

SOME PRACTICAL POINTS  
ON JUNG'S ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY

SEEING that Professor C. G. Jung's analytical psychology has been introduced to the Catholic public by the writings of Fr Victor White, O.P., and by Fr Witcutt's *Catholic Thought and Modern Psychology*, it seems appropriate to discuss this subject from the practical point of view of the psychotherapist. It is the purpose of this article to illustrate one or two practical points of Jung's method by a few examples in the endeavour to dispel the current notion that analytical psychology is an art intelligible only to the initiated. Yet it contains no greater mystery than the familiar phenomena of biology, e.g. the partition of cells. Jung continually stresses the point that his method is empirical, dealing with facts which emerge from the unconscious. Admittedly, these phenomena are often very surprising; however, they should not be disregarded even if they cannot always be explained satisfactorily.

Analytical psychology is not concerned with the soul in the full theological sense of the word but only with its manifestations, with the psyche, which, as Dr Strauss defines it, is the sum total of the experiences made during a person's lifetime as well as those which have come down as a heritage from his ancestors. Modern man, as he is, separated from his divine origin and unable to balance his experiences in accordance with true values, is conscious of a deep-seated dissatisfaction and sense of frustration. This is the breeding-ground for that modern complaint termed 'neurosis'. In essence, the neurotic person does not differ from his normal fellow. It is only that the 'war with himself' is fought with greater intensity and leads to embarrassing conflicts with the outside world. To deal with the complexities of this situation—often disguised under physical diseases like asthma—Jung's method has been developed. The steadily growing interest in analytical psychology, in spite of a natural prejudice against a subject so obviously 'morbid', proves that it meets a very real demand.

It is grace that perfects nature—this is a fundamental truth. However, it does not preclude all effort on the part of the individual. He has to co-operate with God in making his soul a receptacle fit for grace to be received. This means restoring the balance lost in consequence of original sin. If an analyst is consulted by a person who is unable to adjust himself to his surroundings and to deal with his problems he will be confronted with the same principles which can be seen at work in the biological order. It is not the physician who effects

the cure. 'Natura sanat'. The doctor's task is to put the body in favourable conditions in order that the natural healing power of the organism may have its full effect. Rest, physical as well as mental, diet, purgations, warmth in its various forms of application are the standard remedies of all races and ages and are not forgotten even in the era of most powerful germ-destroyers like penicillin. It is a biological law that the health of an organism consists in the harmonious co-operation of its parts in the interest of the whole. A wide-spread complicated system is set up to safeguard this harmony and to restore it if disturbed. This same tendency is inherent in the psyche, too. The analyst cannot make a new man of his patient. He would have to be a saint or at least a superman to exercise such an influence. But as an ordinary person he can only help his patients to remove obstacles such as deep-rooted grievances in order that the psyche may, so to speak, spontaneously regain its equilibrium. Man possesses in his psyche a very delicate instrument registering immediately whatever happens and like a compass showing him when he has lost his way.

This sense of direction is sadly underdeveloped in the present generation. It is true, many people are dimly aware of some nervous disturbance. But, fearing unpleasant discoveries, they avoid the path of true self-knowledge. Instead, they prefer one of the various forms of over-activity offered in such abundance in our age. They will sit on committees or be on the lookout for any kind of entertainment promising to 'kill the time'. They do not realize that this is mere escapism. Some feel lonely and without confidence in themselves, others are subject to temperamental outbreaks and signs of inexplicable despair or overjoy. As a rule all these different types may control themselves so well for a considerable time that the outside world has no perception of their true mental state. There is a complete technique of suppressing all visible signs of lack of balance. Thus a man may become his greatest tyrant. This policy is effective up to a point and in many cases a conversation with a friend or the influence of a priest can straighten things out again. Moreover, some change in circumstances caused by illness, by being put to a different work, etc., may have a similar beneficial effect. But there are other cases where these remedies are ineffective. Then the individual realises that he is no longer master of his house and, face to face with irrational forces which he can no longer control, he resorts to a psychologist to deal with his now full-fledged neurosis.

At this stage various forms of psychology are available. They are all based on the principle of establishing contact with the unconscious, i.e., with that sphere of our psyche whose contents have not passed the threshold of consciousness and which contains, carefully hidden

as in the cave-shelter of a country in modern war, most valuable powers of which their owner was never aware. It also contains all kinds of repressed experiences which are often emotionally over-charged and then occasionally may lead to temperamental explosions or to that smouldering fire which is outwardly manifest in a bad temper. Hypnosis was the first method used by Freud at the end of the last century in dealing with this mental state. Others were developed; however, they all are overshadowed by the 'via regia' to the unconscious, by dream-analysis. In a dream the unconscious speaks in its particular picturesque language; it reveals events forgotten or repressed because they could not be dealt with; it reflects the real self like a mirror; it sometimes teaches like a parable and is always throwing up new and significant material. The world of dreams is a symbolical one conveying truths in a secret but most impressive way. Like 'an idea suggested by an allegory moves and charms us more than if we hear it in its proper terms' (St Augustine),<sup>1</sup> so the knowledge gained by dream-symbols will be more helpful for the conduct of our life than mere intellectual understanding. It is chiefly through the medium of his dreams that the patient, assisted by the analyst, will develop his own way of healing; he will realize his own 'myth', i.e. he will see the cosmic story of man's fall and redemption reflected in the smallness of his own personal existence. In this way he is freed from his isolation and his own fate joined to that of the whole human family.

In the attempt to give a practical example of Jung's method we are faced by a great difficulty, as this would amount almost to the task of writing a full-scale biography. It would mean giving the life story of the patient with his spiritual background and all the manifold details which are part of his daily life. It would involve the irksome task of describing what uncle Christopher and aunt Olive meant to him when he was small, what happened at a certain dance, and why he thought that John was preferred to him by his mother. This is done in psychological studies but it makes strenuous reading; moreover, it is not easy to represent dreams in such a way that they do not lose their specific atmosphere. It needs a writer or a novelist of great ability to fulfil this task. In an article of this nature, therefore, only a few sketches can be given to demonstrate some practical points.

I have chosen three dreams to illustrate (1) the problem of correct dream-interpretation, (2) the relieving effect of a liberated complex, and (3) the effect of seeing one's own 'shadow'.

(1) A middle-aged housewife, who has her problems but is far from

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<sup>1</sup> Masore, *The Christian Sacrifice*, p. 71.

being ill, told me a dream which she had first at the age of seven and then on and off altogether perhaps six times. She saw herself standing as a little girl in the corner of a cellar; in the middle of it was a big tree; it was like a pillar; she only saw the stem: the root was underneath the floor and the top had pierced the ceiling. The girl felt happy and quiet. Then suddenly she noticed hanging in mid-air a ball of cotton which was slowly unrolling itself horizontally; the cotton moved with mechanical staccato movements in a straight line towards her eyes after having passed through the eye of a needle which was suspended in the air, too. The girl was terrified and woke up in a panic. According to Freud's ideas the dream may be interpreted as indicating the protective male presence (as symbolised by the tree) and the deep horror felt when the woman's destiny was revealed. This might be a very interesting aspect, but may, if suggested to the patient as the interpretation of her dream, create a dangerous constellation in which the sexual sphere is unduly stressed and therefore the unconscious stimulated in a specific way. From Jung's point of view, we may see two contrasting tendencies. On the one hand the perpendicular, Gothic one, the idea of growth represented by the tree of life with its root deep in the earth and its top near heaven; and on the other hand the horizontal tendency which indicates no progress but only a change of place; the tendency of our materialistic age symbolised by the mechanical movement and the rootlessness of the ball of cotton moving in an unexpected way contrary to the natural law of gravitation. We cannot dwell on the significance of the fact that the girl is happy in the first part and frightened in the second part of the dream, which suggests a whole *Weltanschauung*. Apart from these two interpretations a third or a fourth one is imaginable too—each equally justified and revealing a particular aspect of the dream. At this point the reader may ask which interpretation is the right one and raise the question of the validity of dream interpretation in general. The unconscious will provide the answer. The situation is not different from what we meet in every other sphere of the human mind. In reviewing a work of art the critics not unusually differ widely in their opinions. The artist alone knows who actually understood his work and he will profit by constructive criticism. In a similar way wider knowledge gained by a developing dream-life will be the measure of the right interpretation. Otherwise the analysis will dry up and the dreams will deal with the same problem in different pictures or will even repeat themselves until the proper meaning is found and accepted. This demands ready cooperation and hard labour also on the part of the analysand. A result will not occur in some magical way. Moreover, the interpretation is never a fixed explanation. It may be the right one for the present moment, but next year, when needs

arise, deeper understanding may uncover a still wider horizon.

(2) The second example occurred during an analysis which in the usual way started with superficial, 'silly' dreams; old classmates 'not seen for the last twenty years' and quite neutral events of the day before played a part in them. All these, however, were connected with some repressed feelings. It appears that during an analysis the psyche like the ocean puts ashore flotsam and jetsam in an attempt at self-purification. The relieving effect of having a good talk to a friend and 'getting it off one's chest' is well known; it should therefore not be surprising if we notice a similar result in the unconscious unburdening itself. This even will be the more helpful as the clearing has been done in the depths. The dream-example I want to give now was dreamt by a woman and it was about a house in which she had been occasionally when she was young. The house was partly destroyed but bricks were piled up and a woman had just arrived on her motor-bicycle. Next night she dreamt she was near a tent when suddenly a doctor shouted some strange words. She woke up frightened and immediately she knew that these words referred to a nasty sexual experience connected with the house she had dreamt of on the night before. The dream did not tell her anything new. She had confessed the experience, had talked it over with friends, and as it had happened some twenty years ago she had rightly assumed that it was all over. But, apparently, it was not. It had inflicted on her a deep wound much more penetrating than she would ever have realized. For days, now, she was in a crisis and in a state of deep emotional disturbance. She recognized in the blitzed house a symbol of her own life and of the frustrations which, to a certain extent, might have been the result of this unfortunate experience. But at the same time she became aware of the constructive powers in herself, of her ability to rebuild what had been destroyed. This dream marked a complete change in her. With the release of the 'complex' which had absorbed a great deal of her energy an obstacle was removed and the stream of life flowed more easily. In the language of dynamic psychology, inhibitions and anxieties disappeared and the freed libido was available for new tasks. This example shows also the intimate connexion of dreams. It is typical that one dream refers to the experience of a previous one. We have to remember that our dreams tell our story in series, repeating the same problem in ever changing, different pictures until we have understood. One dream, therefore, taken out of its context will not tell us much. We have to go through the whole book, or at least a part of it, to gain knowledge and harmony.

(3) The third example is taken from the dream of a young man, a recent convert. Full of the convert's fervour and the zeal of a missionary vocation he was overdoing his external duties as a Catholic to

such an extent that it was difficult for him to settle down in his work and inside his family. He came to the analyst for advice in a special difficulty. In the course of the interviews he had a dream in which he was standing on the corner of a busy London street. A young man approached him from the opposite direction and he asked this man: 'Where is the way?' Instead of an answer the young man made the sign of the cross—twice—one following the other, and then said something 'which I did not understand'. The analysand made a sketch of the scene and then realized that he was standing at a cross-road and that the other man was himself, too; that it was his 'alter ego' or shadow, i.e. that part of him which lies in the dark like the one side of the moon turned away from earth. 'That's really how I am'; the young man was a little untidy, slightly confused and seemed not at all self-confident. 'Well—and he certainly was a bit timid in making the sign of the cross and had to make it even twice as if he was aware of not having Faith as strong as it should be'. It is as if he were telling me, 'Your way is the way of Christ and you will find him not only in the seclusion of a monastery but in a busy London street, too'. The analysand had realised that he had seen himself as he was, including the potentialities of leading a true Christian life. He wrote after some time that he could accept his difficult situation now. Before, when he was told by friends and relatives, he was not much impressed, if at all; but now he had seen and this made him change. He had had the rare opportunity of looking behind the screen and seeing himself as he appeared to his friends.

It may seem strange to a modern man to attach such significance to dreams; previous centuries, however, thought differently and the Scriptures bear full witness to regarding dreams as a legitimate product of the human mind. This fact remains valid although a certain type of bad literature has put incorrect ideas about dreams into the masses. If, however the aim of analysis is achieved and the analysand enabled to deal with the recurrent difficulties of life by himself, no further attention to his dreams should be given. It has to be remembered that Jung's method has been evolved for abnormal conditions, although it is true that some people, especially those who professionally are interested in human nature, will come to a better understanding of their protegés after they have gone through an analysis themselves.

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