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Chapter 3

Modern Psychology

Titus Burckhardt

"The object of psychology is the psychic; unfortunately it is also its subject." Thus wrote a famous psychologist of our time.[1] According to this opinion, every psychological judgment inevitably participates in the essentially subjective, not to say passionate and tendentious, nature of its object; for, according to this logic, no one understands the soul except by means of his own soul, and the latter, for the psychologist, is, precisely, purely psychic, and nothing else. Thus no psychologist, whatever be his claim to objectivity, escapes this dilemma, and the more categorical and general his affirmations in this realm are, the more they are suspect; such is the verdict that modern psychology pronounces in its own cause, when it is being sincere towards itself. But whether it be sincere or not, the relativism expressed in the words just quoted is always inherent in it. This relativism is also a kind of Prometheanism that would make of the psychic element the ultimate reality of man. It is the root of the numerous divergences within this discipline, and it dominates it to the point of contaminating everything that it touches: history, philosophy, art, and religion; all of them become psychological at its touch, and thereby also subjective, and thus devoid of objective and immutable certainties.[2]

1. C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion* (New Haven, Yale, 1938), p. 62
2. "I can find no reason to be surprised at seeing psychology exchange visits with philosophy, for is not the act of thinking, the foundation of all philosophy, a psychic activity which, as such, directly concerns psychology? Must not psychology embrace the soul in its total extension, which includes philosophy, theology, and countless other things? In the face of all the richly diversified religions, there rise up, as the supreme instance perhaps of truth or error, the immutable data of the human soul." (C. C. Jung, *L'Homme à la Découverte de son Âme* [Paris, 1962], p. 238) This amounts to replacing truth by psychology; it is totally forgotten that there are no "immutable data" outside of that which is immutable by its own nature, namely, the intellect. In any case, if the "act of thinking" is no more than a "psychic activity", by what right does psychology set itself up as the "supreme instance", since it too is but one "psychic activity" amongst others?

But all a priori relativism is inconsequential towards itself. Despite the admitted precariousness of its point of view, modern psychology behaves like every other science: it passes judgments and believes in their validity, and in this connection it leans unwittingly, and without admitting it, on an innate certainty: indeed, if we can observe that the psychic is "subjective", in the sense of being dominated by a certain egocentric bias that imposes on it certain limits, or by a particular "coloring", this is because there is something in us which is not subject to these limits and tendencies, but which transcends them and in principle dominates them. This something is the intellect, and it is the intellect that normally provides us with the criteria which alone can shed light on the fluctuating and uncertain world of the *psyché;* this is obvious, but it nevertheless remains totally outside modern scientific and philosophical thinking.

It is important above all not to confuse intellect and reason: the latter is indeed the mental reflection of the transcendent intellect, but in practice it is only what one makes of it, by which we mean that, in the case of the modern sciences, its functioning is limited by the empirical method itself; at the level of the latter, reason is not so much a source of truth as a principle of coherence. For modern psychology it is even less than that, for if scientific rationalism lends a relatively stable framework to one's observation of the physical world, it reveals itself as entirely insufficient when it comes to describing the world of the soul; for surface psychic movements, those whose causes and aims are situated on the plane of current experience, can hardly be translated into rational terms. The whole chaos of lower—and mostly unconscious—psychic possibilities escapes both rationality and what transcends rationality, and this means that both the major part of the psychic world and the metaphysical realm will appear "irrational" according to this way of thinking. Hence a certain tendency, inherent in modern psychology, to relativize reason itself, a tendency that is self-contradictory, since psychology cannot dispense with rational methods. Psychology finds itself confronted with a domain which on all sides overflows the horizon of a science founded on empiricism and Cartesianism.

For this reason, the majority of modern psychologists ensconce themselves in a sort of pragmatism; it is in "committed" experience, together with a coldly clinical attitude, that they see some guarantee

of "objectivity". In point of fact, the movements of the soul cannot be studied from the outside, as in the case of corporeal phenomena; to know what they mean, they have in a sense to be lived, and this involves the subject of the observer, as was justly pointed out by the psychologist at the outset. As for the mental faculty that "controls" the experiment, what is this but a more or less arbitrary "common sense", one inevitably colored by preconceived ideas? Thus the would-be objectivity of the psychic attitude changes nothing in regard to the uncertain nature of the experiment, and so, in the absence of a principle that is both inward and immutable, one returns to the dilemma of the psychic striving to grasp the psychic.

The soul, like every other domain of reality, can only be truly known by what transcends it. Moreover, this is spontaneously and implicitly admitted in people's recognition of the moral principle of justice, which demands that men should overcome their individual subjectivity. Now we could not overcome it, if the intelligence, which guides our will, were itself nothing but a psychic reality; and intelligence would not transcend the *psyché* if, in its essence, it did not transcend the plane of phenomena, both inward and outward. This observation suffices to prove the necessity and the existence of a psychology deriving in a sense from above and not claiming a priori an empirical character. But although this order of things is inscribed in our very nature, it will never be recognized by modern psychology; despite its own reactions against the rationalism of yesterday, it is no closer to metaphysics than any other empirical science—indeed quite the contrary, since its perspective, which assimilates the suprarational to the irrational, predisposes it to the worst of errors.

What modern psychology lacks entirely is criteria enabling it to situate the aspects or tendencies of the soul in their cosmic context. In traditional psychology, these criteria are provided according to two principal "dimensions": on the one hand, according to a cosmology that "situates" the soul and its modalities in the hierarchy of states of existence, and, on the other hand, according to a morality directed toward a spiritual end. The latter may provisionally espouse the individual horizon; it nonetheless keeps in view the universal principles attaching the soul to an order more vast than itself. Cosmology in a sense circumscribes the soul; spiritual morality sounds its depths. For just as a current of water reveals its force and

direction only when it breaks against an object that resists it, so the soul can show its tendencies and fluctuations only in relation to an immutable principle; whoever wishes to know the nature of the *psyché* must resist it, and one truly resists it only when one places oneself at a point which corresponds, if not effectively then at least virtually or symbolically, to the Divine Self, or to the intellect which is like a ray that emanates from the latter.

Thus traditional psychology possesses both an impersonal and "static" dimension (namely, cosmology), and a personal and "operative" dimension (namely, morality or the science of the virtues), and it is necessarily so, because genuine knowledge of the soul results from knowledge of oneself. He who, by the eye of his essence, is able to "objectivize" his own psychic form, by that very fact knows all the possibilities of the psychic or subtle world; and this intellectual "vision" is both the outcome and, if need be, the guarantor of every sacred science of the soul.

For the majority of modern psychologists, traditional morality—which they readily confuse with a purely social or conventional morality—is nothing but a kind of psychic dam, useful on occasion but more often a hindrance or even harmful for the "normal" development of the individual. This opinion is propagated especially by Freudian psychoanalysis, which became widely applied in some countries, where it has practically usurped the function that elsewhere belongs to the sacrament of confession: the psychiatrist replaces the priest, and the bursting of complexes that had previously been repressed takes the place of absolution. In ritual confession the priest is but the impersonal representative—necessarily discreet—of the Truth that judges and pardons; the penitent, by admitting his sins, in a sense "objectivizes" the psychic tendencies that these sins manifest. By repenting, he detaches himself from them, and by receiving sacramental absolution, his soul is virtually reintegrated in its primitive equilibrium and centered on its divine essence. In the case of Freudian psychoanalysis,[3] on the other hand, man lays bare his psychic entrails, not before God, but to his fellow. He does not distance himself from the chaotic and obscure depths

3. The use of the adjective is to make it clear that it is indeed the method of Freud that we are discussing here, for in our own day some forms of psychoanalysis are more neutral and less pernicious, a fact which, from our point of view, is in no wise a justification.

of his soul, which the analyst unveils or stirs up, but on the contrary, he accepts them as his own, for he must say to himself: "This is what I am like in reality." And if he does not overcome, with the help of some salutary instinct, this kind of disillusionment from below, he will retain from it something like an intimate sullying; in most cases it will be his self-abandonment to collective mediocrity that for him will play the part of absolution, for it is easier to endure one's own degradation when it is shared with others. Whatever may be the occasional or partial usefulness of such an analysis in certain cases, the state described above is its more usual result, its premises being what they are.[4]

If the medicine of the traditional civilizations knows nothing analogous to modern psychotherapy, this is because the psychic cannot be treated by the psychic. The *psyché* is the realm of indefinite actions and reactions. By its own specific nature, it is essentially unstable and deceptive, so that it can be cured only by resorting to something situated "outside" or "above" it. In some cases one will act favorably upon it by re-establishing the humoral balance of the body, commonly upset by psychic affections;[5] in other cases it is only by the use of spiritual means, such as exorcism,[6] prayer, or a sojourn in holy places, that the soul can be restored to health.

Everyone is aware of the fact that modern psychology tries to explain psychologically the spiritual means just mentioned. In its eyes, the effect of a rite is one thing, and its theological or mystical interpretation is another. The effect of a rite, arbitrarily limited to the psychic and subjective domain alone, is attributed to psychic dispositions of ancestral origin, which the form of the rite is supposed to actualize. There is no hint of the timeless and superhuman meaning inherent in the rite or symbol—as if the soul could cure itself

4. René Guénon has observed that the principle whereby every psychoanalyst requires to be psychoanalyzed himself before being empowered to analyze others, raises the troublesome question as to who occupied the first place in the queue.
5. Usually a vicious circle ensues, with the psychic imbalance engendering a physical intoxication, which in its turn causes the psychic imbalance to worsen.
6. Cases of diabolical possession, such as manifestly call for the application of the rites of exorcism, seem to have become rarer nowadays, doubtless because demonic influences are no longer "compressed" by the dam of tradition, but are able to spread more or less everywhere in forms that are in a fashion "diluted".

through believing in the illusory projection of its own preoccupations, whether individual or collective. There is nothing, however, in this supposition that would trouble modern psychology, since it is ready to go much further than this, when it asserts, for example, that the fundamental forms of thought, the laws of logic, merely represent a residue of ancestral habits.[7] This path is one that leads to the outright denial of intelligence and to its replacement by biological fatalities, if indeed psychology can go that far without encompassing its own ruin.

In order to be able to "situate" the soul in relation to other cosmic realities or realms, one must refer to the cosmological scheme that represents the degrees of existence in the form of concentric circles or spheres. This scheme, which makes symbolical use of the geocentric conception of the visible universe, symbolically identifies the corporeal world with our terrestrial surroundings; around this center extends the sphere—or spheres—of the subtle or psychic world, surrounded in turn by the sphere of the world of pure Spirit. This representation is naturally limited by its own spatial character, but it nevertheless expresses very well the relationship that exists between these various states. Each of the spheres, considered in itself, presents itself as a complete and perfectly homogeneous whole, whereas from the "point of view" of the sphere immediately above, it is but a content thereof. Thus the corporeal world, envisaged at its own level, does not know the subtle world, just as the latter does not know the supra-formal world, precisely because it encloses only that which has a form. Furthermore, each of these worlds is known and dominated by that which exceeds and surrounds it. It is from the immutable and formless background of the Spirit that the subtle realities become detached as forms, and it is the soul which, through its sensory faculties, knows the corporeal.

This double relationship of things, which a priori is hidden from our individual vision, can be grasped in all its reality when one considers the very nature of sensible perception. On the one hand, this truly reaches the corporeal world, and no philosophical artifice will be able to convince us of the contrary; on the other hand, there is

7. They will say, for example, that logic is merely an expression of the physiological structure of our brain, and forget that, were it so, this statement would also be an expression of this same physiological fatality.

no doubt that all we perceive of the world are but those "images" of it that our mental faculty is able to keep hold of, and in this respect the whole fabric of impressions, memories, and anticipations—in short, everything that for us constitutes the sensible continuity and logical coherence of the world—is of a psychic or subtle nature. It is in vain that one will try to know what the world is "outside" this subtle continuity, since this "outside" does not exist: surrounded as it is by the subtle state, the corporeal world is but a content thereof, even though it appears, in the mirror of this state itself, as a materially autonomous order.[8]

It is obviously not the individual soul, but the entire subtle state that contains the physical world. The logical coherence of the latter presupposes the unity of the former, and this is manifested indirectly by the fact that the multiple individual visions of the sensible world, fragmentary though they be, substantially coincide and are integrated in one continuous whole. The individual soul participates in this unity both by the structure of its cognitive faculties, which is in conformity with the cosmic order, and also by its nature as subject, containing the physical world in its own way; in other words, the physical world is a "world" only in relation to the individual subject, by virtue of the cleaving of consciousness into object and subject, a cleaving that results precisely from the "egoic" polarization of the soul. By this same polarization, the soul is distinguished from the totality of the subtle state—the "total" or "universal soul" of Plotinus—without, however, being separated from it substantially. For if it were separated from it, our vision of the world would not be adequate to reality; but in fact it is so, in spite of the limitations and the relativity of all perception.

It is true that we ordinarily perceive only a fragment of the subtle world—the fragment that we "are", and that constitutes our "myself"—whereas the sensible world reveals itself to us in its macrocosmic continuity, as a whole that seems to include us. This is because the subtle world is the very field of individuation; in reality, we are plunged in the ocean of the subtle world as fishes are in water, and like them, we do not see that which constitutes our own element.

8. Nothing is more absurd than attempts to explain the perception of the material world in material terms.

As for the opposition between the "inward" psychic world and the "outward" corporeal world, this is actualized only in relation to, and in function of, the latter. In itself, the subtle world is neither "inward" nor "outward"; it is at most "non-outward", whereas the corporeal world is outward as such, which furthermore proves that it does not enjoy an autonomous existence.

The corporeal state and the psychic state together constitute formal existence; in its total extension, the subtle state is none other than formal existence, but one calls it "subtle" inasmuch as it escapes the laws of corporeity. According to one of the most ancient and most natural symbolisms, the subtle state may be compared to the atmosphere surrounding the earth which pervades all porous bodies and is the vehicle of life.

A phenomenon can only be truly understood through its relations, both "horizontal" and "vertical", with total Reality. This truth applies particularly, and in a certain sense practically, to psychic phenomena. The same psychic "event" can simultaneously be the response to a sensory impulsion, the manifestation of a wish, the consequence of a previous action, the trace of the typical and ancestral form of the individual, the expression of his genius, and the reflection of a supra-individual reality. It is legitimate to consider the psychic phenomenon in question under one or other of these aspects, but it would be unwarranted to seek to explain the movements and purposes of the soul by one—or even by several—of these aspects exclusively. In this connection let us quote the words of a therapist who is aware of the limitations of contemporary psychology:

> There is an ancient Hindu maxim whose truth is incontestable: "What a man thinks, that he becomes." If one steadfastly thinks of good deeds, one will end by becoming a good man; if one always thinks of weakness, one will become weak; if one thinks of how to develop one's strength (bodily or mental), one will become strong. Similarly, if for years one is engaged almost daily in stirring up Hades,[9] in explaining systematically the higher in terms of the lower, and at the same time ignoring everything in man's cultural history which, despite lamentable errors and misdeeds, has been

9. An allusion to the words of Virgil, *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* ("If I cannot bend the Heavens, I shall stir up hell"), which Freud quoted at the beginning of his *Interpretation of Dreams*.

> regarded as worthwhile, one can scarcely avoid the risk of losing all discernment, of levelling down the imagination (a source of our life), and of severely reducing one's mental horizon.[10]

Ordinary consciousness illuminates only a restricted portion of the individual soul, and the latter represents only a tiny part of the psychic world. Nevertheless, the soul is not cut off from the rest of this world; its situation is not that of a body rigorously limited by its own extension and separated from other bodies. What distinguishes the soul from the rest of the vast subtle world is uniquely its own particular tendencies, which define it—if one may employ a simplified image—as a spatial direction defines the ray of light that follows it. By these very tendencies, the soul is in communion with all the cosmic possibilities of analogous tendencies or qualities; it assimilates them and is assimilated by them. For this reason, the science of cosmic tendencies—the *gunas* of Hindu cosmology—is fundamental for the knowledge of the soul. In this connection, it is not the outward context of a psychic phenomenon—the accidental occasion for its manifestation—that matters essentially, but its connection with *sattva, rajas,* or *tamas*—the "upward," "expansive," and "downward" tendencies—which confers on it its rank in the hierarchy of inward values.

Since the motives of the soul are perceptible only through the forms that manifest them, it is on these forms or manifestations that a psychological assessment must needs be founded. Now, the part played by the *gunas* in any form whatsoever can be measured only in a purely qualitative manner, by means of precise and decisive—but in no wise quantitative—criteria, such as are entirely lacking in the wholly profane psychology of our time.

There are some psychic "events" whose repercussions traverse all the degrees of the subtle world "vertically", since they touch on the essences; others—these are ordinary psychic movements—only obey the "horizontal" coming and going of the *psyché;* and finally, there are those that come from the subhuman depths. The first mentioned are not capable of being expressed entirely—they comprise an element of mystery—and yet the forms which they may

10. Hans Jacob, *Western Psychology and Hindu Sâdhana* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1961). The author of this work is a former disciple of Jung, who later discovered the doctrine and method—immeasurably greater—of the Hindu *sâdhana,* which enabled him to subject Western psychology to a just criticism.

from time to time evoke in the imagination are clear and precise, like those that characterize authentic sacred arts. The last mentioned, namely demonic "inspirations", are unintelligible in their very forms; they "ape" the genuinely mysterious by the nebulous, obscure, and equivocal character of their formal manifestations; examples of this are readily to be found in contemporary art.

When studying the formal manifestation of the soul, one must, however, not forget that man's psycho-physical organism can display strange caesuras or discontinuities. Thus, for instance, in the case of the somewhat "anarchical" category of contemplatives known as "fools of God", the spiritual states do not manifest themselves harmoniously and normally and do not make use of the reason; inversely, an intrinsically pathological state—and as such dominated by infra-human and chaotic tendencies—may incidentally and by accident comprise openings onto supra-terrestrial realities; this is but saying that the human soul is of an inexhaustible complexity.

Viewed as a whole, the subtle world is incomparably vaster and more varied than the corporeal world. Dante expresses this by making the entire hierarchy of planetary spheres correspond to the subtle world, whereas he makes only the terrestrial domain correspond to the corporeal world. The subterranean position of the hells, in his system, merely indicates that the states in question are situated below the normal human state; in reality, they are also part of the subtle state, and this is why some medieval cosmologists place the hells symbolically between heaven and earth.[11]

Experience of the subtle world is subjective—except in the case of certain sciences quite unknown to the moderns—because consciousness, in identifying itself with subtle forms, is affected by their tendencies, just as a ray of light is turned from its course by the form of a wave that it happens to traverse. The subtle world is made up of forms; in other words, it comprises diversity and contrast; but these forms do not possess, in themselves or outside of their projection in the sensible imagination,[12] spatial and defined contours as in the

11. In Islam, it is said that the throne of the devil is located between earth and heaven, a doctrine which also makes clear the temptations to which those who follow the "vertical" path are exposed.
12. If some masters have compared the subtle world to the imagination, it is the imaginative activity, and not the images produced by the imagination, that they had in view.

case of corporeal forms. They are entirely active or, to be more exact, dynamic, pure activity belonging only to the essential "forms" or archetypes that are to be found in the pure Spirit. Now the ego or individual soul is itself one of the forms of the subtle world, and the consciousness that espouses this form is necessarily dynamic and exclusive; it realizes other subtle forms only insofar as these become modalities of its own egoic form.

Thus it is that in the dream state individual consciousness, even though reabsorbed into the subtle world, nonetheless remains turned back on itself; all the forms that it experiences in this state present themselves as simple prolongations of the individual subject, or at least they appear so in retrospect and inasmuch as they verge on the waking state. For in itself, and despite this subjectivism, the consciousness of the dreamer is obviously not impermeable to influences coming from the most diverse "regions" of the subtle world, as is proved, for example, by premonitory or telepathic dreams, which many people have experienced.[13] Indeed, while the imagery of a dream is woven from the very "substance" of the subject—a "substance" that is none other than the progressive actualization of his own psychic form—it nonetheless manifests, incidentally and to different degrees, realities of a cosmic order.

The content of a dream can be considered in many different ways. If one analyzes the *materia* of which it is composed one will find that it is constituted by all sorts of memories, and in this respect the current psychological explanation, which makes the dream the expression of subconscious residues, is largely right. It is not, however, excluded that a dream may also comprise "matters" that in no wise proceed from the personal experience of the dreamer and that are like traces of a psychic transfusion from one individual to another. There is also the economy of the dream, and in this connection we can quote the following description by C. G. Jung, which is exact despite the radically false theses of the author:

> The dream, deriving from the activity of the unconscious, gives a representation of the contents that slumber there; not of all the contents that figure in it, but only of certain of them which, by way of association, are actualized, crystallized, and selected, in correlation with the momentary state of consciousness.[14]

13. Empirical psychology no longer dares to deny this phenomenon.
14. *L'Homme à la Découverte de son Âme,* p. 205.

As for the hermeneutics of dreams, this eludes modern psychology in spite of the latter's efforts in this direction, because one cannot validly interpret images reflected by the soul without knowing to which level of reality they refer.

The images one retains on waking from a dream generally represent only a shadow of the psychic forms experienced in the dream state itself. On passing into the waking state, a sort of decantation occurs—one can be aware of this—and something of the reality inherent in the dream evaporates more or less rapidly. There exists, nevertheless, a certain category of dreams, well-known to traditional oneirocrisy, the memory of which persists with an incisive clarity, and this can happen even if the profound content of these dreams appears to conceal itself. Such dreams, which mostly occur at dawn and continue until waking, are accompanied by an irrefutable feeling of objectivity; otherwise put, they comprise a more than merely mental certainty. But what characterizes them above all, and independently of their moral influence on the dreamer, is the high quality of their forms, disengaged from every turbid or chaotic residue. These are the dreams that come from the Angel; in other words, from the Essence that connects the soul to the supra-formal states of the being.

Since there are dreams of divine or angelic inspiration, their opposite must also exist, and these are dreams of satanic impulsion, containing palpable caricatures of sacred forms. The sensation accompanying them is not one of cool and serene lucidity, but of obsession and vertigo; it is the attraction of an abyss. The infernal influences sometimes ride the wave of a natural passion, which opens the way for them, so to speak. They are, however, distinguishable from the elementary character of passion by their prideful and negative tendency, accompanied either by bitterness or else by sadness. As Pascal said: "He who tries to play the angel will play the beast", and indeed nothing is so apt to provoke caricatures, both in dreams and out of them, as the unconsciously pretentious attitude of the man who mixes God with his own highly particularized ego—the classical cause of many of the psychoses studied by post-Freudian psychologism.[15]

15. In a general way, contemporary psychology delves into the observation of pathological cases, and views the soul only through this clinical perspective.

It was starting from the analysis of dreams that C. G. Jung developed his famous theory about the "collective unconscious". His observation of the fact that a certain category of dream images could not be explained simply on the basis of their being residues of individual experiences led Jung to distinguish, within the unconscious domain whence dreams are fed, between a "personal" zone whose contents represent basically the other face of individual psychic life, and a "collective" zone made up of latent psychic dispositions of an impersonal character, such as never offer themselves to direct observation, but manifest themselves indirectly through "symbolic" dreams and "irrational" impulsions. At first sight, this theory has nothing extravagant about it, except its use of the term "irrational" in connection with symbolism. It is easy to understand that the individual consciousness centered on the empirical ego leaves on the margin or even outside itself everything which, in the psychic order, is not effectively attached to that center, just as a light projected in a given direction decreases towards the surrounding darkness. But this is not how Jung understands the matter. For him, the non-personal zone of the soul is unconscious as such; in other words, its contents can never become the direct object of the intelligence, whatever be its modality or however great its extension.

> Just as the human body displays a common anatomy, independently of racial differences, so also the psyché possesses, beyond all cultural and mental differences, a common *substratum,* which I have named the collective unconscious. This unconscious psyché, which is common to all men, is not made up of contents capable of becoming conscious, but solely of latent dispositions giving rise to certain reactions that are always identical.[16]

And the author goes on to insinuate that it is here a question of ancestral structures that have their origin in the physical order:

> The fact that this collective unconscious exists is simply the psychic expression of the identity of cerebral structures beyond all racial differences . . . the different lines of psychic evolution start out from one and the same trunk, whose roots plunge through all the ages. It is here that the psychic parallel with the animal is situated.[17]

16. C. G. Jung, *The Secret of the Golden Flower* (New York, 1931), introduction.
17. *Ibid.*

One notices the plainly Darwinian turn of this thesis, the disastrous consequences of which show themselves in the following passage: "It is this that explains the analogy, indeed the identity, of mythological motives and of symbols as means of human communication in general."[18] Myths and symbols would thus be the expression of an ancestral psychic fund that brings man near to the animal! They have no intellectual or spiritual foundation, since

> from the purely psychological point of view, it is a question of common instincts of imagining and acting. All conscious imagination and action have evolved on the basis of these unconscious prototypes and remain permanently attached to them, and this is especially so when consciousness has not yet attained a very high degree of lucidity, in other words, as long as it is still, in all its functions, more dependent on instinct than on conscious will, or more affective than rational . . .[19]

This quotation clearly indicates that, for Jung, the "collective unconscious" is situated "below", at the level of physiological instincts. It is important to bear this in mind, since the term "collective unconscious" in itself could carry a wider and in a fashion more spiritual meaning, as certain assimilations made by Jung seem to suggest, especially his use—or rather his usurpation—of the term "archetype" to signify the latent, and as such inaccessible, contents of the "collective unconscious". For though the archetypes do not belong to the psychic realm, but to the world of pure Spirit, they are nevertheless reflected at the psychic level—as virtualities of images in the first place—before becoming crystallized, according to the circumstances, in images properly so-called, so that a certain psychological application of the term "archetype" could at a pinch be justified. But Jung defines the "archetype" as an "innate complex"[20] and describes its action on the soul thus: "Possession by an archetype makes of a man a purely collective personage, a kind of mask, under which human nature can no longer develop, but degenerates progressively."[21] As if an archetype, which is an immediate and supra-formal determination of Being—and non-limitative by this very fact—could in some way cast a spell on and vampirize the soul!

18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. See *L' Homme à la Découverte de son Âme* line, p. 311
21. See *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (Pantheon, New York, 1966), p. 234.

What is really in question in the more or less pathological case envisaged by Jung? Simply a dissociation of the possibilities inherent in the subtle form of a man, a form that includes multiple aspects, each of which has something unique and irreplaceable about it. In every non-degenerate human individual there is to be found in potency a man and a woman, a father and a mother, a child and an old man, as well as various qualities or "dignities" inseparable from the original and ontological position of man, such as priestly and royal qualities, those of a creative craftsman, of a servant, and so forth. Normally all these possibilities complete one another; here there is no irrational fund of the soul, for the coexistence of these diverse possibilities or aspects of the human form is perfectly intelligible in itself and can be hidden only from the eyes of a mentality or civilization that has become one-sided and false. Any genius-like development of one of these multiple possibilities or dispositions inherent in the human soul requires, moreover, the integration of the complementary possibilities; the true man of genius is a balanced being, for where there is no balance there is no greatness either. The opposite of such a development is a barren and pathological exaggeration of one of the soul's possibilities at the expense of the others, leading to that kind of moral caricature compared by Jung to a mask; and let it be added that it is the carnivalesque mask one must think of here, and not the sacred mask which, for its part, does indeed express a true archetype and therefore a possibility that does not bewitch the soul but on the contrary liberates it.[22]

Psychic dissociation always produces a fixation as well as a tearing apart between opposing poles, and this is rendered possible only by the clouding over of that which, in the soul, corresponds to the archetype. At the antipodes of this imbalance productive of hypertrophies, perfect virility, for example, in no wise excludes femininity, but on the contrary includes and adapts it, and the inverse is also true. Similarly, the genuine archetypes, which are not situated at the psychic level, do not mutually exclude but comprise and imply one another. According to the Platonic and hallowed meaning of the term, the archetypes are the source of being and knowledge and not, as Jung conceives them, unconscious dispositions to

22. See the chapter "The Sacred Mask" in *Mirror of the Intellect* (Quinta Essentia, Cambridge, England, 1987).

act and imagine. The fact that the archetypes cannot be grasped by discursive thought has no connection with the irrational and obscure character of the supposed "collective unconscious", whose contents are said to be known only indirectly through their "eruptions" on the surface. There is not only discursive thought, there is also intellectual intuition, and this attains to the archetypes from the starting-point of their symbols.

No doubt the theory according to which ancestral structures constitute the "collective unconscious" imposes itself on modern thought all the more easily in that it seems to be in agreement with the evolutionist explanation of the instinct of animals. According to this view, instinct is the expression of the heredity of a species, of an accumulation of analogous experiences down the ages. This is how they explain, for example, the fact that a flock of sheep hastily gathers together around the lambs the moment it perceives the shadow of a bird of prey, or that a kitten while playing already employs all the tricks of a hunter, or that birds know how to build their nests. In fact, it is enough to watch animals to see that their instinct has nothing of an automatism about it. The formation of such a mechanism by a purely cumulative—and consequently vague and problematical— process is highly improbable, to say the least. Instinct is a non-reflective modality of the intelligence; it is determined, not by a series of automatic reflexes, but by the "form"—the qualitative determination—of the species. This form is like a filter through which the universal intelligence is manifested. Nor must it be forgotten that the subtle form of a being is incomparably more complex than its bodily form. The same is also true for man: his intelligence too is determined by the subtle form of his species. This form, however, includes the reflective faculty, which allows of a singularization of the individual such as does not exist among the animals. Man alone is able to objectivize himself. He can say: "I am this or that." He alone possesses this two-edged faculty. Man, by virtue of his own central position in the cosmos, is able to transcend his specific norm; he can also betray it, and sink lower; *corruptio optimi pessima*. A normal animal remains true to the form and genius of its species; if its intelligence is not reflective and objectifying, but in some sort existential, it is nonetheless spontaneous; it is assuredly a form of the universal intelligence even if it is not recognized as such

by men who, from prejudice or ignorance, identify intelligence with discursive thought exclusively.

As for Jung's thesis that certain dreams, which cannot be explained by personal reminiscences and which seem to arise from an unconscious fund common to all men, contain motives and forms that are also to be found in myths and in traditional symbolism, the thing is possible in principle; not that there is in the soul a repertory of types inherited from distant ancestors and bearing witness to a primitive vision of the world, but because true symbols are always "actual" inasmuch as they express non-temporal realities. In fact, under certain conditions, the soul is able to take on the function of a mirror that reflects, in a purely passive and imaginative manner, universal truths contained in the intellect. Nevertheless, "inspirations" of this nature remain fairly rare; they depend on circumstances that are, so to speak, providential, as in the case of dreams communicating truths or announcing future events, to which allusion has previously been made. Moreover, symbolic dreams are not clothed in just any traditional "style"; their formal language is normally determined by the tradition or religion to which the individual is effectively or virtually attached, for there is nothing arbitrary in this domain.

Now, if one examines examples of supposedly symbolical dreams quoted by Jung and other psychologists of his school, one notices that in most cases it is a matter of false symbolism, of the kind commonly met with in pseudo-spiritual circles. The soul is not only a sacred mirror; more often it is a magic mirror that deceives the one who views himself in it. Jung should have known this, since he himself speaks of the tricks of the *anima,* indicating by this term the feminine aspect of the soul; and some of his own experiences, as described in his memoirs,[23] should have told him that an investigator of the unconscious depths of the *psyché* exposes himself, not merely to the wiles of the egocentric soul, but also to psychic influences coming from elsewhere, from unknown beings and entities,

23. The kind of introspection practiced by Jung by way of psychological investigation and of which he speaks in his memoirs, as well as certain parapsychological phenomena that he provoked by this method, takes one into a frankly spiritualistic ambience. The fact that the author proposed to study these phenomena "scientifically" changes nothing in regard to the influence they in fact had on his theory of "archetypes".

especially when the methods of analysis used derive from hypnosis or mediumship. In this context must be placed certain designs executed by sick patients of Jung and which the latter tries to palm off as genuine *mandalas*.[24]

Over and above all this, there exists a symbolism, very general in nature and inherent in language itself, as for instance when one compares truth to light and error to darkness, or progress to an ascent or moral danger to an abyss, or when one represents fidelity by a dog or craftiness by a fox. Now, to explain the occurrence of a similar symbolism in dreams, of which the language is naturally figurative and not discursive, there is no need to refer to a "collective unconscious"; it is enough to note that rational thought is not the whole of thought and that consciousness in the waking state does not cover the whole domain of mental activity. If the figurative language of dreams is not discursive, this does not necessarily make it irrational, and it is possible, as indeed Jung has properly observed, that a dreamer may be more intelligent in his dreams than in the waking state. It would even seem that this difference of level between the two states is fairly frequent among men of our own time, doubtless because the frameworks imposed by modern life are particularly unintelligent and incapable of vehicling in any normal manner the essential contents of human life.

This has obviously nothing to do with the role of purely symbolic or sacred dreams, whether these be spontaneous or evoked through rites; we are thinking here of the example of the Indians of North America, whose whole tradition, as well as their vital ambience, favors a kind of oneiric prophetism.

So as to neglect no aspect of this question, the following should also be said: In every collectivity that has become unfaithful to its own traditional form, to the sacred framework of its life, there occurs a collapse or a sort of mummification of the symbols it had received, and this process will be reflected in the psychic life of every individual belonging to that collectivity and participating in that infidelity. To every truth there corresponds a formal trace, and every spiritual form projects a psychic shadow; when these shadows are all that remains, they do in fact take on the character of ancestral phantoms that haunt the subconscious. The most pernicious of

24. See the Introduction to *The Secret of the Golden Flower.*

psychological errors is to reduce the meaning of symbolism to such phantoms.

As for the definition of "unconscious", it must never be forgotten that this is eminently relative and provisional. Consciousness is capable of gradation like light and is similarly refracted in contact with the media it meets. The ego is the form of individual consciousness, not its luminous source. The latter coincides with the source of the intelligence itself. In its universal nature, consciousness is in a sense an existential aspect of the intellect, and this amounts to saying that basically nothing is situated outside it.[25] Whence it follows that the "unconscious" of the psychologists is quite simply everything which, in the soul, lies outside ordinary consciousness—that of the empirical "I" oriented towards the corporeal world—in other words, this "unconscious" is made to include both lower chaos and the higher states. The latter (which the Hindus compare to the bliss of deep sleep, the state of *prâjña)* radiate from the luminous source of the Universal Spirit; the definition of the "unconscious" thus in no wise corresponds to a particular concrete modality of the soul. Many of the errors of "depth psychology", of which Jung is one of the chief protagonists, result from the fact that it operates with the "unconscious" as if it were a definite entity. One often hears it said that Jung's psychology has "re-established the autonomous reality of the soul." In truth, according to the perspective inherent in this psychology, the soul is neither independent of the body nor immortal; it is merely a sort of irrational fatality situated outside any intelligible cosmic order. If the moral and mental behavior of man were determined behind the scenes by some collection of ancestral "types" issuing from a fund that is completely unconscious and completely inaccessible to the intelligence, man would be as if suspended between two irreconcilable and divergent realities, namely that of things and that of the soul.

For all modern psychology, the luminous point of the soul, or its existential summit, is the consciousness of the "I", which only exists to the extent that it can disengage itself from the darkness of the "unconscious". Now, according to Jung, this darkness contains the vital roots of the individuality: the "collective unconscious" would

25. Let us here recall the Vedantic ternary *Sat-Chit-Ânanda* (Being, Consciousness, Bliss).

then be endowed with a regulatory instinct, a kind of somnambulant wisdom, no doubt of a biological nature; from this fact, the conscious emancipation of the ego would comprise the danger of a vital uprooting. According to Jung, the ideal is a balance between the two poles—the conscious and the unconscious—a balance that can be realized only by the help of a third term, a sort of center of crystallization, which he calls the "self", a term borrowed from the doctrines of Hinduism. Here is what he has written on the subject:

> With the sensation of the self as an irrational and indefinable entity, to which the "I" is neither opposed nor subordinated, but to which it adheres and round which it moves in some sort, like the earth around the sun, the aim of individuation is attained. I use this term "sensation" to express the empirical character of the relationship between the "I" and the self. In this relationship there is nothing intelligible, for one can say nothing about the contents of the self. The "I" is the only content of the self that we know. The individualized "I" feels itself to be the object of a subject unknown and superior to itself. It seems to me that psychological observation here touches its extreme limit, for the idea of a self is in itself a transcendent postulate, which one can admittedly justify psychologically, but cannot prove scientifically. The step beyond science is an absolute requirement for the psychological evolution described here, for without the postulate in question I could not sufficiently formulate the psychic processes observed from experience. Because of this, the idea of a self at least possesses the value of a hypothesis like the theories about the structure of the atom. And if it be true that here too we are prisoners of an image, it is in any case a very living image, the interpretation of which exceeds my capacities. I scarcely doubt that it is a question of an image, but it is an image that contains us.[26]

Despite a terminology too much bound up with current scientism, one might be tempted to grant full credit to the presentiments expressed in this passage and to find in it an approach to traditional metaphysical doctrines, if Jung, in a further passage, did not relativize the notion of the self by treating it this time, not as a transcendent principle, but as the outcome of a psychological process:

> One could define the self as a sort of compensation in reference to the contrast between inward and outward. Such a defini-

26. See *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology,* p. 240.

tion could well be applied to the self in so far as the latter possesses the character of a result, of an aim to reach, of a thing that has only been produced little by little and of which the experience has cost much travail. Thus, the self is also the aim of life, for it is the most complete expression of that combination of destiny we call an "individual", and not only of man in the singular but also of a whole group, where the one is the complement of the others with a view to a perfect image.[27]

There are some realms where dilettantism is unforgivable.

It is the balance to be realized between the unconscious and the conscious, or the integration, in the empirical "personality", of certain forces or impulsions emanating from the unconscious, that Jung paradoxically labels as "individuation", using a term by which was traditionally designated, not some psychological process or other, but the differentiation of individuals from the starting point of the species. But what Jung understands by this term is a kind of definitive pronunciation of the individuality which is taken as an end in itself. In such a perspective, the notion of "self" plainly loses all metaphysical meaning, but this is not the only traditional notion that Jung appropriates in order to debase it to a purely psychological and even clinical level; thus he compares psychoanalysis, which he uses precisely to promote this "individuation", to an initiation in the proper and sacred meaning of the term, and he even declares that psychoanalysis represents "the only form of initiation still valid in the modern age!"[28] Whence proceed a whole series of false assimilations. and intrusions into a realm where psychology is devoid of competence.[29]

27. *Ibid.*
28. See psychological commentary of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead.*
29. Jung's psychological interpretation of alchemy has been expressly refuted in my book *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul* (Element Books, Shaftesbury, England, 1986; Fons Vitae, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997). Frithjof Schuon, after reading the present chapter, sent me the following reflections in writing: "People generally see in Jungism, as compared with Freudism, a step towards reconciliation with the traditional spiritualities, but this is in no wise the case. From this point of view, the only difference is that, whereas Freud boasted of being an irreconcilable enemy of religion, Jung sympathizes with it while emptying it of its contents, which he replaces by collective psychism, that is to say by something infra-intellectual and therefore anti-spiritual. In this there is an immense danger for the ancient spiritualities, whose representatives, especially in the East, are too often lacking in critical sense with regard to the modern spirit, and this by reason of a complex of 'rehabilitation'; also it is not with much surprise, though with grave disquiet, that one has come across echoes of this kind from Japan, where the psychoanalyst's 'equilibrium' has been compared to the *satori* of Zen; and there is little doubt that it would be

Here it is not a case of the involuntary ignorance of some isolated seeker, for Jung carefully avoided all contact with the representatives of living tradition. During his visit to India, for example, he did not wish to see Shri Râmana Mahârishi—alleging a motive of insolent frivolity[30]—doubtless because he feared instinctively and "unconsciously" (it is a case for saying it) a contact with a reality that would give the lie to his theories. For him, metaphysics was but a speculation in the void or, to be more exact, an illusory attempt by the psychic to reach beyond itself, comparable to the senseless gesture of a man who would pull himself out of a mud hole by his own hair. This conception is typical of modern psychologism, and this is why we mention it. To the absurd argument that metaphysics is only a production of the *psyché* one can immediately object that this judgment itself is but a similar production. Man lives by truth; to accept any truth, however relative it may be, is to accept that *intellectus adequatio rei*. Merely to say "this is that" is automatically to affirm the very principle of adequation, and therefore the presence of the absolute in the relative.

Jung breached certain strictly materialistic frameworks of modern science, but this fact is of no use to anyone, to say the least—one wishes one could have rejoiced over it—because the influences that filter through this breach come from lower psychism and not from the Spirit, which alone is true and alone can save us.

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easy to meet with similar confusions in India and elsewhere. Be that as it may, the confusions in question are greatly favored by the almost universal refusal of people to see the devil and to call him by his name, in other words, by a kind of tacit convention compounded of optimism to order, tolerance that in reality hates truth, and compulsory alignment with scientism and official taste, without forgetting 'culture', which swallows everything and commits one to nothing, except complicity in its neutralism; to which must be added a no less universal and quasi-official contempt for whatever is, we will not say intellectualist, but truly intellectual, and therefore tainted, in people's minds, with dogmatism, scholasticism, fanaticism, and prejudice. All this goes hand in hand with the psychologism of our time and is in large measure its result."

30. See the preface to Heinrich Zimmer's book on Shri Râmana Mahârshi.