Anthropology and Attachment. [1]

Peter Mulholland

In the second half of the last century Ireland, along with much of the Western world, witnessed a remarkable surge of interest in experientially-based forms of religion that often emphasized spiritual or 'magico-religious' healing practices[2]. As Robbins's 1988 review of the literature on modern New Religious Movements (NRMs) shows, the sociological origins and functions of these movements has been extensively studied and theorized. In this essay I will argue that recent developments in the field of developmental psychology bridge the gap between sociological and psychological theories of religious behaviour in a way that promises to deepen our understanding of religious behaviour and explain individual and collective surges of interest in devotional and magico-religious forms.

In the 1960s numerous new and some not-so-new religious movements like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists emerged and flourished in Ireland (see Tierney). Visiting Christian evangelists contributed to this religious flux with rallies and crusades, and 'the healing ministry' was revived in the mainstream Christian denominations. The rise of these NRMs was accompanied by a surge of interest in occult practices and reported sightings of UFOs as well as in various forms of folk or faith healing and experiential forms of religiosity within the Catholic Church (Mulholland, 102–36; Roch, 188–9). This surge was most apparent in the overlapping waves of enthusiasm for faith healing and Charismatic Renewal (Taylor); in the revival of devotional exercises like the 'nine-day novena' (Inglis); in the tens of thousands who traversed the country in response to reports of 'moving statues' and in the 'enormous' increase in the number of Irish pilgrims going to Lourdes (Ryan and Kirakowski).[3] Many of the NRMs that flourished at this time soon faded from view while others came to be seen as constituents of the New Age Movement (NAM) that emerged in the 1970s. This notoriously 'diffuse' movement is made up of many more-or-less discrete groups and practices. It is an umbrella movement that operates as a network for the promotion of a huge variety of 'self-spiritualities' and 'holistic' or 'Mind-Body-Spirit' therapies (Heelas, 2, 9, 68, 75, 80, 82; Puttick, 130). With its millenarian goal of transforming the world through healing the self, the NAM was soon characterised as representing 'a culture of narcissism' (Lasch, 396–7). Here in Ireland the NAM persists mainly in the form of innumerable spiritual and holistic healing groups and professional healers who provide alternative therapies in private homes or from rented rooms in hotels and community centres and in the hundreds of dedicated healing centres, spas, ashrams and retreat houses that have been established all across the country (see Costigan).

The Dynamics of Religious Change: Inglis and Taylor
The flourishing of interest in magical practices and NRMs in Ireland is not a new phenomenon. Ireland has a very old tradition of folk and faith healing and in the late 1800s there was a minor flourishing of interest in Theosophy in which W. B. Yeats, George (AE) Russell were involved. James Joyce also took an interest before renouncing the group and calling its headquarters in Dublin the 'Yogibogeybox in Dawson Chambers' (Kime Scott, 54–5). Traditional Irish Catholicism has also long had what Inglis described as being a 'magical-devotional' dimension. This magical dimension has existed alongside the dominant 'legalistic-orthodox' form of religiosity that the Church has cultivated since its rise to power in the middle of the 19th century

(Inglis, 11, 38). Though the legalistic form of religiosity has come to dominate Irish Catholicism, Inglis argued, Irish Catholics still tend to 'vacillate' between different ways of being religious and Catholicism here remains an 'amalgam' of ways of being religious. Inglis describes this amalgam as consisting of three ideal types that he calls '(a) magical-devotional', '(b) legalist-orthodox', and '(c) individually principled ethics'. He explained type (a) as providing a refuge in times of personal difficulty and as being aimed mainly at achieving 'material transformations in this world'. He suggested that type (b) emerged out of the magical-devotional type that prevailed into the 19th century and as having begun to give way to type (c) in the 1950s; mainly among sections of the urban educated where increasing numbers seemed to be choosing the 'beliefs, practices and ethics to which they adhere' (Inglis, 12–38 and 244). Indeed Inglis suggested that all three forms of Catholicism should be seen as developmental stages operating at individual and society-wide levels but with the legalistic and magical forms not being easily differentiated in practice, as both tend to be governed by a 'strict adherence' to the magical formula or to the 'letter of the law'. However, though he saw them as developmental stages, Inglis insists that these stages should not be seen as part of some kind of definite or irreversible trend. Rather, they are seen as being strongly related to prevailing needs and circumstances and Inglis explained eruptions of the magical-devotional form as being 'undoubtedly linked to changes in social and economic conditions' but primarily to 'a disenchantment with the institutional Church's failure 'to respond to the more emotional, experiential religious needs of the people' (Inglis, 28–38).

Inglis explained the rise and dominance of the institutional Church as having been a product of a complex interaction of macro-historical and micro-social processes. These included the effects of famine, shifts in the relationship between Britain and Ireland, improvements in medicine, changes in farming practices and in family dynamics. These changes also saw the Catholic Church becoming deeply involved in shaping Irish society through 'a systematic process of socialisation exercised in churches, schools, hospitals, and homes' where the now religiously 'valorised' Irish mother served as the Church's 'organizational link' in the inculcation of more civil behavioural norms and values (Inglis, 64, 100, 184, 191). Inglis described this 'civilizing process' as having to do with 'changes in the way people adapted to living in more complex, centralised and regulated communities and societies'. And this involved an 'increasing expectation … that people be … more peaceful, considerate and self-reflective' (Inglis, 68, 98, 130–33). The inculcation of more civil ways of behaving was at the heart of the Church's 'civilizing mission' and involved the promotion of a 'sentimental and moral' approach to childrearing amongst Irish mothers (Inglis, 199). However, as Inglis explains, this shift brought with it a puritanical approach to childrearing that restricted the physical expressions of affection and instilled a 'sense of shame and guilt about the body' that supported the 'embodiment of the rules and regulations of the Church in successive generations'. And, he argues, this puritanical ethos had the effect of inhibiting 'self-confidence, ambition and achievement' and inculcated an 'emotional awkwardness' and lack of 'communicative competence' that became part of 'the Irish habitus' (Inglis, 138, 157, 200, 249, 256).

Inglis recognizes the fact that 'there are numerous different ways in which Irish Catholics are religious' and he is careful to point out that his thesis is a 'highly generalized and summary account' of historical processes that rests on the use of 'general concepts' and 'analytical devices to unify a vast array of people, practices and events' (Inglis, 20, 12, 101). Nevertheless, his generalized approach meant that he

paid little or no attention to the diversity of superstitious, magical and unorthodox religious beliefs and practices that lurked behind 'the massive, opaque curtain of orthodoxy' (Fallon, 197; see also Tovey and Shore, 324–330; Whelan and Hornsby-Smith, 40). So, while he provides a penetrating insight into the history and dynamics of Irish Catholicism and how it shaped the Irish habitus, Inglis's thesis has little to say about variations and deviations in the dominant model of socialization and how these may have affected people's religious orientation and communicative or relational habitus. And, though his observations on the psychosocial forces behind eruptions of magical-devotional Catholicism may be perceptive, they do not explain why it is that this form of religiosity has more appeal to some than to others from the very same cultural, socio-economic, educational, and demographic background.

Taylor's explanation of the rise and of the rifts within a group of Catholic charismatics in the 1970s goes some way towards explaining the forces that drive individual quests for religious healing and shape their religious orientations. In his study of a Co. Donegal-based charismatic group he found that, while some of his actors were 'drawn' into charismatic groups by their partners, most were driven by quests for cures for somatic complaints, relational difficulties, profound disappointments and/or psychological malaise (Taylor, 236, 226, 245). But he also found that, as with the pilgrimage groups he studied, class-related 'quotidian life' experiences and intimate memories of formative relationships played a critical role in shaping their religious understandings and orientations (Taylor, 4, 195–7, 218–9). Taylor explained the formation of a 'new sect' or 'possession cult' amongst the charismatics as being a product of the 'logic of the [charismatic] experience as well as the particular proclivities of a few individuals'. Delving deeper into the personal narrative of one woman who baulked at the prospect of supporting the formation of a schismatic sect, he found that her decision was based on experiences of 'resonances' between her 'intimate childhood experiences' and 'Church structure'. Taylor explained how the woman, who harboured disturbing memories of feeling unloved and unwanted by her own mother, experienced powerful resonances between the iconic figure of Mary, the Mother of God, and a simple, devout and beloved aunt with whom she had spent some of her school holidays (Taylor, 218–24, 241). For Taylor, then, it was both painful childhood experiences and memories of class-related, quotidian life experiences that drove his actors' quests for religious healing and shaped their religious orientations, experiences and understandings.

Whereas Inglis's generalized approach helped explain how the religiously valorised model of sentimental mothering shaped the stereotypic Irish habitus, Taylor's work shows how deviations from that model could drive some sections of a seemingly homogeneous religious community towards the magical-devotional form of religiosity and into quests for religious healing that can lead to the formation of new sects and experientially-based 'possession cults'. Taylor, like Inglis, viewed religion as being a process or 'concatenation of processes, personal and historical' (Taylor, 4).

Explanations for the Rise of New Religious Movements
Many sociological theories of the modern surge of NRMs have posited 'rapid social change' and/or some version of a 'crisis of meaning' theory as the explanation for the post World War II religious flux. Others argued that it had more to do with the heightening of existential anxieties flowing from the Second World War, the Cold War, and the war in Vietnam. Robbins provided an excellent survey of these theories in his 1988 book, *Cults, Converts and Charisma* (see also Monteith in Sutcliffe and

Bowman, Ellwood, Rothstein, Wuthnow, and Hallahim in Greil and Robbins). However, while these various theories and combinations of theories certainly do shed light on the various forces behind the modern surge of interest in magico-religious practices they often tend to make sweeping generalizations that overlook the fact that only a relatively small proportion of any particular population was ever seriously involved in the NRM phenomenon (see Bruce, Heelas, York). While the Charismatic Renewal Movement with which Taylor's Donegal group was affiliated dwarfed all the other NRMs that surfaced here in Ireland during this period the numbers involved never went much above 35,000 out of a total population of more than three million (Szuchewycz). Other students of the NRM phenomenon have studied the types of people they attract and what it is about the new groups that appeal to them.

Some studies of NRMs have highlighted the part played by the psychosocial and emotional needs of those who become members and Lasch was not alone in detecting narcissistic tendencies among them. Alster, Fuller (1989), Lewis, and Puttick have all highlighted the prevalence of narcissistic and 'trivial and self-indulgent' practices (Heelas, 150, 214) among the various new groups and movements. These and other writers found that both Christian and exotic NRMs were peopled by the socially and/or emotionally marginalized (Allen and Wallis, Robbins, Hexham and Poewe). And, arguing along similar lines to Taylor, many students of religious behaviour have proffered some version of the 'Integrative Hypothesis' that sees NRMs as having a 'latent pattern maintenance' function in helping marginalized or anomic individuals to develop the skills they need to adapt to conventional society (Robbins, 28–36). Other studies have found that groups that have come to be associated with New Ageism tend to attract people who have been grossly abused in childhood. Greenwood cited Rabinovitch's 1992 study of Wiccans in the USA in support of her own finding that almost every one of the English Wiccans she interviewed had been abused in childhood. Greenwood (150) went on to interpret Wiccan practices as symbolic attempts to deal with feelings of marginality and powerlessness stemming from childhood abuses. I also found a good deal of evidence of childhood abuse in the narratives of the New Age healers and healees that I interviewed. But, like Taylor, I also found that quests for healing and orientation towards experiential and magical practices could originate in much less severe forms of abuse such as those that left people feeling they had been neglected or rejected and unloved as children. And, like Heelas, I found that immersion in an authoritarian, disciplinarian world also featured in the narratives of those involved in New Age healing etc. These various findings support the view that explaining surges of interest in magico-religious movements requires a synthesis of sociological and psychological approaches that can account for the fact that they are associated with specific historical periods but attract only relatively small numbers of people from all socio-economic, religious, educational and demographic backgrounds.

Christian's explanation of the intermittent historical pattern of surges of reports of religious apparitions goes some way towards answering these questions. He argued that various 'apparition episodes … arise from movements very deep in the individual consciousness with a collective, often systemic [a]etiology'. And he held that the recent 'trans-national pattern' of religious apparitions and UFO sightings represented 'the crystallization of the Cold War not only within a community, but even within the family' (240–60). Carroll made similar observations regarding the historical pattern of Marian apparitions and suggested that they originated in personal attempts to re-establish the presence of a reassuring mother during times of general distress. This argument is well supported by the evidence for the situation here in

Ireland during the rise of magical-devotional forms of Catholicism and other magical and millenarian movements. This flourishing of NRMs was indeed accompanied by a heightening of collective anxiety and existential angst. The Irish media kept the country well informed of the threat posed by the Cold War and the development of the Irish television station, Telefís Éireann, in the '60s meant that Irish people were exposed to vivid and almost daily coverage of the war in Vietnam and of the Northern 'Troubles' that threatened, and occasionally spilled over into, the Republic. Tierney (6) reckoned 'the Troubles' attracted some of the 'itinerant preachers' who arrived in Ireland in the early '70s. But the war in N. Ireland wasn't the only domestic source of anxiety at this time. The country was plagued by a combination of economic problems at a time of rising expectations and there was plentiful evidence for the kind of 'rapid social change' and 'crisis of meaning' theories that were advanced to explain NRMs. Kirby (19) reckoned that the launching of the first *Programme for Economic Expansion* in 1958 was a catalyst for change in the economic and cultural history of the Irish Republic. Nic Ghiolla Phádraig (1995) and Fuller (2004) are in substantial agreement with this view and media archives provide ample evidence of the remarkable changes that were taking place in the socio-economic, educational, cultural, religious, and political life of the country during this time (Mulholland, 102–73). These diverse arguments and bodies of evidence lend support the view that the flourishing of interest in experientially-based forms of religiosity and magico-religious practices is driven by both internal and external forces and circumstances. What they lack, however, is a theoretical framework that explains the dynamics of the culture-psyche interface in steering some sections of the population towards new and exotic magico-religious movements. John Bowlby's neo-Freudian Attachment Theory and recent developments in the field of developmental psychology provide a framework for exploring and explaining the complexities of this interface.

Attachment Theory: Bowlby and Nuckolls
The fundamental premise of Attachment Theory is that humans have an evolved survival need to establish a bond with a carer and that a child's experiences of repeated patterns of interaction with significant carers cause it to embody relational models that endure relatively unchanged into adulthood. These 'inner working models' underpin one's relational competence and way of responding to the threat of loss and anxiety in adulthood. Bowlby (129) described attachment behaviour as being:

> any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated and preferred individual, who is usually conceived as stronger and/or wiser

Mary Ainsworth developed a laboratory procedure called 'the strange situation' that tested Bowlby's theory and showed that differences in the way mothers habitually interact with their offspring profoundly affect their children's sense of security and shape their attachment behaviour. Ainsworth observed three distinct patterns of attachment behaviour that she called 'secure', 'avoidant', and 'resistant', with both of the latter being classified as 'insecure' types (Goldberg, 11).

Cognitive anthropologist Charles Nuckolls cited various bodies of evidence in support of Bowlby's theory and held that it provided the kind of empirically verifiable approach that science itself touts. Nuckolls took the violation of every child's attachment assumption (that the bond with the mother 'mediated by intimate physical

contact' will continue forever) to be 'nearly' universal. And he argued that that psychological conflict is transferred onto religious representations and becomes 'crucial to the development of belief in superhuman agencies' and the possibility of resolving 'conflicted attachment wishes'. Taking the Jalaris of South India as a case study, he argued that their vocabulary of possession 'represents, through transference, values and attitudes originally associated with the relationship between mother and child'; and that in so doing their religious beliefs provide them with a way of coping with unresolved attachment conflicts (183–97). However, Nuckolls went on to note that, while the violation of attachment assumptions was 'nearly universal', that violation did not give rise to cross-culturally similar outcomes because both the method and outcome of individuation processes varies 'between social groups because of the different values placed on emotion and fusion and autonomous individuation'. With his focus on cultural patterns Nuckolls took no account of Ainsworth's finding that differences in the ways mothers from the same culture interact with their children cause them to develop one or other of the three attachment patterns revealed in her laboratory studies. So, while he makes a strong case for Attachment Theory in the interpretation of religious behaviour, Nuckolls, like Inglis, pays no attention to how variations in or deviations from religiously valorised behavioural models of parenting and socialization might drive the cognitive and religious development of the members of even the most ostensibly homogenous of cultures or communities along different paths.

Mentalization Theory: Fonagy
In 2004 a team led by Peter Fonagy developed Bowlby's attachment theory but criticised as 'naïve' his conception of enduring relational templates being formed on the basis of childhood attachments. Rather, the members of the team argue that 'it is the quality or "depth" of processing of the psychosocial environment that can be set by early experience' and affect the development of 'the mentalizing necessary to function effectively in a stressful social world' (98). By 'mentalizing' they mean 'the capacity to envision mental states in self and others' (23). This 'mentalization' theory is supported throughout with references to recent neuroscientific discoveries and the growing philosophical acceptance of the role played by the 'moral emotions' like empathy and compassion in underpinning personal morality and social integration (70, 137–8). Fonagy and his associates posit the existence of a 'neural mechanism' they call the 'Interpersonal Interpretative Mechanism' or IIM. This mechanism, they argue, underpins the development of our reflective function or 'theory of mind' (ToM), which is described as being 'the developmental acquisition that permits children to respond not only to another person's behaviour, but to the children's conception of others' beliefs, feelings, attitudes, desires … and so on' (24). Our naturally developing ToM supports our social interactions by providing us with intuitions or insights into the mental states and intentions of others. However, they argue, this does not fully explain the complex reflective processes involved in 'higher-order' thinking. Pointing out the fact that a child has feelings 'about the mental states he encounters in others' they go on to note that a child 'may know what the other feels but care little or not at all about this' (29–30). Fonagy's team calls the higher-order or 'ultimate' form of affect regulation 'mentalized affectivity', meaning the capacity 'to understand one's own feelings experientially in a way that is emotionally meaningful (vs. intellectually)' (96). Mentalization 'denotes interest in one's mind in general

[and] "affectivity" denotes interest in one's own affects'. So "mentalized affectivity' describes how affect regulation is transformed by mentalization' (436).

Mentalization theory, like Attachment Theory, holds that incongruent or 'deviant' forms of parenting can arrest or hinder psychological development. This can produce borderline and/or narcissistic personality disorders and 'potentially terrifying' experiences of 'psychic equivalence'. Psychic equivalence is a 'more primitive level of mental functioning where ... feelings and fantasies are experienced as reality and not as mental states representing reality' (4–11, 200, 300–1). Two developmental processes are identified as being crucially involved in the emergence (or not) of higher order mentalization. The child's experience of its internal world is understood as consisting of 'two alternating modes [the] mode of 'psychic equivalence'… and a mode of 'pretend' (where internal is forever separated from external)'. 'Safe, playful interaction with caregivers' (including older siblings or friends) supports the integration of these two modes and the development of mentalization (50, 318–9). 'Safe' interactions are those that provide the child with congruent and 'contingent marked' displays that mirror its affects in ways that differentiate 'as-if' or 'pretend' communications from realistic ones. The 'marked' element refers to those 'salient perceptual features that distinguish pretend' actions and/or expressions from realistic ones; e.g. knowing looks, facial expressions, changing voice pitch and any gesture that lets a child know that one's expressions are 'not for real' and have 'no realistic consequences' (296). Fonagy's team call this interactive process the 'social biofeedback mechanism' and they explain how its development can be disrupted in ways that leave some people with a well-developed facility for the 'pretend' mode but with an 'island of psychic equivalence' that has roots in traumatic experience(s) or fantasies associated with loss or abuse. Chronic failures in the social biofeedback process can undermine the integration of the two modes of thinking and undermine the development of higher order mentalization in ways that give rise to more extensive experiences of psychic equivalence and a proclivity for 'concrete' thinking and the 'externalization' of 'conscious or unconscious - mental representations of (real or fantasized) interpersonal conflicts … [and] socially unacceptable desires that generate painful feelings of anxiety, helplessness, guilt, shame, anger, fear, rage, and so on' (199–200, 295, 413). Two distinct types of 'externalization' are discussed. 'Marked' or 'symbolic externalizations' refer to expressions of psychological contents in which 'the subject always maintains some level of awareness and understanding of the representational nature of the externalised symbolic form'. Pretend play, art, theatre, fiction, and 'fantasizing or daydreaming … without undermining reality testing' are cited as examples. These 'marked externalisations' are distinguished from those 'that involve a defensive distortion of reality perception' or the development of pathological defensive mechanisms involving projective identification and distorted self-representations (193-5, 294–5). These 'unmarked' or 'realistic externalizations' are likened to the kind of 'idiosyncratic, magical thinking' that afflicts people with a poor capacity for mentalization and which 'acquires greater intensity in emotionally charged contexts' (193, 294–5, 471).

What Fonagy's team refer to as 'realistic externalizations' and 'concrete' or 'magical' thinking are common features of the whole spectrum of experientially based Charismatic, devotional, and magico-religious beliefs and practices that flourished in Ireland and across the rest of the Western world in the second half of the last century and fed the growth of the magical, millenarian NAM. The concept of 'psychic equivalence' and the explanation of its roots in childhood traumas helps explain the magical-devotional preoccupation with the Madonna, the revival of novenas, the

surge of Irish pilgrims to apparition sites abroad, and 'moving statues' during the 1970s and 80s. The understanding of how the propensity for magical thinking of this type can be intensified by emotionally-charged contexts helps explain why surges of magical-devotionalism tend to be associated with particular historical periods and deepens our understanding of the personal proclivities that Taylor and Carroll associated with religious quests and attempts to re-establish the presence of a mother figure.

Conclusions

In his 1999 review of developments in psychological anthropology Philip Bock held that 'the actual psychological processes that produce [religious] conformity in some instances, resistance or rebellion in others, still need to be clarified' (208). Attachment theory and its recent elaboration by Fonagy's team provide a framework for clarifying those processes and explaining their historical and socio-cultural origins. Attachment theory was based on the premise that humans have an evolved survival need/drive to establish an attachment to what Bowlby described as some 'differentiated and preferred individual, who is usually conceived as stronger and/or wiser' (129). The manner in which that universal human need is met differs from culture to culture and, as Nuckolls explained, is represented in religious transferences that can help people cope with unresolved attachment needs or conflicts (183–97). However, as Inglis observed, religious representations also inform and shape attachment behaviour and can be used to change or, perhaps more accurately, to valorise historical shifts of emphasis in relational values and behaviour. And, as Taylor noted, those shifts can play out differently in the personal or familial and class-related quotidian life experiences of the members of even the most apparently homogeneous of religious communities. Mentalization theory enhances our ability to explain how these diachronic shifts and demographic differences can support the kind of religious 'vacillations' and periodic oscillations that were discussed by Inglis and Taylor.

What Fonagy's team refers to as 'realistic externalizations' and 'concrete' or 'magical' thinking featured large in the many experientially-based charismatic, devotional, and magico-religious beliefs and healing practices that flourished in Ireland and elsewhere in the decades after World War II. Somatic and psychosomatic complaints and psychological malaise or psychosocial alienation underpinned the formation of a multitude of little 'communities of affliction' (Turner in Taylor, 223) in which the 'somatization' of affects was often what Kleinman called the preferred 'idiom of interpersonal distress' (10). The explanation of how those with a poor capacity for mentalization are more likely to experience bouts of psychic equivalence in emotionally charged contexts refines the 'crisis theory' view of NRMs. It also helps to extend our understanding why many of the NRMs are characterised by intense and exciting gatherings and dramatic or climactic group rituals. The developmentalist explanation of the 'affect regulation' benefits of the externalization of affects helps explain why insecure types persist in practices that repeatedly failed to bring about the promised medical benefits or the arrival of some kind of personal transformation or millenarian event. This approach may also provide a framework for explaining how religiously marked (i.e. 'set apart and sacred') or ritualised externalizations can trigger the kind of mystical experiences that are reported as 'born again' or Pauline-type conversions of the sort that are reputed to have effected transformations in the subjective and intersubjective or social being of some people.

Mentalization theory provides a framework for explaining the complex ways in which a person's and a people's psychological and religious development can be fostered or stymied by variations in and deviations from culturally valorised socialization processes and the historical and class-related socio-economic forces that shape them. It enriches our understanding of how the dominant model of religiously valorised sentimental mothering contributed to the modernization of Ireland through helping people to adapt to changing socio-economic conditions and embody what Inglis described as being the necessary and increasing need to be 'more peaceful, considerate and self-reflective'. But it also helps explain why the growth of the individualistic religious ethos that Inglis detected amongst the urban educated in the 1950s was accompanied by a surge of enthusiasm for magico-religious forms amongst people from all denominational, demographic, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. It explains how the authoritarian behaviour and punitive ethos that emerged along with a puritanical brand of Catholicism helped to sustain the appeal of magical Marian devotionalism and generated a flourish of interest in exotic and schismatic magico-religious practices among some sections of the population. This understanding of the way in which culturally transmitted behavioural models can undermine peoples' relational competence and self-confidence helps explain why so many researchers have found that NRMs have a special appeal to marginalized groups and individuals suffering psychosocial deprivation. Mentalization theory's explanation of the relationship between attachment difficulties and the development of narcissistic tendencies also helps to explain why some observers have found the NAM to be peopled by narcissistic types. And the understanding of how childhood traumas can set up idiosyncratic 'islands of psychic equivalence' may also help explain why both New Age insiders and outsiders regard some beliefs and behaviours as being trivial and self-indulgent.

Notes

[1] The field and archival research upon which this paper is based was financed by a scholarship from the Irish Council for Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

[2] The term 'magico-religious' was used by Marett to refer to what he believed was an early stage in the development of religion and magic (1914, xxi). I am using the term in a very loose sense to refer to forms of religiosity that have a magical dimension and emphasise the use of ritual practices and objects in attempting to manipulate supernatural powers and achieve changes in this world.

[3] *The Sunday Independent*, 11–7–76

References

Allen, G. and Roy Wallis 1976. 'Pentecostalists as a Medical Minority', in Roy Wallis and Peter Morley (eds) *Marginal Medicine*. London: Peter Owen.

Alster, K.B. 1989. *The Holistic Healing Movement*. University of Alabama Press.

Beckford, J.A. and Martine Levasseur 1986. *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*. London: Sage Publications.

Bock. P.K. 1999. *Rethinking Psychological Anthropology*. Waveland Press.

Bowlby, J. 1977. *The Making and Breaking of Affectional Bonds*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Bruce, S. 2000. 'The New Age and Secularisation', in S. Sutcliffe and Marian Bowman (eds) *Beyond The New Age*. Edinburgh University Press.

Carroll, M. P. 1986. *The Cult of The Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*. Princeton University Press.

Christian, Jr. W. 1984. 'Religious Apparitions and the Cold War in Southern Europe', in Eric Wolf (ed.) *Religion, Power and Protest in Local Communities: The Northern Shore of the Mediterranean*. Mouton Publishers.

Costigan, L. 1997. *Irish Guide to Complementary and Alternative Therapies.* Dublin: Wolfhound Press.

Ellwood, R. 1992. 'How New is the New Age', in James R. Lewis and Gordon Melton (eds) *Perspectives on the New Age*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Fallon, B. 1999. *An Age of Innocence: Irish Culture 1930–1960*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Fuller, L. 2004. *Irish Catholicism Since 1950: The Undoing of a Culture*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Fuller, R.C. 1989. *Alternative Medicine and American Religious Life*. Oxford University Press.

Fonagy, P., Gyorgy Gergely, Elliot L. Jurist and Mary Target 2004. *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*. London: Karnack Books.

Goldberg, S. 2000. *Attachment and Development*. London Arnold.

Greenwood, S. 2000. 'Gender and Power in Magical Practices', in Steven Sutcliffe and Marian Bowman (eds) *Beyond the New Age*. Edinburgh University Press.

Greil, A.L. and Thomas Robbins (eds) 1994. 'Between the Sacred and the Secular: Research and Theory on Quasi-Religion', *Religion and the Social Order*. Vol. 4.

Heelas, P. 1996. *The New Age Movement: the Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hexham, I. and Karla Poewe 1997. *New Religions as Global Culture*. Westview Press.

Inglis, T. (1998) *The Moral Monopoly: The Rise and Fall of the Catholic Church in Modern Ireland*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Kime Scott, B. 1978. 'Joyce and the Dublin Theosophists: "Vegetable Verse" and Story. *Éire-Ireland, Journal of The Irish American Institute*.

Kirby, P. 1984. *Is Irish Catholicism Dying?* Cork: Mercier Press.

Kleinman, A. 1995. *Writing at the Margin: Discourse between Anthropology and Medicine*. University of California Press.

Lasch, C. 1979. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. Abacus.

Lewis, J.R. and Gordon Melton (eds) 1992. *Perspectives on the New Age*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Marett, R.R. 1914. *The Threshold of Religion*. London: Methuen.

Mulholland, P. 2007. 'Reiki and the Roman Catholic Tradition: An Anthropological Study of Changing Religious Forms in Modern Ireland'. Unpublished PhD Thesis. National University of Ireland Maynooth.

Nuckolls, C. W. 2001. 'Steps to an Integration of Developmental Cognitivism and Depth Psychology', in Harvey Whitehouse (ed.) *The Debated Mind: Evolutionary Psychology Versus Ethnography*. Oxford: Berg. 181–202.

Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, M. 1995. 'The Power of the Catholic Church in the Republic of Ireland', in Patrick Clancy, Sheelagh Drudy, Kathleen Lynch and Liam O'Dowd (eds), *Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives*. Institute of Public Administration in association with The Sociological Association of Ireland.

Puttick, E. 2000. 'Personal Development: The Spiritualization and Secularization of the Human Potential Movement', in Steven Sutcliffe and Marian Bowman (eds) *Beyond the New Age*. Edinburgh University Press.

Robbins, T. 1988. *Cults, Converts and Charisma*. Sage Publications.

Roch, E. A. 1981. *Folk Medicine and Faith Healing in N. Ireland*. Ph. D Thesis: Queen's University Belfast: Control No. t4825499.

Rothstein, M. 2001. *New Age Religion and Globalization*. Aarhus University Press.

Ryan, T. and Jurek Kirakowski 1985. *Ballinspittle: Moving Statues and Faith*. Cork: Mercier Press.

Sutcliffe, S. and Marion Bowman 2000. *Beyond the New Age*. Edinburgh University Press.

Szuchewycz, B. 1989. '"The Growth is in the Silence": The Meaning of Silence in the Irish Catholic Charismatic Movement', in Chris Curtin and Tom Wilson (eds) *Ireland From Below: Social Change and Local Communities*. Galway University Press.

Taylor, L. 1995. *Occasions of Faith: An Anthropology of Irish Catholics*. Dublin: Lilliput Press.

Tierney, M. 1985. *The New Elect*. Dublin: Veritas Publications.

Tovey, H. and Perry Shore 2000. *A Sociology of Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Whelan, C. and Michael Hornsby-Smith 1994. *Values and Social Change in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Wuthnow, R. 1986. 'Religious Movements and Counter Movements in North America', in James Beckford (ed.) *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*. London: Sage Publications.

York, M. 2000. 'Alternative Spirituality in Europe: Amsterdam, Aups and Bath', in Steven Sutcliffe and Marian Bowman (eds) *Beyond the New Age*. Edinburgh University Press.