

PSYCHOLOGY AND CATHOLICS

IT is obviously impossible in a brief article to discuss the relation between the corpus of Catholic belief, tradition, and their pastoral applications on the one hand, and the enormous mass of half-digested material which is modern psychology, on the other. I have chosen to throw out a few hints as to the kind of problems which agitate the mind of anyone who is concerned with the subject. I am dealing with two terms of a discussion which to many Catholics appear to be irreconcilable.

I hope that those who keep their BLACKFRIARS back-numbers, or can get hold of them, will re-read a long and searching article by Father Victor White in the number for August 1945 entitled 'Psychotherapy and Ethics', for these notes are prompted largely by that essay, and the long interval of time is a measure of its vivid effect upon my thought. I will doubtless appear to have overstressed the difference between us, which is probably far more one of theory than of practice. I may thereby also give some wrong impressions by overstating the case for psychology; this is perhaps inevitable in any debate.

I do however regard the reconciliation and synthesis of religion and psychology as of far greater importance than that between 'religion and science' which agitated a previous generation.

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IS THE THERAPIST A MORALIST?

One of the crucial aspects for a Catholic in the whole business of psychotherapy is its relation to morality and the 'ethical' role of the analyst. Does the therapeutic process operate at all levels of the psyche, and so interpenetrate this as to render it inevitable for the analyst to influence the patient in the 'spiritual' as well as the 'emotional' field? Is it part of his rôle to bring the patient to achieve a synthesis which includes or should include, religion? Father Victor White dealt with this question in the article I have mentioned, answering the above question mainly in the affirmative. Personally I hold it inadvisable that the therapist should become involved in the rôle of spiritual adviser; it is not his job to suggest beliefs or values: 'therein the patient must administer to himself'. He is dealing with the 'natural' man, and his job is to free the patient from the emotional barriers which are holding up the self-realisation of that personality. The patient may in the course of this process become aware of the need for a belief, a philosophy of life, but this he should get from his immediate environment, from the tradition and culture in which he lives. True, the therapist

must have his own philosophy, his own code and character, but these should influence the process only indirectly, unconsciously if you like; he must remain, explicitly, neutral and detached. To enlarge upon this we may take as our starting point a statement from the article in question: 'it is with dubious propriety that psycho-therapy can hide behind medicine from the challenge of moral and spiritual factors when these are being increasingly recognised . . . in the aetiology of functional and even organic health and disease'. Now, I would say that it does not seek to hide behind medicine but to become integrated with it; then for the terms 'moral and spiritual' I would substitute, or add, the words 'instinctive and emotional'. The same might be put in reverse by stating that psycho-therapy must not hide behind religion and deny the reality of instinctive and emotional factors. In-so-far as religious and moral issues do mix in the course of analysis the therapist is obviously concerned with them, but as *psychological* factors, and not in the realm of absolute values. The therapist's function is to step in where these instinctive and emotional forces are in such conflict that they are causing a state of disintegration or a serious loss of mental harmony and balance. These forces mainly operate in the field of personal relationships: in the family, in work and leisure; we are dealing with loves and hates, with jealousy and guilt, with inferiority and self-assertion. The patient is to be enabled to understand the present state as the repetition of a 'pattern' which was laid down in the past, even in infancy, and has continued to influence in a baneful manner his present attitude and behaviour; keeping his Ego at an immature level. The therapist's job is, as Father White says, not to make us good or bad, or indeed to 'make' us anything, but to help us to turn ourselves into satisfactory human beings, within the limits of our personality. In this process he must follow the patient and not lead him; he interprets, but is only right if he gains the patient's assent; the realisation and insight must come from the patient's own thoughts and feelings, and these eventually brought to the bar of his reason.

In all this I am largely re-stating what Father White himself has said, and where we disagree is with regard to the dichotomy between 'moralist' and 'therapist' which he, quite rightly in a certain sense, regards with concern.

Dalbiez, supporting the rightness of this separation of rôles, puts it as strongly as this: 'we see therefore that whereas morality aims at achieving man's whole and supreme good by means of free-will, psycho-therapy aims at achieving a partial and relative human good—psychic or somatic health—by psychological deter-

minism'. This is perhaps going too far, because the realms of the absolute and the relative, of free-will and 'conditioning', of feeling and action, must interpenetrate. The analyst is a man for all that, and as we said at the beginning, his own character and belief must influence the patient even though unconsciously to both. You could not conceive a Communist treating a Catholic (although you might vice versa—with difficulty!). Apart from these extremes, however, it is quite wrong for the therapist to give advice on matters of conduct or to put across matters of belief or values. Indeed it is a safeguard that the code of the analyst should preclude him from so doing; a great deal of harm has been done in many cases by not observing the rule of benevolent neutrality. Even a Catholic therapist treating a Catholic patient would or should say to his patient, when a question of faith or morals crops up: 'go show yourself to the Priest'—or words to that effect.

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FREUD OR JUNG?

Freud has been a consistent opponent and belittler of religious belief. His views may be sketched as follows: Culture has two main purposes: to protect men against nature, and to regulate the relation between human beings. Man must accept the need to work in co-operation, to make use of nature, and to work in community. For the latter he must learn to regulate primitive 'love' which he says 'opposes the interests of culture and . . . culture menaces love with grievous restrictions'. In other words, to promote culture, 'instinctual renunciation' is necessary, and coercion inevitable.

Now, both in his attempts to defend himself against a ruthless and cruel nature, and to harmonise his individual predatory and aggressive individualism with Society, man humanises these forces and 'invents' deities. To these he looks as a child to his father—both with fear and a sense of protection. To these he looks also for a reward which shall reconcile him to the cruelty of his fate, and a sanction in the shape of moral law, for accepting the privations of culture. All that men seek for is happiness, and to ask what other purpose there is in life, is vain: 'the idea of a purpose in life stands or falls with the idea of religion'. (We would actually agree with Freud in his statement about happiness which in fact is the purpose of religion also—when it includes the Supreme happiness which we call God.)

But to Freud religion is a phase of obsessional neurosis in the race, wherein: 'for the radiant intelligence of the child we substitute the feeble mentality of the adult'. This will be cured, he

thinks, in time, with the aid of Science and of Reason for: 'The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it has gained a hearing'. This is, I hope, a not unfair synopsis of Freudian ideas on Religion and Culture (how different from Mr Dawson, we might exclaim!).

Now we turn to Jung, and we find that he has apparently come to be more and more a protagonist of the Catholic religion. He suggests that modern man may no longer be satisfied with the walls which sheltered him, yet without them he lets loose the legions of hell. 'Abandoning the sanity and wisdom of the Church which canalised man's energies . . . he turns to the collectivity of the State.' Jung finds a religious need expressed in the minds of his patients, in their dreams and paintings, but he does not postulate a return to traditional religion. True he leaves the Catholic to his priests and his practices if these to him are still alive and meaningful, but the Way for Jung has taken a strange path: it leads him to alchemy, which appears to represent a Western form of Yoga. 'In alchemy there lies concealed a Western meditative Yoga, but it was kept a carefully guarded secret out of fear of heresy and its terrible consequences.'

It must be remembered that Jung has tended to deal more and more with patients past their middle years and of a rather selected type, and he has gone far beyond the confines of clinical psychology. He has detached himself more and more from the 'simpler' problems of the individual: his petty desires, his conflicts with sex (so universal, so urgent and real), his self-esteem in job and career, his personal vanities and resentments.

It would appear then that the therapist must make his choice between sex and science with Freud, or religion and alchemy with Jung. It will seem so, if we select for consideration, as we have done, only a part of the whole. The contrast between them can be made to seem extreme, and it makes one wonder what difference in temperament, culture and personal development can result in two great thinkers arriving at such opposite conclusions. If, however, we leave aside what is most speculative in Freud: his views on anthropology, culture and religion, and reflect upon his concepts of unconscious motivation, repression and conflict, and upon his incomparable technique of analysis, we must admit that he is indeed the founder of medical psychology.

Jung, particularly in his earlier work on psychological types and on the 'collective unconscious', serves as a counter-weight and complement to Freud. Both are needed, and indeed many others, to build up that psychological edifice which will never be complete.

Catholics should be humble enough to admit that Freud can help them to tear off the mask of hypocrisy—rationalistic or pharisaical—which can so easily cloud the vision.

With Jung we may get lost in a 'cloud of unknowing' rather different from that of the old mystic; with Freud we can see the dung on our feet, but in the end he may be the safer guide to health and perhaps even to holiness!

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WHAT ABOUT CHILD PSYCHOLOGY?

There is nothing more discouraging to a Catholic psychologist or social worker who is concerned, day in and day out, with the problems of childhood, than misinformed judgments and exaggerations which are so often seen in reports of speeches, or in letters to the Catholic press. We hear about 'soft psychology', 'the prattlings of psychology', the awfulness of modern ideas on education, the need for more punishment and so on. These makers of speeches and writers of letters appear to be convinced that there must be an absolute antithesis between Catholic principles on the one hand and modern psychology on the other. Yet no psychologist will deny the enormous importance of stable and harmonious family life, of parental responsibility, of good example and training; quite the contrary, they affirm it and prove it by numerous examples.

When we study cases of delinquency in Remand Homes or Clinics we are evaluating the deficiencies in a child's endowment, upbringing and opportunities which are, in some cases and in varying degrees, the reasons, not excuses, for a child's behaviour. A great deal of petty crime is of course just simple 'naughtiness' which deserves punishment, and should be dealt with by parents themselves and not by Juvenile Courts. But a very considerable proportion of delinquents come from so-called homes where they have never had parental love and care, where they have been mercilessly punished and neglected: they have been unloved and dispossessed, and they have acquired a deep, and just, resentment against the adult world. Moreover a small proportion (but the most important because from them come the recidivists and criminals) include the psychopathic personalities, the epileptoids, neurotics, and feeble-minded which psychiatry alone can evaluate. To apply the same parrot-cry of 'responsibility' and 'punishment' for all these equally is simply lack of charity. To make use of modern methods of a psychological diagnosis, and the merciful ways of reform and rehabilitation, is to practise love of one's neighbour in a manner which is sensible, scientific, as well as just and Christian.

It is not our job to judge, condemn, moralise or punish; it is our

job to present a true picture of the situation upon which judgment can be reached and appropriate measures carried out. It is our job to explore to the full those Social conditions and individual *psychological* disorders which are the *natural* concomitants of man's spiritual disorder; this does not mean that we need to explain the whole by the part, but we can say that within our limits and in our proper sphere we are entitled to give our psychological opinions and prescribe our psychological remedies. Not for us to pronounce upon the degree of responsibility and culpability, which God alone knows—hence the gentleness of the confessional. So we may say, with Eric Gill: '. . . let the psychologist extend the sphere of pathology as widely as he can. It is for the good of the confessional that he should do so.' (Many other wise remarks on this subject will be found in his *Necessity of Belief*.)

If there is one thing which psychologists agree upon it is the primary importance of stable family life, particularly in the earliest years, for the mental health of the child. Following from this they stress the importance of providing as near a substitute as possible for orphaned or 'abandoned' children. This is obviously in keeping with Catholic ideals, yet we do not find that Catholic institutions, admirable though their work has been, show much sign of acting upon these premises. It is also notorious that it is exceedingly difficult to find Catholic foster-homes for such children.

In education generally, there are certain trends which are often dubbed 'progressive' and thereby seem to be damned in Catholic eyes. Such are for example the 'activity' methods of teaching, the stress on art, music and drama, the emphasis on co-operative tasks rather than competition, the development of discipline which shall be accepted as self-discipline rather than imposed under punitive sanctions. Doubtless these forms of educational practice may be exaggerated, and made into a cult—to the exclusion of the necessary 'drill' in the arduous task of learning fundamentals. But they are to my mind absolutely in harmony with the nature of the 'person' as it can and should be educated. They allow for creativeness, interest, spontaneity and responsibility: for that many-sided, body-mind-spirit unity which is the human creature. They tend to draw out the best instead of suppressing the worst. (I am *not* forgetting original sin!)

That great Catholic pioneer of modern methods, Montessori, led the way in many respects (how many of us have read her *Secret of Childhood*, I wonder?) but, as always with shining exceptions, we have lagged behind even in the prudent adoption of such principles in our schools, through a mistaken 'traditionalism'. So that

we find the President of a Catholic Teachers' Association reported in the *Educational Supplement* of *The Times* recently as saying the following: 'The fundamentals and foundations of education had been relegated to the background by the frills and fripperies of the new game known as modern school method'.

If only we could recognise that both sides are half right, that there is no need for, and every reason against, exclusivism and diehardism in such matters. . . .

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What I am after, in short, is a respect for the nature of man and a recognition of its shortcomings and its needs. To think that prayer and the sacraments, necessary and holy as of course they are, will put everything right no matter what the nature of child or adult may be, no matter how warped the character or how desolate and depressed the state of mind; to think this is 'supernaturalism', and again a case of 'nothing but'. . . .

It is to think only in terms of body and spirit and not of their meeting ground which is mind; it is, in other terms, to create an absolute antithesis between nature and grace. The knowledge of man's true nature, the recovery of 'natural law', is a terribly urgent need of our times. The Catholic writer, Thibon, puts it thus: 'in times past, Christianity had to fight nature; that nature which was so hard, so hermetically closed that grace could hardly penetrate. Today we must fight *for* nature in order to save that minimum of health which is necessary for the grafting of the supernatural.'

De Greef, a Catholic psychiatrist, asks the question: 'mediocre as man is, can he, even through the mediation of Christianity, assure the love and well-being of his neighbour? Between the perfection of the Doctrine and man . . . is there not too great a gulf?' 'It would seem necessary', he says, 'to introduce between man and doctrine a way of feeling, a kind of social pedagogic which prepares the human being to give real value to his Christianity.' The study of human relations, in the light of modern psychology, is, I believe, not the least of the means given us today towards the healing of man's heart.

CHARLES BURNS.