movement, through repeated practices of a cultural or liturgical type of the character called Satan (or Devil) in the Bible (...)>>, as the decadent writer Huysmans remembers: << (...) Satanism is an attitude that consists in a sacrilegious practice, in a moral rebellion, in a spiritual orgy, in an aberration that is not ideal ideal and Christian, it also resides in enjoyment tempered by fear (...), the forbidden joy of transferring to God the gifts and prayers due to God, consists in the non-observance of the Catholic precepts which are followed upside down, committing to more severely abuse Christ, the sins that he has more expressly cursed: the contamination of worship and the carnal orgy (...)>>.

According to Prof. R. Noblet; a professor at the University of Southern California, ten thousand Satanist congregations were active in 1946, in 1976, they became almost forty-eight thousand and in 1985 even one hundred and thirty-five thousand, also thanks to the growth of the Church of Satan among the sixties and the seventies. At the end of the twentieth century; according to some statistics, the "satanisms" operating only in the USA; in the early 2000s were over one million.

All however adherents to six different currents of thought:

- a) in "*Rationalist Satanism*" of the second half of the twentieth century, founded by LaVey, Satan is not a living physical creature but a key to philosophical and esoteric reading to live a life according to materialistic, hedonistic, anti-Christian and humanistic principles (the man at the center of worship).
- b) in the "*traditionalist Satanism*", typical of the Judeo-Christian culture shaped then by the fathers of Catholicism, they see Satan as the "prince of darkness" and "the fallen angel" described in the Bible, and therefore adore him for his decision to have rebelled against God.
- c) in "*occultist Satanism*" of the first half of the twentieth century, founded by Crowley and with a clear esoteric imprint, Satan is an ancient, primordial, non-evil entity, capable of giving knowledge and powers, preparation and universal awareness.
- d) in the "*Gnostic or scientific Satanism*" of the last twenty years of the twentieth century, founded by Dean Joseph Martin, Satan is an inferior entity / divinity forced by the Catholic God to rebellion. Taking up philosophical and religious concepts typical of Pythagoreanism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism and Jewish Kabbalism, he states that everything can be explained by science and knowledge.
- e) in "*acid Satanism*", typical of the sick and deviated youth subculture, Satan is the pretext to devote himself to criminal episodes, including violent actions, profanations, sexual abuse and drugs;
- f) in "*Luciferism*", a sub-type of "rational Satanism", Satan does not exist and only Lucifer is considered, understood not as being really existing but as a philosophy of life centered both on materialistic, hedonistic, anti-Christian and humanistic principles (typical of satanic-rational worship), both on the glorification of the ego and primordial instincts.

Many are the names that accompany the iconography of this mysterious entity. "Satan" is undoubtedly the best known name and derives from the Hebrew "Satan" that is "adversary" or also "he who opposes" or "accuser" or "contradictor". It is according to the Judeo-Christian tradition an angel rebellious to God, in particular in the monotheistic religions derived from the Jewish one, it is the incarnation and the personification of the principle of supreme evil, as opposed to God, the principle of the highest good. But is it really so? Is it the decayed angel described by Catholics or does its figure actually derive from other more ancestral cultures?

First of all, we focus on the etymology of the name. Satan, in the Jewish tradition, appears for the first time with the word "שָׂטָן" *šaṭān*, in the Torah (in numbers 22.22), it is an angel (מַלְאָךְ *mal'akh*) of God whose purpose is to set himself up as an adversary against Balaam, rising along his path with the sword drawn in his hand, with the aim of voiding that he travels along a wrong road and that he falls in an irreparable error. So far nothing different from the Catholic concept of angel

Again, if we analyze the name by which Satan is called in the esoteric melodrama, a branch of the Jewish Judaic type of occultism dedicated to the study of angels and celestial creatures, the term *Satanel* appears, that is the angel to whom God is entrusted the task of verifying the level of piety of Man or his love and his dedication to God himself. And with him also many other fallen brothers become demons for the modern tradition, such as Astarte, Belfagor, Belzebù, Belial, Lilith, Asmodeus, Azazel, Baal, Dagon, Moloch, Mammon, Mephistopheles and many others; all names deriving from the deities of the peoples of the present land of Palestine (and in general of Mesopotamian), such as the Moabites, the Canaanites, the Edomites, the Jebusites, the Philistines, the Amorites, the Amarrites and the Phoenicians, including the Jews themselves opposed to the worship of Yahweh or El of Israel.

And it is here that we could ask ourselves the question: << If many demons and angels like Uriel, Gabriel and Michael, have etymologically a root deriving from names of divinities of the Mesopotamian, Assyrian-Babylonian cult and of the Phoenician-Canaanite area; how come doesn't the same rule apply to Satan? >>.

Finding the answer to this question, in terms of criminal analysis of the satanic phenomenon, is fundamental as it could help you find the real motive that drives certain subjects to commit one or more crimes in the name of Satan. Going back in time keeping in mind the question to be solved it seems that following the cult of the Sun already dear to the terrestrial populations since the writing era Satan was actually a minor divinity mythologically a component of the divine lineage to all effects with qualities very different from the Judaic-Christian representation; as a son of a renegade God and a fallen angel.

But let's go with order. Already from the Age of Horus (Egyptian deity of the Sun), there existed an entity completely identical to Satan, which was called "Samael" and also known by the Jewish people from the third century BC (amoraic period) "סַמְאֵל" (ie punishment of God) as an angel sent by God as "angel of death", as incapable of distinguishing good from evil; destructive angel that competes with the divine will at the death of men, but this would confirm the Judeo-Christian thesis that Satan is nothing but an angel.

Everything seems to be perfectly coherent; were it not for one particular: the apocryphal text of the Apocalypse of Baruch; in Greek (4.9) called Satan with the name of *Sammuel*, etymologically linked precisely to the Assyrian-Babylonian culture, the text tells us the true story of this entity, according to which he became Satan, planting the doubt that caused the fall of Adam and for this he was condemned to be Satan.

But that is not all. In another apocryphal text, called the Ascension of Isaiah, always written in Greek but probably of Essene origin, Satan was called (as well as Samael) also "Belial", that is terms that have etymologically links with the Assyrian-Babylonian culture.

And if then all these names are associated with Satan, it is reasonable to think that the origins of this entity have deeper roots than the common name used by Judeo-Christian culture. Indeed, confirming this, in the Christian context of the sacred scriptures approved by the CEI, Satan appears iconographically as the Archangel of Evil, a figure in clear contrast with God, called before the fall "Lucifer" (from the Latin "Lucifer" or from Greek "Phosphoros"; ie "Light-bearer"). Therefore it is the same Catholic culture that recognizes in Satan the name given to the fallen entity called before the defeat "Lucifer".

And who was "Lucifer"? In Greek-Roman mythology, "Lucifer" was a minor deity of light and morning; corresponding to the Greek divinity of light "Eosphorus" (ie "Bearer of the Dawn") or "Phosphorus" (ie "Light-bearer"), name given to the "Morning Star", son of Eos (Goddess of the Dawn) and of the Titan Astreo, father of Dedalion and Ceice (Ceyx), King of Thessaly; in fact, in the Greek-Roman religion, there existed cults dedicated to deities called "Lucifer" (ie "Light Bearers") such as Diana and Juno in the feminine and Apollo in the masculine; of which an epithet was Phosphoros; which translated into Latin literally means Lucifer.

And it is in this context that the story is reported, from the Christian Scriptures and from the writings of the Fathers of the Church, such as Thomas Aquinas, St. Benedict, St. Jerome, Tertullian, Origen, St. Gregory the Great, St. Cyprian of Carthage, St. Bernard of Chiaravalle and Saint Augustine of Canterbury, wanted Lucifer in the role of the most beautiful Archangel, more shining and closer to God, who however, precisely because of his closeness, believed he was not only like God, but more powerful than the Almighty himself, thus sinning of blasphemous pride and rebelling against the will of God.

A story, in short, that definitively transforms a lower, positive and enlightening divinity, wanted by God as close as possible, to a fallen angel, a sworn enemy and lord of undisputed evil: from Samael (minor deity of the Assyrian-Babylonian culture, taken from the Christian cult as angel of God) to Lucifer (Roman divinity of light and morning, linked to the planet Venus), from Lucifer to Satan (fallen angel).

The detailed and extraordinary (mythical) story of this divinity is also narrated by the English poet John Milton in an epic poem that tells exactly all the rebellion, the war in Heaven and the fall.

In essence, from the cult of the Sun, the Egyptian minor God Seth becomes Satan, passing through Ishtar, Samael, Astarte, Inanna, Phosphoros (or other Typhon) and Lucifer; gradually becoming from minor

divinity dispenser of wisdom, knowledge, resolute in war, inspiration and guardian of the truth, to archangel, to end up as a heavenly creature fallen into a demon.

And this esoteric interpretation takes us straight to the answer we were looking for about the question posed at the beginning of the previous paragraph: << If, therefore, Lucifer is not the fallen Christian angel but is a minor divinity dispenser of wisdom and knowledge, why should he ever to be glorified through impure, illicit and evil deeds?>>.

It is therefore a very dangerous area that is told by the esoteric approach. This work cannot represent the natural site for a research centered only on this line, however, the hypothesis (not yet demonstrated) of the existence of "demons" understood only as spiritistic entities appears interesting. An idea that deserves to be deepened to discover how the reality that surrounds us is richer than the known appearance. One question: what would happen if we possessed the senses of felines, which perceived four times more and audibly five times more visually? Perhaps we would discover that our way of perceiving reality is quite relative. And if our trusted four-legged friends really saw "something"; when we watch them linger with their eyes in the "darkness" of the corridors of our homes?

2.5. The religious approach

This approach is linked to the cult of reference and culminates with the staging of the rite of liberation from evil or exorcism. More in detail, exorcism is the term used to describe the set of practices and rituals considered effective, in a religious context, in order to drive away an alleged demonic or evil presence from a person; an animal or a place. The person in charge of exorcisms is called "exorcist" and his instruments are prayers, formulas, gestures, symbols, icons, relics and "blessed" objects.

<<[...] The concept of evil possession and the practice of exorcism are very ancient and widespread. The New Testament includes among the miracles of Jesus Christ the liberation of some possessed; as in the case of the demoniac of Gerasa (see Gospel according to Luke 8,26-39 and Mark 5,1-20). It should also be remembered that liberation from the demons is an integral part of the Gospel message and of the apostolic mission of the Church in the world (... Heal the sick raise the dead heal the lepers cast out demons for free you have received freely given, Matthew 10,8). For this reason and for the unbroken tradition, diabolic possession was part of the creed of Christianity from its inception, exorcism, as a pious practice of liberation from the devil, was and still is a practice recognized and promoted by the Catholic Church; the Orthodox Church and various Protestant Churches. (...) In the Kabbalah and in the European Jewish tradition, a person may be possessed by an evil spirit called dybbuk, who is believed to be the wandering soul of a dead person who escaped from Gehenna (a Hebrew word freely translated as "hell"). According to this belief, a soul that has failed to fulfill its mission during life has a second chance to accomplish it by becoming a dybbuk. The dybbuk must be exorcised with a formal religious rite. (...) In the context of the Catholic Church, exorcism with the exception of ordinary exorcism practiced on the occasion of baptism is a sacramental practicable only by bishops or by a priest who has obtained the mandate from his own bishop. In the past the exorcist was the third ministry among minor orders, but it was only a formal title and was abolished with the Second Vatican Council [...] >> .

2.6. The western psychoanalytic approach ⁸

The father of psychoanalysis is undoubtedly the unrepentant "Jewish" atheist and heretic Sigmund Freud, despite his numerous works related to religious themes, such as *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* (1907), *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *Preface to "Problems of Psychology of Religion"* by T. Reik (1919), *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), *A Religious Experience* (1928) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). Freud undoubtedly knew the Bible and easily cited the Old and New Testaments, although he also possessed knowledge of the religion of the Romans, Greeks, Egyptians and other ancient peoples.

He had information; though not very in-depth, about the religions of India and China. In the preceding paragraphs, therefore, this relationship with religion emerged, emphasizing how the Jewish spirit has for better or for worse marked its personality. Psychoanalysis also inevitably suffered from the Jewish spirit of its founding father, for G. Brondino (1995 - 1996): "Modern psychotherapy" is, at least to some extent, the fulfillment of Jewish-Christian ethics.

In particular, the author mainly considers four areas of psychoanalysis in which we can find, with greater evidence, the Jewish influence: introspection, sexuality, dream interpretation and transference. In *Totem and Tabù* (1912 - 1913), he then accepts the subdivision of the stages of human development into animistic (mythological), religious and scientific: "Animism in itself is not yet a religion; but contains the premises on which we build more late religions". He also affirms that the term animism indicates the concept according to which souls exist, in a more general sense it is the doctrine of spiritual beings in general, and points out that: "They [the primitives] populate the world with a number of benevolent or malevolent spiritual beings, they attribute to these spirits and demons the cause of natural events, and they believe that they not only vivify animals and plants, but also the inanimate things of the universe. A third element, and perhaps the most important, of this primitive 'natural philosophy' appears to us to be far less singular, since we ourselves have not yet distanced ourselves from it enough, even though we have significantly limited the existence of spirits and although today we explain the natural processes based on the hypothesis of impersonal physical forces: it is the primitive belief that even individual human beings are subject to an analogous animation".

According to S. Freud, animism was the first image of the world to which man arrived: it was a normal fact for primitive man, in that he knew how the world was made, he knew it the same way that perceived himself, therefore it is not surprising that primitive man dislocates in the external world relations inherent to his own psychic structure. Spirits and demons are nothing but projections of the emotions of primitive man: he transforms his affective charges into characters with whom he populates the world. The primitive finds his own inner mental processes outside himself, in a similar way to that followed by a paranoid. Therefore, for primitives, men, animals and things contain a benevolent spirit or a demon that guides and animates them.

Finally, Freud interested in medieval witchcraft and demonic possession, wrote:

- a) In *Isteria* (1888): "In the Middle Ages neurosis played an important part in the history of civilization, taking epidemic forms by virtue of a psychic contagion, it was at the root of the elements of reality that existed in the stories of obsessed and witchcraft. [...] The poor hysterics, who in previous centuries were burned or exorcised as obsessed, in our enlightened age were subject only to the curse of ridicule: their state was considered the result of simulation and exaggeration; unworthy of clinical observation";
- b) In *Character and anal eroticism* (1908): "[...] And certainly the devil is nothing but the personification of the unconscious instinctual life removed". In the session of January 27, 1909 of the Psychoanalytic Society of Vienna, Hugo Heller gave a report on *The History of the Devil*. Freud intervened in the debate in a lively and interested manner, and spoke at length about the figure of the Devil, whose temptations, he said, were exploited in the Middle Ages to justify forbidden freedoms. The father of psychoanalysis attributed to the greater repression following the Reformation the transformation of the Devil into a figure of pure wickedness.
- c) In *Totem and Tabù* (1912): The states of demonic possession correspond to our neuroses, for the explanation of which we resort again to psychic forces. The demons are thus bad, repudiated desires, which derive from drive motions that have been rejected and removed. We do nothing more than eliminate the projection into the external world hypothesized in the Middle Ages about such psychic entities, we believe that they originated in the intimate life of the sick where they actually dwell.

L. de Urtubey (1983) stated later, Freudian Psychoanalysis considers the Devil to be a complex figure; similar to a dream figure: it is human and animal, male and female, it has monstrous features, but it is the most beautiful of creatures. The devil is marked by ambivalence. According to the author, therefore, it is possible to consider both the Devil as a metaphor for the impulses removed and the drives removed as a metaphor for the Devil. The idea of the Devil as a representative of his father develops very early in S. Freud, but unlike the previous hypothesis that considered the Devil a representative of the removed impulses, he met in his mind resistances that lasted about twenty-five years. The work in which S. Freud clearly expresses the hypothesis of the father / devil identification is a demonic neurosis in the tenth century (1922); published in 1923. Therefore, he clearly remembers that Freud had to solve some of his problems (it is due "Come to terms" with them), not least the relationship with his father, before he managed to recover from the depression in which he had fallen following his death.

In 1912, E. Jones published a work on the psychoanalytic significance of nightmares and the link these have with some medieval beliefs entitled "Psychoanalysis of the Nightmare". In particular, in this work, the author examines the psychological origin and the onerous character of some figures that populated the imagination of the citizen: the Vampire, the Werewolf, the witches and the Devil. In reference to the latter, for him it was nothing but the representative of the wickedness of man. Furthermore, according to Jones, the devil is closely related to the Oedipus complex: "The belief in the Devil represents in large part an exteriorization of two sets of desires removed, both derived, ultimately, from the infantile Oedipus complex: a) the desire to imitate some aspects of the father figure; b) the desire to challenge the father; in a ballad between emulation and hostility".

In 1914, Otto Rank publishes, in the *Imago* magazine, an article entitled "The Double", in which he states that the Devil is "the last religious emanation of the fear of death" and adds that the sense of guilt pushes the hero not to take charge of some actions performed by his ego, he then delegates to a double; which is represented by the Devil. Furthermore, he believes that Satan resulted from the projection onto the external world of aggressive feelings of the individual, implemented to quell the feelings of guilt. The accusing Satan corresponds to the mechanism of paranoid projection: the reproaches that the individual advances to himself are projected to the outside, and verbalized by means of another figure (in this case the Devil). Also in 1914, T. Reik published "The Religious Rite". In a chapter of this work, entitled "The *couvade*" and the psychogenesis of reprisals, where the author describes some primitive rituals that aim to keep the demons away during the birth of women. The author claims that the demons are the result of the projection of aggressive unconscious impulses, similar to those that one feels when one dies. A person who experiences contradictory feelings of hostility and tenderness towards his father can lighten the situation in which he finds himself by transplanting the unconscious part of his hostile impulses into the outside world. If this operation succeeds that is, if the attempt to apply one's hostile feelings to others is successful, the individual no longer feels bad impulses towards the father; but they are the evil demons that hate the father; while he feels only tenderness and love in his regards.

Even A. Adler talked about the Devil, although without important insights. He spoke about it on the occasion of the session of January 27, 1909 of the Psychoanalytic Society of Vienna in which H. Heller presented his article on The History of the Devil. Here we have put forward some thoughts regarding:

- the figure of the Devil, or a condensation of what society condemns, is a screen figure, a figure that allows the instinctual motions removed to be represented to the conscience and recognized by it. Therefore, it is a personification of the repressed;
- to the elements related to Satan or the traits of cruelty that derive from the thirst for power and cruelty of the Jesuits and from the fact that the witch hunt has struck above all the humble.

Finally, but not in order of importance; the contribution of the Swiss non-believer Carl Gustav Jung; a disciple of Freud. Retracing his works related to the religious world, such as *Psychoanalysis and Spiritual Direction* (1928), *Relationships of Psychotherapy with the Treatment of Souls* (1932), *Psychological Commentary on the "Bardo Thödol"* (The Tibetan Book of the Dead) (1935), *Yoga and the West* (1936), *Psychology and religion* (1938), *Psychoanalytic interpretation of the dogma of the Trinity* (1948), *Preface to "I Ching"* (1950), *Response to Job* (1952), *On the problem of the symbol of Christ* (1953), *The symbol of transformation in the mass* (1954), *Psychological commentary on the "Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation"* (1954) and *Good and Evil in analytic psychology* (1959). G. Brondino (1995-1996) believes that Jungian thought about religion has gone through three phases or three periods, which of course are not to be considered as clearly separated from one another: gnostic period (a); agnostic period (b) and symbolic period (c):

- in the first period, Jung fully adheres to Freudian thought, believing God to be the result of the projection of the image of the father outside. God replaces the figure of the virtuous and good father, on the other the Devil replaces the evil and cruel father;
- in the second period; which occurs between 1912 and 1938, Jung continues in his reflections on religion in an increasingly independent manner from Freudian thought. He goes so far as to state that religious projections are unconscious and substitute responses to unfulfilled desires. According to Jung, religious images have an archetypal character. Religion; consequently, cannot be reduced to a simple projection of removed instincts, but to a projection of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. Even the Devil, like God, is a "power of the unconscious", as real as God and endowed with the same capacity to influence consciousness. The unconscious powers have their own will, independent of that of the Ego, which does not necessarily coincide with it. Indeed, often these two wills are in contrast.
- in the third period, Jung conceives religion as a real experience of the "numinous". Religion is in a close, vital relationship with the images that spontaneously flow from the unconscious. The "a-moral" conception of Yahweh allows C. G. Jung to reject the conception of a *Dio summum bonum*, and to support a vision of good and evil as inseparable parts of a whole. In this period, Jung often dealt with the theme of the demonic, considering Satan not a metaphor but considers it really existing. Satan lives in the unconscious, it is the other face of God, his dark side, psychologically it corresponds to the Shadow and the comparison with it can lead to the identification.

2.7. The clinical and psychopathological approach. Essential profiles⁹

This approach is characterized by its particular pragmatism: only if clear clinical indicators are present to define a diagnosis, then the event will have its explanation.

The "possessory phenomenon" here is investigated from a strictly medical point of view, where manifestation is the container of physical symptoms and clinical investigations are the tools to be used to clarify the dynamics, both from a strictly medical point of view and under the psychiatric profile. You will have to proceed with the patient's medical history and then integrate the documentation with that of the family members.

Temporal and frontal lobe tumors can give rise to symptoms very similar to possession, as well as psychotic delusions, personality dissociations and schizophrenia. Again, metabolic syndromes and childhood traumas can explain the phenomenon in its entirety, in almost all cases.

In this work, the issues related to this approach will not be studied in depth, it is enough to think only that (as already expressed in the first paragraph of the second chapter of the present work) the first investigation on the patient must necessarily focus on these analytical aspects. However; for reasons of argumentative completeness; what follows will be referred to the psychopathological aspects of the phenomenon "demonic possession". The cases of alleged diabolical possession, moreover, have always been, over the centuries, the subject of debate and contention between theologians and scholars.

In the 16th century; an era dominated by the processes of the Inquisition and witchcraft, doctors such as C. Agrippa, J. De Wier and J. Schenk considered the possessed of the mentally ill, opposing the current ideas of their time, which saw the action there of the Devil.

In the XVIII century; affirms M. Declich (1962), forerunners of a psychiatric study of diabolical possessions were P. Hecquet, who for the first time proposed a psychiatric therapy of the demon-possessed and B. De Sauvage; who defined the "demonmanias", as a melancholy delirium. In 1858, however; Esquirol defined demonmanias as a religious form of melancholy. Then, Kraft-Ebing, who recognized the delusions of possession in the paranoiacs and placed hallucinations and cenestesopathies in the foreground.

Always according to M. Declich (1962), within contemporary psychiatric studies on diabolical possessions, it is possible to identify 3 research addresses:

- I. The first address is aimed at framing; in the context of demonic possessions; precise "nosological pictures";
- II. The second address is aimed at the study of diabolical possessions in relation to the "morbid" forms of which they represent the more or less significant expression;
- III. Finally; the third goal is the study of the psychogenetic and dynamic process of possession.

The Dictionary of psychiatry of L.E. Hinsie and R.J. Campbell (1970) does not consider possession a psychiatric entity, but however the authors insert in their work the term possession ideas, which corresponds to the following definition: "Delusional conviction of being possessed from another body that controls gestures; words and thoughts. It can be called a demon (demonmanias; demonopathy) or an animal (zoopathy)". In essence, a delusion, a delusional conviction, which can take on different forms, and which pervades all the actions and thoughts of the subject.

The DSM-V (2013) inserts; in line with the DSM-IV-TR; the trance of possession within the dissociative trance disorder.

Séglas instead distinguishes different forms of delusions present in diabolical possession: first, it takes into consideration demonopathy, which defines as persecution; external or internal; by the devil; then; true demonomania, whereby the subject has the feeling of becoming the devil, finally, demonolatry, where by the individual worships demons.

However, it is L. Gayral and J. Gayral (1944) that traces the most exhaustive classification of delusions present in the possession, recognizing five types of delusions:

- I) The first is the "demonolatric delirium", connected to the veneration of demons;
- II) The second is the "damnophobic delusion", characterized by the fear of eternal damnation;
- III) The third is the "demonopathic delusion", in turn distinguished in external and internal: in the first variant, the Devil acts from the outside through the sensory receptors, while; in the second, the Devil acts from within through an action cenestesopatic and psychological;
- IV) The fourth is the "demonoantropic delirium", for which the normal personality of the individual is replaced by that of the Devil;
- V) The fifth is the "ethical form of the delusions of diabolical possession", characterized by an ethical crisis on the part of those affected.

Finally, for H. Ellenberger (1970), the clinical manifestations of diabolical possession can be triple:

- a) the former falls within the framework of a serious mental illness, generally schizophrenia or psychosis; which takes the form of diabolical possession;
- b) the second clinical form of diabolical possession is latent possession, made active by means of an exorcism carried out in order to cure physical or mental ills;
- c) the third is spontaneous active possession, considered a more or less serious form of hysterical neurosis.

And yet, the possessed person often presents very peculiar and characteristic symptoms, as he has already seen: a) the aversion to the sacred and to the figure of Christ; b) unnatural force; c) knowledge of dead or ancient languages, never studied or previously known; d) physical pain and feeling of loss of control due to spiritual beings who possess their own bodies; e) vulgar and scurrilous speech; often with

the emission of guttural or otherwise characteristic sounds to be profound; f) the emission of strong odors due to sulfur scents; g) the emaciated and painful appearance, with marks on the body and self-inflicted wounds; h) the visual expression clearly changed with eye color tending to black, red, yellow or white, to completely cover the whole eye; i) the ability to predict future events.

How to explain them scientifically? Not infrequently, the possessed is a religious subject or immersed in a strongly religious context, where the sense of guilt is the engine of human relationships: the fear towards God or towards the strict rules dogmatized by Catholicism would generate in the most sensitive and vulnerable subject the fear of not being up to the situation; causing the possessory status as a compensatory condition necessary for self-punishment.

The researcher and expert Armando de Vincentiis points out that: <<[...] numerous religious cultures use the term possession to indicate the presence, in a subject, of an entity of a supernatural nature. According to this belief the entity, almost always demonic, would take command of the individual's body and express itself through it. There are several distinctions in both anthropological and theological fields that allow a classification of the different forms of possession. The anthropological study of the various expressions of possession in primitive cultures has made it possible to distinguish what are called "positive possessions", in which the subject would host a spirit of a benign nature and whose function would be to moralize and advise one's own group, and the "negative possessions", in which the host would be represented by an evil spirit with the function of bringing confusion to his own community. A further distinction is made in the context of Catholic theology, that is, the "somnambulistic possession" where the personality of the individual is totally replaced by the supernatural one, and the "lucid possession" in which the subject maintains his behavior intact, but feels he is hosting a negative presence. It should be borne in mind that the phenomenon of possession is only the consequence of a religious belief and has no foundation in science, in every religious tradition the phenomenon is expressed differently following the rules of its own culture. A Christian may believe he is possessed by the devil, while a shaman can claim to house the spirits belonging to his tradition (spirit of the sea; of the forest, etc.). Although theology tries to define precise criteria through which it is possible to diagnose a possession; such as aversion to the sacred, incomprehensible language, change of personality, etc.; there are no objective data and the aforementioned criteria can be perfectly framed within various forms of psychopathological disorders well known. There are numerous psychiatric pathologies that, in a religious context, are defined as possessions. The conviction of being invaded by a foreign entity is typical of many psychiatric syndromes, such as some forms of schizophrenic psychosis, hysterical neurosis and depressive delusions. In many situations the conviction of being possessed is only the consequence of a suggestion thanks to which a subject; who believes in the devil, "convinces himself" of being governed by it and behaves following the role dictated by his religious tradition. There are occasions when some individuals use, more or less voluntarily, the "excuse" of possession to obtain secondary benefits, such as attributing blame to the devil to justify a negative action; for example a crime [...] >>.

Who, therefore, prefers the spiritistic hypothesis, necessarily supports the more esoteric and occult interpretation: a spirit takes possession of the physical body of an individual completely destroying its defenses. Whoever supports this vision implicitly accepts that a human being is composed of not less than four parts: material body (physical), mental body (mind), spirit or spiritual body (spirit) and animistic body (soul). The external spirit would then take possession of the body of others, subjugating the spirit. The "possession" is therefore a situation in which it is considered a person inhabited by a supernatural being (be it a spirit, a demon or a God).

In Christianity, this "being" is usually interpreted as a demon, and for this it is called "demonic possession", according to the sacred text of the New Testament, where episodes are reported in which Jesus Christ confronts and frees some "demon-possessed". Even some Protestant churches, still, recognize possession and exorcism, although the practice is much less formal while in the Orthodox church.

every negative manifestation (difficulty, possession, illness, ...) is therefore considered as a direct action of the devil, therefore it is necessary to raise one's prayer for the healing-liberation of every person who requests it with faith and humility; without seeking its causes. (...) From the scientific point of view, however, the phenomenon has necessarily different connotations and completely detached from religious belief and popular superstition.

In fact; the Italian position of CICAP; the Italian Committee for the Control of Affirmations on Pseudosciences, is clear: << [...]The phenomenon of demonic possession is not phenomenologically different from the picture of divine possession (ecstasy): what changes is the different meaning attributed to this experience. In the first the invader is considered to be of an evil nature, in the second the invader is of divine origin, as a consequence; the emotional experiences of the possessed are of extreme anguish in one and of joy and bliss in the other. Here, our attention will be focused on demonic (malign) possession; referring the reader to other sources for the divine one.

In the Catholic sphere, it is possible to make a further distinction on this phenomenon. Possession can in fact be "lucid" (the subject is absolutely aware of the presence within himself of an external entity, mysterious and negative) or "somnambulist" (the invader takes total control of the body and the subject's actions, the whose personality is totally submerged). What creates fascination, fuss and terror, in the Catholic sphere, is this last form of possession. The "exorcists" carry out a diagnosis of possession after having found some signs, in their way of seeing, of no psychiatric relevance and therefore, considered unexplained and supernatural: the knowledge of unknown languages, the knowledge of distant facts or writings never read, an extraordinary physical strength and finally a shocking aversion to the sacred (Balducci, 1988). Before examining the criteria set out above, it is worth remembering that behaviors with similar characteristics can be found in all forms of psychiatric pathology (Mastronardi, 1995) and in other non-Catholic cultures, with the interesting observation that many possession behaviors take on different meanings according to the different cultural models to which they belong. In some peoples, certain attitudes do not even have a religious meaning, but become part of the folkloristic rituals of everyday life (Lewis, 1972). Returning to the criteria of possession, we will observe that even these are not subtractable to psychological observation and for each one we will give the right reading:

a) *Unknown languages*. It is important to remember that, as far as we know, a whole speech has never been recorded with a language unknown to the subject possessed and known by others, such as English, German, Russian, etc. Strangely, it is only a matter of languages unknown to the same exorcists, such as Aramaic or other ancient dialects. A controlled study has instead shown that the language of the possessed is actually a language without meaning, which uses the fundamental phonemes of its own language, with a very restricted code similar to that of children in the early stages of vocalization and mixed with foreign words of universal knowledge (Pattison, 1973). The coherence of the discourse is, very probably, only a mental construction of the listener who, taken by suggestion and wonder, momentarily loses his critical sense;

b) *Knowledge of remote and future facts*. This criterion is perfectly explainable with a phenomenon well known to psychologists, "cryptomnesia". It will have happened to many to see sentences, songs or poems deemed long forgotten or never learned to resurface, and how much wonder on the part of others has been created in the face of a phenomenon, so extraordinary that it is considered paranormal. In reality, the event is only the consequence of a strange memory behavior thanks to which facts, events, phrases or images, once perceived and stored in the mind, are removed and apparently forgotten and then resurface years later, giving idea of a phenomenon out of nature;

c) *Extraordinary strength*. On this point it is not necessary to dwell much, any psychiatrist is aware of the fact that some pathological states may, for brief moments, give rise to a superior force.

However, in the possessed man this force never goes beyond the normal physiological laws. We have never seen a possessed bend under the eyes of all a thick steel bar;

d) The aversion to the sacred. If you try to spray holy water on a possessed person, you will observe a reaction of anguish and dismay.

But as long as a double-blind experiment, in which neither the experimenter nor the demon-possessor is aware of the fact that he is spraying blessed water or unblessed water; will highlight the reality of this phenomenon, it must be considered simply as an unconscious due recitation to an identification in the role of possessed by the Devil. I do not consider the discourse on demonic possession to be concluded, but I believe that the reader can no longer avoid considering what was said here and I invite him to look further into the matter by observing it also.

3. The integrated approach

On these assumptions; we will now try to trace the diabolical "forms", starting from the assumption that possession is the manifestation of a psychiatric disorder, according to a thesis that could be defined as "integrated approach", which takes into account all the positions analyzed so far, giving space, however, to the scientific elements of research:

- I) **Form I (sub-acute)**: possession as a manifestation of "drug intoxication disorder". The phenomenon is clearly linked to a specific cause that, if removed, would cause the disappearance of the symptoms connected to it. Episodes of this type therefore fall into the occasional event, mainly linked to the psychotropic substance taken. In this category can be included the mystical experiences related to visions and auditory events of the apparitions.
- II) **Form II (mild-acute)**: possession as a manifestation of the "fictitious disorder". The patient, perfectly aware of playing a role, uses the possessory manifestation to draw attention to himself, according to the same pattern reproduced by patients with Munchausen. The patient, in particular, can present different degrees of alteration of the real perception, where the self-produced fictitious symptom may even come to believe, while remaining anchored to the fact that his need always lies in attracting attention. This is the second category of Ellenberger (latent possession).
- III / A) **form III type A (moderate)**: possession as a manifestation of the "somatoform disorder of conversion or conversion hysteria". The patient projects his deepest fears and anxieties through the possessory phenomenon, thus reducing his responsibility with respect to the original problem. In this form, moreover, the patient experiences a conversion of the deepest instances in a more radical, complex and chronic manner, undergoing a modification in all or part of his personality. The egocentrism becomes the fixed pivot and its relationship with reality is compromised and deteriorated, with the consequent development of fantastic type thoughts. It can manifest obsessive compulsive and / or manipulative attitudes, nevertheless, however, the hysteric does not pretend voluntarily, as he does not realize the error of his way of doing; living those circumstances as true and absolute. Moreover, if it is not noticed by the others, its state of health may undergo deterioration; as the ultimate goal will always be to attract attention, albeit in a theatrical manner. We often see comorbidity (or contemporary existence) with personality disorders: in this case, the form of possession assumes the characteristics of point IV) serious. The third category of Ellenberger (spontaneous active possession) and the cultural, sociological and psychopathological positions fall perfectly within this framework.
- III / B) **form III type B (moderate)**: possession as a clinical manifestation of a pathology of organic nature, such as the "epileptic temporal lobe disorder" or of a "parietal lobe syndrome" or even brain neoplastic pathologies. These conditions can induce hallucinations capable of making a possessory experience lucidly live or even give the patient the feeling of being a victim of paranormal presences, through voices, sounds and frightening experiences. The mystical experiences fall within this framework: an extraordinary research by Monica Lanfredini; Nicola Cardon and Giuseppe Perrella (BM & L-Italia; Firenze 2008) entitled "The search for the Spirit in the Brain" will be analyzed in detail in the next paragraph; in the form of Appendix I.

IV) **form IV (severe-chronic)**: possession as a manifestation of a "personality disorder" or a "psychotic disorder". Some examples may be the possession linked to the "persecutory delusion", to "psychosis" (not determined by drugs), to "dissociation" (or multiple personalities) and to "schizophrenia". The patient has a well-defined personality disorder and possession is a symptom that recalls the disorder he suffers from. This is the framework of Ellenberger's first category (so-called severe psychic illness), the ethno-anthropological and psychopathological positions, and the classification of Ségla, which distinguishes the following forms: a) demonopathy; defined as persecution, external or internal, by the the devil; b) the true demonias; for which the subject has the sensation of transforming himself into the devil; c) demonolatry, for which the individual worships demons and is a victim of the same. Also within this framework is the classification by L. Gayral and J. Gayral which trace 5 possible delusions: a) The first is the "demonolatrical delirium", connected to the veneration of demons; b) The second is the "damnophobic delusion", characterized by the fear of eternal damnation; c) The third is the "demonopathic delusion", in turn distinguished in external and internal: in the first variant; the Devil acts from the outside through the sensory receptors, while, in the second, the Devil acts from within through an action cenestesopatic (or the wrong feeling of the subject of non-existent pain); d) the fourth is the "demonantropic delirium", for which the normal personality of the individual is replaced by that of the Devil; e) the fifth is the "ethical form of the delusions of diabolical possession", characterized by an ethical crisis on the part of those affected.

4. Conclusions

From documentary evidence and research carried out over two centuries, it is clear that the phenomenon of demonic possession is the expression of a psychopathological condition graduated according to the symptoms described case by case.

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