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## THE ROLE OF THE UNCONSCIOUS <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To the layman's ears, the word "unconscious" has an undertone of something metaphysical and rather mysterious. This peculiarity, attaching to the whole concept of the unconscious, is primarily due to the fact that the term found its way into ordinary speech as a designation for a metaphysical entity. Eduard von Hartmann, for instance, called the unconscious the "Universal Ground." Again, the word was taken up by occultism, because people with these leanings are extremely fond of borrowing scientific terms in order to dress their speculations in a "scientific" guise. In contradiction to this, the experimental psychologists, who for a long time regarded themselves—not unjustly—as the representatives of the only truly scientific psychology, adopted a negative attitude towards the concept of the unconscious, on the ground that everything psychic is conscious and that consciousness alone deserves the name "psyche." They admitted that conscious psychic contents showed varying degrees of clarity, some being "brighter" or "darker" than others, but the existence of unconscious contents was denied as being a contradiction in terms.

<sup>2</sup> This view stemmed very largely from the circumstance that work in the laboratory was confined exclusively to "normal" subjects, and also from the nature of the experiments themselves. These were concerned so far as possible with the most elementary psychic processes, while the investigation of the more complex psychic functions, which by their very nature do not lend themselves to experimental procedures based on exact measurement, was almost entirely absent. But a factor far transcending both these reasons in importance was the segregation

<sup>1</sup> [Originally published as "Ueber das Unbewusste," *Schweizerland: Monatshefte für Schweizer Art und Arbeit* (Zurich), IV (1918), no. 9, 464-72, and no. 11-12, 548-58.—EDITORS.]

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of experimental psychology from psychopathology. In France, ever since the time of Ribot, psychologists had kept an alert eye on abnormal psychic phenomena, and one of their most eminent representatives, Binet, even made the pronouncement that the pathological psyche exaggerated certain deviations from the normal which were difficult to understand, and, by throwing them into relief, made them more comprehensible. Another French psychologist, Pierre Janet, working at the Salpêtrière, devoted himself almost exclusively and with great success to the study of psychopathological processes. But it is just the abnormal psychic processes which demonstrate most clearly the existence of an unconscious. For this reason it was the medical men, and above all the specialists in the field of psychic illnesses, who supported the hypothesis of the unconscious and defended it most vigorously. But whereas in France psychology was considerably enriched by the findings of psychopathology and was led to accept the notion of "unconscious" processes, in Germany it was psychology that enriched psychopathology, supplying it with a number of valuable experimental methods—without, however, taking over from psychopathology its interest in pathological phenomena. This explains in large part why psychopathological research underwent a different development in German science from that followed in France. It became—except for the interest it aroused in academic circles—a task for the medical practitioner, who by his professional work was compelled to understand the complex psychic phenomena exhibited by his patients. In this way there came into being that complex of theoretical views and practical techniques which is known as "psychoanalysis." The concept of the unconscious underwent a broad development in the psychoanalytic movement, far more so than in the French school, which was more concerned with the various forms in which unconscious processes manifested themselves than with their causation and their specific content. Fifteen years ago, independently of the Freudian school and on the basis of my own experimental researches, I satisfied myself as to the existence and significance of unconscious processes, indicating at the same time the methods by which these processes might be demonstrated. Later, in collaboration with a number of my pupils, I also demonstrated the significance of unconscious processes in the mentally insane.

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3 As a result of this—at first—purely medical development the concept of the unconscious took on a coloration derived from the natural sciences. It has remained a purely medical concept in the Freudian school. According to the views of this school, man, as a civilized being, is unable to act out a large number of instinctive impulses and wishes, for the simple reason that they are incompatible with law and morality. In so far, therefore, as he wants to adapt himself to society, he is obliged to suppress these wishes. The assumption that man has such wishes is altogether plausible, and the truth of it can be seen at any time by every individual with a little application of honesty. But this insight amounts as a rule only to the general statement that socially incompatible and inadmissible wishes exist. Experience shows, however, that the facts are quite different when we come down to individual cases. It then proves, remarkably enough, that very often, as a result of the suppression of an inadmissible wish, the thin wall between wishing and being conscious of the wish is broken, so that the wish becomes unconscious. It is forgotten, and its place is taken by a more or less rational justification—if, indeed, any motivation is sought at all. This process, whereby an inadmissible wish becomes unconscious, is called *repression*, as distinct from *suppression*, which presupposes that the wish remained conscious. Although repressed and forgotten, the incompatible content—whether it consist of wishes or of painful memories—nevertheless exists, and its unperceived presence influences the conscious processes. This influence expresses itself in the form of peculiar disturbances of the conscious, normal functions; we call these disturbances nervous or *psychogenic* disturbances. The remarkable thing is that they do not confine themselves to purely psychological processes but extend also to physiological ones. In the latter case, as Janet emphasizes, it is never the elementary components of the function that are disturbed, but only the voluntary application of the function under various complex conditions. For instance, an elementary component of the nutritive function consists in the act of swallowing. If choking were regularly to occur whenever food in solid or liquid form was taken, then it would be an anatomical or organic disturbance. But if the choking occurred only in the case of certain foods or at certain meals, or only in the presence of certain persons, or only in certain moods, then it would be a



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nervous or psychogenic disturbance. The psychogenic disturbance therefore affects merely the act of eating under certain psychological and not physical conditions.

4 Such disturbances of physiological functions are particularly frequent in hysteria. In another, equally large group of illnesses which French doctors call psychasthenia, their place is taken by purely psychological disturbances. These can assume a great variety of forms, such as obsessional ideas, anxiety states, depressions, moods, fantasies, pathological affects and impulses, and so on. At the root of all these disturbances we find repressed psychic contents, i.e., contents that have become unconscious. On the basis of these purely empirical findings, the concept of the unconscious as the sum-total of all incompatible and repressed wishes, including all painful and repressed memories, gradually took form.

5 Now it is an easily demonstrated fact that the overwhelming majority of these incompatible contents have to do with the phenomenon of sexuality. Sexuality is a fundamental instinct which, as everyone knows, is the most hedged about with secrecy and with feelings of delicacy. In the form of love, it is the cause of the stormiest emotions, the wildest longings, the profoundest despairs, the most secret sorrows, and, altogether, of the most painful experiences. Sexuality is an important physical and widely ramified psychic function on which the whole future of humanity depends. It is thus at least as important as the function of nutrition, even though it is an instinct of another kind. But whereas we can allow the nutritive function, from the devouring of a simple piece of bread to a guild banquet, to be seen by all eyes in all its variations, and at most must hold it in check because of an attack of intestinal catarrh or a general food shortage, sexuality comes under a moral taboo and has to submit to a large number of legal regulations and restrictions. It is not, like the nutritive function, at the free disposal of the individual. It is therefore understandable that a great many pressing interests and powerful emotions congregate round this question, for as a rule affects are found at places where adaptation is least complete. Furthermore, sexuality, as I have said, is a fundamental instinct in every human being, and this is reason enough for the well-known Freudian theory which reduces everything to sexuality, and sketches a picture of the unconscious which makes it

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appear as a kind of lumber-room where all the repressed and inadmissible infantile wishes and all the later, inadmissible sexual wishes are stored. Distasteful as such a view is, we must give it its due if we want to discover all the things that Freud has smuggled into the concept of sexuality. We shall then see that he has widened its boundaries far beyond the permitted limits, so that a better word for what he actually means would be "Eros" in the old, philosophical sense of a Pan-Eros who permeates all nature as a creative and procreative force. "Sexuality" is a most unhappy expression for this. But, such as it is, the concept of sexuality has now been coined and appears to have such definite limits that one even hesitates to use the word "love" as a synonym. And yet Freud, as can easily be shown from numerous passages in his writings, very often means "love" when he speaks merely of sexuality.

6 The whole Freudian movement has settled firmly for the sexual theory. There is certainly no unprejudiced thinker or investigator who would not instantly acknowledge the extraordinary importance of sexual or erotic experiences and conflicts. But it will never be proved that sexuality is *the* fundamental instinct and *the* activating principle of the human psyche. Any unprejudiced scientist will, on the contrary, admit that the psyche is an extremely complex structure. Though we can approach it from the biological standpoint and seek to explain it in terms of biological factors, it presents us with a great many other puzzles whose solution makes demands which no isolated science, such as biology, is in a position to satisfy. No matter what instincts, drives or dynamisms biologists may postulate or assume both now and in the future, it will assuredly be quite impossible to set up a sharply defined instinct like sexuality as a fundamental principle of explanation. Biology, indeed science in general, has got beyond this stage: we no longer reduce everything to a single manifest force, as the earlier scientists did with phlogiston and electricity. We have learned to employ a modest abstraction, named energy, as an explanatory principle for all quantitative changes.

7 I am convinced that a truly scientific attitude in psychology must likewise lead to the conclusion that the dynamic processes of the psyche cannot be reduced to this or that concrete instinct —we should merely find ourselves back at the stage of the phlo-

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giston theory. We shall be obliged to take the instincts as constituent parts of the psyche, and then abstract our principle of explanation from their mutual relationship. I have therefore pointed out that we would do well to posit a hypothetical quantity, an "energy," as a psychological explanatory principle, and to call it "libido" in the classical sense of the word, without harbouring any prejudice with regard to its substantiality. With the help of such a quantity, the psychodynamic processes could be explained in an unobjectionable manner, without that unavoidable distortion which a concrete ground of explanation necessarily entails. Thus, when the Freudian school explains that religious feelings or any other sentiments that pertain to the spiritual sphere are "nothing but" inadmissible sexual wishes which have been repressed and subsequently "sublimated," this procedure would be equivalent to a physicist's explanation that electricity is "nothing but" a waterfall which someone had bought up and piped into a turbine. In other words, electricity is nothing but a "culturally deformed" waterfall—an argument which might conceivably be raised by the Society for the Preservation of Wild Nature but is hardly a piece of scientific ratiocination. In psychology such an explanation would be appropriate only if it could be proved that the dynamic ground of our being is nothing but sexuality, which amounts to saying, in physics, that falling water alone can produce electricity. In that case it could rightly be maintained that electricity is nothing but a waterfall conducted along wires.

- 8 So if we reject the exclusively sexual theory of the unconscious and put in its place an energetic view of the psyche, we must say that the unconscious contains everything psychic that has not reached the threshold of consciousness, or whose energy-charge is not sufficient to maintain it in consciousness, or that will reach consciousness only in the future. We can then picture to ourselves how the unconscious must be constituted. We have already taken cognizance of repressions as contents of the unconscious, and to these we must add *everything that we have forgotten*. When a thing is forgotten, it does not mean that it is extinguished; it simply means that the memory has become subliminal. Its energy-charge has sunk so low that it can no longer appear in consciousness; but, though lost to consciousness, it is not lost to the unconscious. It will naturally be objected that

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this is no more than a *façon de parler*. I would like to make what I mean clear by a hypothetical example. Suppose there are two people, one of whom has never read a book and the other has read a thousand. From the minds of both of them we expunge all memory of the ten years in which the first was merely living and the second was reading his thousand books. Each now knows as little as the other, and yet anyone will be able to find out which of them has read the books and, be it noted, understood them. The experience of reading, though long forgotten, leaves traces behind it, and from these traces the previous experience can be recognized. This long-lasting, indirect influence is due to a fixing of impressions, which are still preserved even when they are no longer capable of reaching consciousness.

9 Besides things that have been forgotten, subliminal perceptions form part of the contents of the unconscious. These may be sense perceptions occurring below the stimulus-threshold of conscious hearing, or in the peripheral field of vision; or they may be apperceptions, by which are meant perceptions of endopsychic or external processes.

10 All this material constitutes the *personal unconscious*. We call it personal because it consists entirely of acquisitions deriving from personal life. Therefore, when anything falls into the unconscious it is taken up in the network of associations formed by this unconscious material. Associative connections of high intensity may then be produced, which cross over or rise up into consciousness in the form of inspirations, intuitions, "lucky ideas," and so on.

11 The concept of a personal unconscious does not, however, enable us fully to grasp the nature of the unconscious. If the unconscious were only personal, it would in theory be possible to trace all the fantasies of an insane person back to individual experiences and impressions. No doubt a large proportion of the fantasy-material could be reduced to his personal history, but there are certain fantasies whose roots in the individual's previous history one would seek for in vain. What sort of fantasies are these? They are, in a word, *mythological fantasies*. They are elements which do not correspond to any events or experiences of personal life, but only to myths.

12 Where do these mythological fantasies come from, if they do not spring from the personal unconscious and hence from the

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experiences of personal life? Indubitably they come from the brain—indeed, precisely from the brain and not from personal memory-traces, but from the inherited brain-structure itself. Such fantasies always have a highly original and “creative” character. They are like new creations; obviously they derive from the creative activity of the brain and not simply from its mnemonic activity. We receive along with our body a highly differentiated brain which brings with it its entire history, and when it becomes creative it creates out of this history—out of the history of mankind. By “history” we usually mean the history which we “make,” and we call this “objective history.” The truly creative fantasy activity of the brain has nothing to do with this kind of history, but solely with that age-old natural history which has been transmitted in living form since the remotest times, namely, the history of the brain-structure. And this structure tells its own story, which is the story of mankind: the unending myth of death and rebirth, and of the multitudinous figures who weave in and out of this mystery.

<sup>13</sup> This unconscious, buried in the structure of the brain and disclosing its living presence only through the medium of creative fantasy, is the *suprapersonal unconscious*. It comes alive in the creative man, it reveals itself in the vision of the artist, in the inspiration of the thinker, in the inner experience of the mystic. The suprapersonal unconscious, being distributed throughout the brain-structure, is like an all-pervading, omnipresent, omniscient spirit. It knows man as he always was, and not as he is at this moment; it knows him as myth. For this reason, also, the connection with the suprapersonal or *collective* unconscious means an extension of man beyond himself; it means death for his personal being and a rebirth in a new dimension, as was literally enacted in certain of the ancient mysteries. It is certainly true that without the sacrifice of man as he is, man as he was—and always will be—cannot be attained. And it is the artist who can tell us most about this sacrifice of the personal man, if we are not satisfied with the message of the Gospels.

<sup>14</sup> It should on no account be imagined that there are such things as *inherited ideas*. Of that there can be no question. There are, however, innate possibilities of ideas, *a priori* conditions for fantasy-production, which are somewhat similar to the Kantian categories. Though these innate conditions do not

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produce any contents of themselves, they give definite form to contents that have already been acquired. Being a part of the inherited structure of the brain, they are the reason for the identity of symbols and myth-motifs in all parts of the earth. The collective unconscious forms the dark background against which the adaptive function of consciousness stands out in sharp relief. One is almost tempted to say that everything of value in the psyche is taken up into the adaptive function, and that everything useless goes to form that inchoate background from which, to the terror of primitive man, menacing shadows and nocturnal spectres detach themselves, demanding sacrifices and ceremonies which to our biologically oriented minds seem futile and meaningless. We laugh at primitive superstitions, thinking ourselves superior, but we completely forget that we are influenced in just as uncanny a fashion as the primitive by this background, which we are wont to scoff at as a museum of stupidities. Primitive man simply has a different theory—the theory of witchcraft and spirits. I find this theory very interesting and very sensible—actually more sensible than the academic views of modern science. Whereas the highly educated modern man tries to figure out what diet best suits his nervous intestinal catarrh and to what dietetic mistakes the new attack may be due, the primitive, quite correctly, looks for psychological reasons and seeks a psychically effective method of cure. The processes in the unconscious influence us just as much as they do primitives; we are possessed by the demons of sickness no less than they, our psyche is just as much in danger of being struck by some hostile influence, we are just as much the prey of malevolent spirits of the dead, or the victims of a magic spell cast by a strange personality. Only, we call all these things by different names, and that is the only advantage we have over primitive man. It is, as we know, a little thing, yet it makes all the difference. For mankind it was always like a deliverance from a nightmare when the new name was found.

- 15 This mysterious background, which from time immemorial peopled the nocturnal shadows of the primeval forest with the same yet ever-changing figures, seems like a distorted reflection of life during the day, repeating itself in the dreams and terrors of the night. Shadowily they crowd round, the revenants, the spirits of the dead, fleeting memory-images risen from the prison

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of the past whence no living thing returns, or feelings left behind by some impressive experience and now personified in spectral form. All this seems but the bitter aftertaste from the emptied beaker of the day, the unwelcome lees, the useless sediment of experience. But if we look closer, we discover that this apparently hostile background sends out powerful emissaries which influence the behaviour of primitives in the highest degree. Sometimes these agencies take on a magical, sometimes a religious form, and sometimes the two forms appear inextricably mixed. Both of them are the most important factors in the primitive mentality after the struggle for existence. In them the spiritual element manifests itself autonomously to the primitive psyche—whose reflexes are purely animal—in projected, sensuous form, and we Europeans must sometimes be struck with wonder at the tremendous influence the experience of the spirit can have on primitive man. For him, the sensuous immediacy of the object attaches to spiritual phenomena as well. A thought *appears to him*, he does not think it; it appears to him in the form of a projected sensuous perception, almost like an hallucination, or at least like an extremely vivid dream. For this reason a thought, for the primitive, can superimpose itself on sensuous reality to such an extent that if a European were to behave in the same way we should say he was mad.

<sup>16</sup> These peculiarities of primitive psychology, which I can only touch lightly on here, are of great importance for an understanding of the collective unconscious. A simple reflection will bear this out. As civilized human beings, we in Western Europe have a history reaching back perhaps 2,500 years. Before that there is a prehistoric period of considerably greater duration, during which man reached the cultural level of, say, the Sioux Indians. Then come the hundreds of thousands of years of neolithic culture, and before that an unimaginably vast stretch of time during which man evolved from the animal. A mere fifty generations ago many of us in Europe were no better than primitives. The layer of culture, this pleasing patina, must therefore be quite extraordinarily thin in comparison with the powerfully developed layers of the primitive psyche. But it is these layers that form the collective unconscious, together with the vestiges of animality that lose themselves in the nebulous abyss of time.

<sup>17</sup> Christianity split the Germanic barbarian into an upper and

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a lower half, and enabled him, by repressing the dark side, to domesticate the brighter half and fit it for civilization. But the lower, darker half still awaits redemption and a second spell of domestication. Until then, it will remain associated with the vestiges of the prehistoric age, with the collective unconscious, which is subject to a peculiar and ever-increasing activation. As the Christian view of the world loses its authority, the more menacingly will the "blond beast" be heard prowling about in its underground prison, ready at any moment to burst out with devastating consequences. When this happens in the individual it brings about a psychological revolution, but it can also take a social form.

18 In my opinion this problem does not exist for the Jews. The Jew already had the culture of the ancient world and on top of that has taken over the culture of the nations amongst whom he dwells. He has two cultures, paradoxical as that may sound. He is domesticated to a higher degree than we are, but he is badly at a loss for that quality in man which roots him to the earth and draws new strength from below. This chthonic quality is found in dangerous concentration in the Germanic peoples. Naturally the Aryan European has not noticed any signs of this for a very long time, but perhaps he is beginning to notice it in the present war; and again, perhaps not. The Jew has too little of this quality—where has he his own earth underfoot? The mystery of earth is no joke and no paradox. One only needs to see how, in America, the skull and pelvis measurements of all the European races begin to indianize themselves in the second generation of immigrants. That is the mystery of the American earth.

19 The soil of every country holds some such mystery. We have an unconscious reflection of this in the psyche: just as there is a relationship of mind to body, so there is a relationship of body to earth. I hope the reader will pardon my figurative way of speaking, and will try to grasp what I mean. It is not easy to describe, definite though it is. There are people—quite a number of them—who live outside and above their bodies, who float like bodiless shadows above their earth, their earthy component, which is their body. Others live wholly in their bodies. As a rule, the Jew lives in amicable relationship with the earth, but without feeling the power of the chthonic. His receptivity to this



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seems to have weakened with time. This may explain the specific need of the Jew to reduce everything to its material beginnings; he needs these beginnings in order to counterbalance the dangerous ascendancy of his two cultures. A little bit of primitivity does not hurt him; on the contrary, I can understand very well that Freud's and Adler's reduction of everything psychic to primitive sexual wishes and power-drives has something about it that is beneficial and satisfying to the Jew, because it is a form of simplification. For this reason, Freud is perhaps right to close his eyes to my objections. But these specifically Jewish doctrines are thoroughly unsatisfying to the Germanic mentality; we still have a genuine barbarian in us who is not to be trifled with, and whose manifestation is no comfort for us and not a pleasant way of passing the time. Would that people could learn the lesson of this war! The fact is, our unconscious is not to be got at with over-ingenious and grotesque interpretations. The psychotherapist with a Jewish background awakens in the Germanic psyche not those wistful and whimsical residues from the time of David, but the barbarian of yesterday, a being for whom matters suddenly become *serious* in the most unpleasant way. This annoying peculiarity of the barbarian was apparent also to Nietzsche—no doubt from personal experience—which is why he thought highly of the Jewish mentality and preached about dancing and flying and not taking things seriously. But he overlooked the fact that it is not the barbarian in us who takes things seriously—they become serious for him. He is gripped by the daemon. And who took things more seriously than Nietzsche himself?

<sup>20</sup> It seems to me that we should take the problem of the unconscious very seriously indeed. The tremendous compulsion towards goodness and the immense moral force of Christianity are not merely an argument in the latter's favour, they are also a proof of the strength of its suppressed and repressed counterpart—the antichristian, barbarian element. The existence within us of something that can turn against us, that can become a serious matter for us, I regard not merely as a dangerous peculiarity, but as a valuable and congenial asset as well. It is a still untouched fortune, an uncorrupted treasure, a sign of youthfulness, an earnest of rebirth. Nevertheless, to value the unconscious exclusively for the sake of its positive qualities and to regard it as a source of revelation would be fundamentally wrong.

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The unconscious is, first and foremost, the world of the past, which is activated by the one-sidedness of the conscious attitude. Whenever life proceeds one-sidedly in any given direction, the self-regulation of the organism produces in the unconscious an accumulation of all those factors which play too small a part in the individual's conscious existence. For this reason I have put forward the compensation theory of the unconscious as a complement to the repression theory.

- <sup>21</sup> The role of the unconscious is to act compensatorily to the conscious contents of the moment. By this I do not mean that it sets up an opposition, for there are times when the tendency of the unconscious coincides with that of consciousness, namely, when the conscious attitude is approaching the optimum. The nearer it approaches the optimum, the more the autonomous activity of the unconscious is diminished, and the more its value sinks until, at the moment when the optimum is reached, it falls to zero. We can say, then, that so long as all goes well, so long as a person travels the road that is, for him, the individual as well as the social optimum, there is no talk of the unconscious. The very fact that we in our age come to speak of the unconscious at all is proof that everything is not in order. This talk of the unconscious cannot be laid entirely at the door of analytical psychology; its beginnings can be traced back to the time of the French Revolution, and the first signs of it can be found in Mesmer. It is true that in those days they did not speak of the unconscious but of "animal magnetism." This is nothing but a rediscovery of the primitive concept of soul-force or soul-stuff, awakened out of the unconscious by a reactivation of archaic forms of thought. At the time when animal magnetism was spreading throughout the Western world as a regular epidemic of table-turning, amounting in the end to a recrudescence of the belief in fetishes (animation of an inanimate object), Robert Mayer elevated the primitive dynamic idea of energy, which rose up from the unconscious and forced itself on him like an inspiration—as he himself describes—to the level of a scientific concept. Meanwhile, the table-turning epidemic burst its bounds altogether and proliferated into spiritualism, which is a modern belief in spirits and a rebirth of the shamanistic form of religion practised by our remote forefathers. This development of reactivated contents from the unconscious is still going on today,

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and during the last few decades has led to a popularizing of the next higher stage of differentiation—the eclectic or Gnostic systems of Theosophy and Anthroposophy. At the same time, it laid the foundations of French psychopathology, and in particular of the French school of hypnotism. These, in turn, became the main sources of analytical psychology, which now seeks to investigate scientifically the phenomena of the unconscious—the same phenomena which the theosophical and Gnostic sects made accessible to the simple-minded in the form of portentous mysteries.

**22** It is evident from this development that analytical psychology does not stand in isolation but finds itself in a definite historical setting. The fact that this whole disturbance or reactivation of the unconscious took place around the year 1800 is, in my view, connected with the French Revolution. This was less a political revolution than a revolution of minds. It was a colossal explosion of all the inflammable matter that had been piling up ever since the Age of Enlightenment. The official deposition of Christianity by the Revolution must have made a tremendous impression on the unconscious pagan in us, for from then on he found no rest. In the greatest German of the age, Goethe, he could really live and breathe, and in Hölderlin he could at least cry loudly for the glory that was Greece. After that, the dechristianization of man's view of the world made rapid progress despite occasional reactionaries. Hand in hand with this went the importation of strange gods. Besides the fetishism and shamanism already mentioned, the prime import was Buddhism, retailed by Schopenhauer. Mystery religions spread apace, including that higher form of shamanism, Christian Science. This picture reminds us vividly of the first centuries of our era, when Rome began to find the old gods ridiculous and felt the need to import new ones on a large scale. As today, they imported pretty well everything that existed, from the lowest, most squalid superstition to the noblest flowerings of the human spirit. Our time is fatally reminiscent of that epoch, when again everything was not in order, and again the unconscious burst forth and brought back things immemorially buried. If anything, the chaos of minds was perhaps less pronounced than it is today.

**23** As the reader will have remarked, I have omitted to speak

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here of the medical aspect of the unconscious, for instance the question of how the unconscious produces nervous symptoms. But I have touched on this question in the earlier pages and can now leave it alone. At all events, I am not getting away from my subject, because psychotherapy is concerned not only with family quarrels, unhappy love-affairs, and the like, but with the question of psychological adaptation in general, and the attitude we are to take towards people and things, and also towards ourselves. A doctor who treats the body must know the body, and a doctor who treats the psyche must know the psyche. If he knows the psyche only under the aspect of sexuality or of the personal lust for power, he knows it only in part. This part has to be known, of course, but the other parts are equally important, and particularly the question I have touched on here concerning the relation between conscious and unconscious. A biologically trained eye is not sufficient to grasp this problem, for in practice it is more than a matter of eugenics, and the observation of human life in the light of self-preservation and propagation is too one-sided. Certainly the unconscious presents us with very different aspects; but so far we have fixed our attention too much on certain outward peculiarities, for instance the archaic language of the unconscious, and have taken it all quite literally. The language of the unconscious is particularly rich in images, as our dreams prove. But it is a primitive language, a faithful reflection of the colourful, ever-changing world. The unconscious is of like nature: it is a compensatory image of the world. In my view it cannot be maintained either that the unconscious has a merely sexual nature or that it is a metaphysical reality, nor can it be exalted into a "universal ground." It is to be understood as a psychic phenomenon, like consciousness. We no more know what the psyche is than we know what life is. They are interpenetrating mysteries, giving us every reason for uncertainty as to how much "I" am the world, and how much "world" is "I". The unconscious at any rate is real, because it *works*. I like to visualize the unconscious as a world seen in a mirror: our consciousness presents to us a picture of the outer world, but also of the world within, this being a compensatory mirror-image of the outer world. We could also say that the outer world is a compensatory mirror-image of the inner world. At all events we stand between two worlds, or between two

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totally different psychological systems of perception; between perception of external sensory stimuli and perception of the unconscious. The picture we have of the outer world makes us understand everything as the effect of physical and physiological forces; the picture of the inner world shows everything as the effect of spiritual agencies. Then, it is no longer the force of gravity that welds the stars together, but the creative hand of a demiurge; love is no longer the effect of a sexual stimulus, but of psychic predestination, and so forth.

<sup>24</sup> The right way may perhaps be found in the approximation of the two worlds. Schiller thought he had found this way in art, in what he called the "symbol" of art. The artist, therefore, should know the secret of the middle path. My own experiences led me to doubt this. I am of the opinion that the union of rational and irrational truth is to be found not so much in art as in the symbol *per se*; for it is the essence of the symbol to contain both the rational and the irrational. It always expresses the one through the other; it comprises both without being either.

<sup>25</sup> How does a symbol originate? This question brings us to the most important function of the unconscious: the *symbol-creating function*. There is something very remarkable about this function, because it has only a relative existence. The compensatory function, on the other hand, is the natural, automatic function of the unconscious and is constantly present. It owes its existence to the simple fact that all the impulses, thoughts, wishes, and tendencies which run counter to the rational orientation of daily life are denied expression, thrust into the background, and finally fall into the unconscious. There all the things which we have repressed and suppressed, which we have deliberately ignored and devalued, gradually accumulate and, in time, acquire such force that they begin to influence consciousness. This influence would be in direct opposition to our conscious orientation if the unconscious consisted only of repressed and suppressed material. But this, as we have seen, is not the case. The unconscious also contains the dark springs of instinct and intuition, it contains all those forces which mere reasonableness, propriety, and the orderly course of bourgeois existence could never call awake, all those creative forces which lead man onwards to new developments, new forms, and new goals. I therefore call the influence of the unconscious not merely complementary but

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compensatory, because it adds to consciousness everything that has been excluded by the drying up of the springs of intuition and by the fixed pursuit of a single goal.

26 This function, as I say, works automatically, but, owing to the notorious atrophy of instinct in civilized man, it is often too weak to swing his one-sided orientation of consciousness in a new direction against the pressures of society. Therefore, artificial aids have always been needed to bring the healing forces of the unconscious into play. It was chiefly the religions that performed this task. By taking the manifestations of the unconscious as divine or daemonic signs, revelations, or warnings, they offered it some idea or view that served as a favourable gradient. In this way they directed particular attention to all phenomena of unconscious origin, whether they were dreams, visions, feelings, fantasies, or projections of the same in strange or unusual personalities, or in any striking processes of organic and inorganic nature. This concentration of attention enabled the unconscious contents and forces to overflow into conscious life, thereby influencing it and altering it. From this standpoint, religious ideas are an artificial aid that benefits the unconscious by endowing its compensatory function—which, if disregarded, would remain ineffective—with a higher value for consciousness. Faith, superstition, or any strongly feeling-toned idea gives the unconscious content a value which ordinarily it does not possess, but which it might in time attain, though in a very unpleasant form. When, therefore, unconscious contents accumulate as a result of being consistently ignored, they are bound to exert an influence that is pathological. There are just as many neurotics among primitives as among civilized Europeans. Hysterical Africans are by no means rare in Africa. These disagreeable manifestations of the unconscious account in large measure for the primitive fear of demons and the resultant rites of propitiation.

27 The compensatory function of the unconscious naturally does not contain in itself the conscious valuation, although it is wholly dependent on the conscious way of thinking. The unconscious can supply, at most, the germs of conscious convictions or of symbol-formation. We can say, therefore, that the symbol-creating function of the unconscious exists and does not exist, depending on the conditions. It shares this paradoxical quality

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with symbols in general. One is reminded of the story of the young rabbi who was a pupil of Kant's. One day an old rabbi came to guide him back to the faith of his fathers, but all arguments were in vain. At last the old rabbi drew forth the ominous *shofar*, the horn that is blown at the cursing of heretics (as happened to Spinoza), and asked the young man if he knew what it was. "Of course I know," answered the young man coolly, "it is the horn of a ram." At that the old rabbi reeled back and fell to the ground in horror.

28 What is the *shofar*? It is *also* only the horn of a ram. Sometimes a symbol can be no more than that, but only when it is dead. The symbol is killed when we succeed in reducing the *shofar* to a ram's horn. But again, through symbolization a ram's horn can become the *shofar*.

29 The compensatory function expresses itself in quite definite arrangements of psychic material, for instance in dreams, in which nothing "symbolic" is to be found any more than in a ram's horn. In order to discover their symbolic quality a quite definite conscious attitude is needed, namely, the willingness to understand the dream-content symbolically, first of all as a mere hypothesis, and then leave experience to decide whether it is necessary or desirable to understand the dream in this way. I will give a brief example which may help to elucidate this difficult question. An elderly woman-patient, who, like many others, was upset by the problem of the war, once told me the following dream which she had shortly before she visited me:

30 *She was singing hymns that put particular emphasis on her belief in Christ, among others the hymn that goes:*

Christ's blood and righteousness shall be  
My festal dress and jewellery;  
So shall I stand before the Lord  
When heaven shall grant me my reward.  
They shall be saved at Judgment Day  
Who put their trust in Christ alway.

*While she was singing it, she saw a bull tearing around madly in front of the window. Suddenly it gave a jump and broke one of its legs. She saw that the bull was in agony, and thought, turning her eyes away, that somebody ought to kill it. Then she awoke.*

31 The bull's agony reminded her of the torturings of animals

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whose unwilling witness she had been. She abominated such things and was extraordinarily upset by them because of her unconscious identification with the tortured animal. There was something in her that could be expressed by the image of an animal being tortured. This image was evidently evoked by the special emphasis on the belief in Christ in the hymns she was singing, for it was while she was singing that the bull got excited and broke its leg. This odd combination of ideas immediately led to an association concerning the profound religious disquiet she had felt during the war, which shook her belief in the goodness of God and in the adequacy of the Christian view of the world. This shock should have been assuaged by the emphasis on Christian faith in the hymn, but instead it aroused that animal element in the unconscious which was personified by the bull. This is just the element that is represented by the Christian symbol as having been conquered and offered up in sacrifice. In the Christian mystery it is the sacrificed Lamb, or more correctly, the "little ram." In its sister-religion, Mithraism, which was also Christianity's most successful rival, the central symbol of the cult was the sacrifice not of a ram but of a bull. The usual altarpiece showed the overcoming of the bull by the divine saviour Mithras. We have, therefore, a very close historical connection between Christianity and the bull sacrifice. Christianity suppressed this animal element, but the moment the absolute validity of the Christian faith is shaken, that element is thrust into the foreground again. The animal instinct seeks to break out, but in so doing breaks a leg—in other words, instinct cripples itself. From the purely animal drives there also come all those factors which limit the sway of instinct. From the same root that produces wild, untamed, blind instinct there grow up the natural laws and cultural forms that tame and break its pristine power. But when the animal in us is split off from consciousness by being repressed, it may easily burst out in full force, quite unregulated and uncontrolled. An outburst of this sort always ends in catastrophe—the animal destroys itself. What was originally something dangerous now becomes something to be pitied, something that really needs our compassion. The tremendous forces unleashed by the war bring about their own destruction because there is no human hand to preserve and guide them. Our view of the world has proved too narrow to channel these forces into a cultural form.



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32 Had I tried to explain to my elderly woman-patient that the bull was a sexual symbol, she would have got nothing out of it; on the contrary, she would merely have lost her religious point of view and been none the better off. In such cases it is not a question of an either/or explanation. If we are willing to adopt a symbolical standpoint, even if only as an hypothesis, we shall see that the dream is an attempt on the part of the unconscious to bring the Christian principle into harmony with its apparently irreconcilable opposite—animal instinct—by means of understanding and compassion. It is no accident that official Christianity has no relation to the animal. This omission, particularly striking in comparison with Buddhism, is often felt by sensitive people and has moved one modern poet to sing of a Christ who sacrifices his life for the sufferings of dumb animals. The Christian love of your neighbour can extend to the animal too, the *animal in us*, and can surround with love all that a rigidly anthropomorphic view of the world has cruelly repressed. By being repressed into the unconscious, the source from which it originated, the animal in us only becomes more beastlike, and that is no doubt the reason why no religion is so defiled with the spilling of innocent blood as Christianity, and why the world has never seen a bloodier war than the war of the Christian nations. The repressed animal bursts forth in its most savage form when it comes to the surface, and in the process of destroying itself leads to international suicide. If every individual had a better relation to the animal within him, he would also set a higher value on life. Life would be the absolute, the supreme moral principle, and he would react instinctively against any institution or organization that had the power to destroy life on a large scale.

33 This dream, then, simply shows the dreamer the value of Christianity and contrasts it with an untamed force of nature, which, left to its raging, hurts itself and demands pity. A purely analytical reduction that traced the religious emotion back to the repression of animal instinct would, in this particular case, be sterile and uselessly destructive. If, on the other hand, we assert that the dream is to be understood symbolically and is trying to give the dreamer an opportunity to become reconciled with herself, we have taken the first step in an interpretation which will bring the contradictory values into harmony and open up a new path of inner development. Subsequent dreams would then, in

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keeping with this hypothesis, provide the means for understanding the wider implications of the union of the animal component with the highest moral and intellectual achievements of the human spirit. In my experience this is what actually happens, for the unconscious is continuously compensatory in its action upon the conscious situation of the moment. It is therefore not a matter of indifference *what* our conscious attitude is towards the unconscious. The more negative, critical, hostile, or disparaging we are, the more it will assume these aspects, and the more the true value of the unconscious will escape us.

34 Thus the unconscious has a symbol-creating function only when we are willing to recognize in it a symbolic element. The products of the unconscious are pure nature. *Naturam si sequemur duces, nunquam aberrabimus*,<sup>2</sup> said the ancients. But nature is not, in herself, a guide, for she is not there for man's sake. Ships are not guided by the phenomenon of magnetism. We have to make the compass a guide and, in addition, allow for a specific correction, for the needle does not even point exactly to the north. So it is with the guiding function of the unconscious. It can be used as a source of symbols, but with the necessary conscious correction that has to be applied to every natural phenomenon in order to make it serve our purpose.

35 Many people will find this view extremely unscientific, for nowhere do they see any reduction to fundamental causes, so that they could declare with certainty that such-and-such a thing is "nothing but" this or that. For all those who seek to explain things in this way, sexuality as a causative factor is very convenient. Indeed, in the case I have described a sexual explanation could be offered without much difficulty. But—what would the patient get out of it? What use is it to a woman on the threshold of old age if her problem is answered in this way? Or should psychotherapy be reserved for patients under forty?

36 Naturally we can ask in return: What does the patient get out of an answer that takes religious problems seriously? What is a religious problem anyway? And what has a scientific method to do with religion?

37 It seems to me that the patient is the proper authority to deal with questions of this sort. What does he get out of them

<sup>2</sup> "If we take Nature for our guide, we shall never go astray."

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however they are answered? Why should he bother his head about science? If he is a religious person, his relationship to God will mean infinitely more to him than any scientifically satisfactory explanation, just as it is a matter of indifference to a sick man *how* he gets well so long as he does get well. Our patient, indeed any patient, is treated correctly only when he is treated as an individual. This means entering into his particular problem and not giving him an explanation based on "scientific" principles that goes clean over his head although it may be quite correct biologically.

- 38 In my view the first duty of a scientific psychologist is to keep close to the living facts of the psyche, to observe these facts carefully, and thus open himself to those deeper experiences of which at present he has absolutely no knowledge. When, therefore, this or that individual psyche has a sexual conflict, and another one has a religious problem, the true scientist will first of all acknowledge the patent difference between them. He will devote himself as much to the religious problem as to the sexual problem, regardless of whether the biologist's credo allows room for the gods or not. The really unprejudiced investigator will not let his subjective credo influence or in any way distort the material lying before him, and pathological material is no exception to this. Nowadays it is a piece of unwarranted naïveté to regard a neurotic conflict as exclusively a sexual or as exclusively a power problem. This procedure is just as arbitrary as the assertion that there is no such thing as the unconscious and no neurotic conflicts. When we see all round us how powerful ideas can be, we must admit that they must be equally powerful in the psyche of the individual, whether or not he is aware of it. No one doubts that sexuality is a psychologically effective factor, and it cannot be doubted that ideas are psychologically effective factors too. Between the world of ideas and the world of instinct there is, however, a polar difference, so that as a rule only one pole is conscious. The other pole then dominates the unconscious. Thus, when anyone in his conscious life is wholly under the sway of instinct, his unconscious will place just as one-sided an emphasis on the value of ideas. And since the influence of the unconscious does in the end reach consciousness indirectly, and secretly determines its attitude, it gives rise to a compromise formation: instinct surreptitiously becomes a fixed idea, it loses

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its reality and is blown up by the unconscious into a one-sided, universal principle. We see the contrary often happening too, when a person consciously takes his stand on the world of ideas and is gradually forced to experience how his instinct secretly makes his ideas the instrument of unconscious wishes.

39 As the contemporary world and its newspapers present the spectacle of a gigantic psychiatric clinic, every attentive observer has ample opportunity to see these formulations being enacted before his eyes. A principle of cardinal importance in studying these phenomena is the one already stressed by analytical psychology: that the unconscious of one person is projected upon another person, so that the first accuses the second of what he overlooks in himself. This principle is of such alarming general validity that everyone would do well, before railing at others, to sit down and consider very carefully whether the brick should not be thrown at his own head.

40 This seemingly irrelevant aside brings us to one of the most remarkable features of the unconscious: it is, as it were, present before our eyes in all its parts, and is accessible to observation at any time.

41 The reason for this paradoxical quality is that the unconscious, in so far as it is activated in any way by small amounts of energy, is projected upon certain more or less suitable objects. The reader will ask how anyone can know this. The existence of projections was gradually recognized when it was found that the process of psychological adaptation was marked by disturbances and defects whose cause appeared to lie in the object. Closer investigation revealed that the "cause" was an unconscious content of the subject, which, because not recognized by him, apparently transferred itself to the object, and there magnified one of its peculiarities to such proportions that it seemed a sufficient cause of the disturbance.

42 The fact of projection was first recognized from disturbances of psychological adaptation. Later, it was recognized also from what *promoted* adaptation, that is to say from the apparently positive qualities of the object. Here it was the valuable qualities of the subject's own personality which he had overlooked that appeared in the object and made it especially desirable.

43 But the full extent of these projections from the unconscious became known through analysis of those obscure and inexplic-

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able feelings and emotions which give some intangible, magical quality to certain places, certain moods of nature, certain works of art, and also to certain ideas and certain people. This magic likewise comes from projection, but a projection of the collective unconscious. If it is inanimate objects that have the "magical" quality, often their mere statistical incidence is sufficient to prove that their significance is due to the projection of a mythological content from the collective unconscious. Mostly these contents are motifs already known to us from myths and fairytales. I would mention as an example the mysterious house where a witch or magician dwells, where some monstrous crime is being committed or has been committed, where there is a ghost, where a hidden treasure lies buried, and so on. The projection of this primordial image can be recognized when, one day, a person somehow comes upon this mysterious house—when, in other words, a real but quite ordinary house makes a magical impression upon him. Generally, too, the whole atmosphere of the place seems symbolic and is, therefore, the projection of a coherent unconscious system.

44 We find this phenomenon beautifully developed in primitive man. The country he inhabits is at the same time the topography of his unconscious. In that stately tree dwells the thundergod; this spring is haunted by the Old Woman; in that wood the legendary king is buried; near that rock no one may light a fire because it is the abode of a demon; in yonder pile of stones dwell the ancestral spirits, and when any woman passes it she must quickly utter an apotropaic formula lest she become pregnant, for one of the spirits could easily enter her body. All kinds of objects and signs mark these places, and pious awe surrounds the marked spot. Thus does primitive man dwell in his land and at the same time in the land of his unconscious. Everywhere his unconscious jumps out at him, alive and real. How different is our relationship to the land we dwell in! Feelings totally strange to us accompany the primitive at every step. Who knows what the cry of a bird means to him, or the sight of that old tree! A whole world of feeling is closed to us and is replaced by a pale aestheticism. Nevertheless, the world of primitive feeling is not entirely lost to us; it lives on in the unconscious. The further we remove ourselves from it with our enlightenment and our rational superiority, the more it fades into the distance, but is

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made all the more potent by everything that falls into it, thrust out by our one-sided rationalism. This lost bit of nature seeks revenge and returns in faked, distorted form, for instance as a tango epidemic, as Futurism, Dadaism, and all the other crazes and crudities in which our age abounds.

45 Even the primitive's distrust of the neighbouring tribe, which we thought we had long ago outgrown thanks to our global organizations, has come back again in this war, swollen to gigantic proportions. It is no longer a matter of burning down the neighbouring village, or of making a few heads roll: whole countries are devastated, millions are slaughtered. The enemy nation is stripped of every shred of decency, and our own faults appear in others, fantastically magnified. Where are the superior minds, capable of reflection, today? If they exist at all, nobody heeds them: instead there is a general running amok, a universal fatality against whose compelling sway the individual is powerless to defend himself. And yet this collective phenomenon is the fault of the individual as well, for nations are made up of individuals. Therefore the individual must consider by what means he can counteract the evil. Our rationalistic attitude leads us to believe that we can work wonders with international organizations, legislation, and other well-meant devices. But in reality only a change in the attitude of the individual can bring about a renewal in the spirit of the nations. Everything begins with the individual.

46 There are well-meaning theologians and humanitarians who want to break the power principle—in others. We must begin by breaking it in ourselves. Then the thing becomes credible. We should listen to the voice of nature that speaks to us from the unconscious. Then everyone will be so preoccupied with himself that he will give up trying to put the world to rights.

47 The layman may feel somewhat astonished that I have included these general problems in my discussion of a psychological concept. They are not a digression from my theme, as might appear, but are an essential part of it. The question of the relations between conscious and unconscious is not a special question, but one which is bound up in the most intimate way with our history, with the present time, and with our view of the world. Very many things are unconscious for us only because our view of the world allows them no room; because by education

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and training we have never come to grips with them, and, whenever they came to consciousness as occasional fantasies, have instantly suppressed them. The borderline between conscious and unconscious is in large measure determined by our view of the world. That is why we must talk about general problems if we wish to deal adequately with the concept of the unconscious. And if we are to grasp its nature, we must concern ourselves not only with contemporary problems, but also with the history of the human mind.

- 48 This preoccupation with the unconscious is a problem of practical as well as theoretical importance. For just as our view of the world up till now has been a decisive factor in the shaping of the unconscious and its contents, so the remoulding of our views in accordance with the active forces of the unconscious is laid upon us as a practical necessity. It is impossible to cure a neurosis permanently with individual nostrums, for man cannot exist merely as an isolated individual outside the human community. The principle on which he builds his life must be one that is generally acceptable, otherwise it will lack that natural morality which is indispensable to man as a member of the herd. But such a principle, if it is not left in the darkness of the unconscious, becomes a formulated view of the world which is felt as a necessity by all who are in the habit of consciously scrutinizing their thoughts and actions. This may explain why I have touched on questions each one of which would need for its full presentation more than one head and more than one lifetime.

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