

**TWELVE LECTURES ON THE NATURE OF**  
**MAN**

*from the Scientific, Artistic and Religious Viewpoints*

Vladimir Moss

INTRODUCTION .....	3
1. THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY (A) .....	4
2. THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY (B) .....	12
3. ART, THERAPY AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS .....	21
4. PSYCHOLOGY, DRAMA AND HISTORY .....	30
5. SHAKESPEAREAN PSYCHODRAMA .....	39
6. THE DRAMATIC IMAGE OF MAN .....	49
7. IMPERSONATION, EMPATHY AND CATHARSIS .....	58
8. THE SELF AS ART .....	68
9. THREE CATEGORIES OF THE PERSON .....	78
10. MAN AS THE IMAGE OF GOD .....	87
11. CREATED SOUL OR EVOLVING BODY? .....	97
12. GOD-MAN OR MAN-GOD? .....	105
APPENDIX I: ORTHODOXY, FREUDIANISM AND ORIGINAL SIN .....	115
APPENDIX II: ROMANIDES, DEIFICATION AND THE IMAGE OF GOD .....	125

## INTRODUCTION

This little book is the text of a series of lectures I prepared for delivery in English (with the aid of a Bulgarian interpreter) at the Faculty of Psychology in the State University of Sofia, "St. Kliment Okhridsky", in the autumn of 1993. For certain external reasons there was time for only eight out of a planned twelve lectures, which were given in a slightly simplified form. Here the full course of twelve lectures is offered to the Orthodox reader.

The main theme of the lectures is: what is man? A fallen being created in the image of God and called to be a god himself, or a product of chance evolution destined to be dissolved, without remainder, into dust and ashes? This question is approached through a study of the scientific, artistic and religious approaches to the theory of personality. In the first two lectures, the scientific approach is subjected to a radical criticism and is shown to be completely inadequate to the freedom and dignity of its subject. In the next six lectures an artistic approach to personality theory is developed in some detail, in the hope that it might provide a bridge between the scientific and religious approaches. In the last four lectures, some central aspects of Orthodox Christian psychology are outlined. It goes without saying that these last lectures provide only a brief introduction to the true, patristic psychology, that gigantic "psychoanalysis and psycho-synthesis of the universal human soul", in Evdokimov's words<sup>1</sup>, which alone can be adequate to the subject of man.

I wish to express my warm gratitude to the professors of the Faculty of Psychology, to my expert translator, Dr. Petya Nitsova, and to the students who listened to me so patiently, for giving me the opportunity to deliver this course of lectures.

*June 22 / July 5, 2008.*

*Holy Protomartyr Alban of Britain.*

*East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, England.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Evdokimov, P., *Les Ages de la Vie Spirituelle*, Paris: De Brouwer, 1964 (in French).

## 1. THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY (A)

*There are more things in heaven and on earth, Horatio,  
than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*  
Hamlet.

One of the most striking characteristics of man is his tendency to unbalanced and wildly contradictory estimates of his own nature. He tends, on the one hand, to overestimate himself in relation to that which is truly higher than himself - God and the world of unfallen spirits. And on the other hand, he underestimates himself in relation to that which is truly lower than himself - the animals and the world of fallen matter.

This tendency is especially striking in modern civilization. For, on the one hand, no age has believed so intensely that, in Protagoras' words, "man is the measure of all things", or, in more modern language, that "the sky - or the galaxies - are the limit" as far as man's abilities are concerned. Modern man believes that he is a god - not in the Christian sense that man by union with God can become deified through grace, but in the pagan sense that man is divine by nature, and so is in principle capable of solving any problem or attaining any goal that he sets his mind to - and without the help of any higher (and purely hypothetical) being.

But on the other hand, a very large part of modern science and philosophy, and especially psychological science, has been devoted to proving the proposition that man is in essence simply a very complicated machine, an animal that happens to have acquired certain exceptional abilities through evolution, but an animal nevertheless. In the past, men took Aristotle's definition of man as "the rational animal" as pointing to a certain rational quintessence of man that surpassed his animal nature. Now, however, man's rationality is simulated on artificial intelligence computer programmes, B.F. Skinner openly derides the idea that human nature has "freedom and dignity"<sup>2</sup>, while Desmond Morris' definition of man as "the naked ape"<sup>3</sup> - that is, as an ape differing from other apes, not in rationality, but only in hairlessness - raises hardly an eyebrow.

There is a paradox here, a schizoid contradiction in modern man's understanding of himself, which cries out for a psychological explanation. Is it that man is indeed made up of such varied qualities that he is inevitably reduced to uttering contradictory half-truths about himself? Or is modern man actually mentally ill, so that he veers from manic paeans in praise of himself to depressive self-loathing of the most extreme kind?

---

<sup>2</sup> Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, *The Naked Ape*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1967.

If we turn from science and philosophy to art, then the hypothesis that modern man's contradictory understanding of himself is a symptom of mental illness, acquires confirmation. The most famous artists of our civilization, such as Picasso and Francis Bacon, portray man in various stages of disintegration; we see distorted limbs and howling half-faces utterly devoid of spirituality. In music, similarly, atonalism has taken the place of harmony. What can these images and sounds be expressing if not the psychically damaged and spiritually impoverished state either of the artist himself or of the world he lives in? But if the world praises and imitates these artists, then we must assume that it values their work, not as the freakish expressions of raving lunatics having no universal significance, but rather as its own objective portrait.

Of course, we - and especially we psychologists - often like to think that the world is sick while we ourselves are healthy. And yet the best-known psychologists, such as Freud and Jung, were careful to point out that the psychologically healthy are only the relatively less ill, which is why they continued to spend a lot of time in self-analysis. Moreover, psychologists should perhaps be even more careful and self-critical than the ordinary man in view of the fact that some of the greatest errors and distortions in modern man's understanding of himself have been propagated precisely by psychologists - for example, the American behaviourist model, from whose distortions we are only just beginning to free ourselves.

Therefore in seeking an answer to our question concerning the contradictions in modern man's understanding of himself, we should not be afraid to abandon the path towards that understanding which modern psychology has set out on and which has brought forth such monstrous fruit. Perhaps other ages, and other disciplines, have some knowledge which is worth recovering. It is on this assumption, at any rate, that this series of lectures is based. In its insights taken from art, drama and theology, as well as science and philosophy, are combined in order to understand the creature that created all these disciplines. For it is at least prima facie plausible to suppose that a complete, harmonious picture of man can be obtained only by studying him in all his activities, not excluding the most mysterious from a traditional psychological point of view.

\*

I believe that most psychological science, far from illumining its subject, - the soul, or the mental life of man - has radically distorted it and even completely hidden it from view. It has done this, I believe, by committing three inter-related methodological blunders which have their roots in a false philosophical world-view that has arisen in the West in the course of centuries. I do not propose to study this false philosophical world-view at this point; but I would like to say a few words on the methodological blunders

that have penetrated psychology as a result of it, i.e. selectionism, reductionism, compartmentalism and scientism.

**1. Selectionism.** In approaching their subject, psychologists have tended to select only those data about mental life which are the least mental, subjective and personal - in other words, the least characteristically human. The complex mental phenomena associated with religion, art, empathy, extra-sensory perception, creative genius, spiritual and romantic love, the "souls" of supra-individual communities such as schools, institutions and nations, have been rigorously excluded from study or assigned to the realm of "para-psychology" - which literally means "beyond psychology".

Now there are indeed aspects of these phenomena which go beyond psychology in the strict sense of the word. But all of them have roots in experience and therefore form part of the data of psychology. To exclude them from consideration a priori is like deciding to exclude from physics all data relating to substances below the atomic level. Such a priori limitation of data in physics would, of course, be considered anti-scientific suppression of evidence - facts which don't fit current paradigms are precisely those which should be studied most. But we have taken it for granted in psychology for decades.

One of the main advantages of adopting a multi-disciplinary approach is that it makes it impossible to deny the existence of certain abilities in man that we all take for granted in our everyday lives but which psychologists in the past somehow managed to ignore entirely.

Even with regard to animals, psychologists have displayed an amazing capacity for refusing to see the obvious. One example is the controversy associated with the name of the American behaviourist psychologist Tolman concerning the ability of rats to find their way through a maze again after only one experience of travelling through it. The natural explanation of this ability is that rats are able to build up maps of the environment "in their heads" which enable them to find their way through it. However, American psychology in the 1940s did not admit the existence of mental maps, and attempted to explain the rats' abilities purely in terms of stimulus-response learning. So an enormous amount of time and effort was spent in the vain attempt to find a stimulus-response explanation of maze-learning which would avoid the need to postulate the existence of mental maps in animals. It has been above all the discoveries of ethologists that has exposed the futility of such behaviourism. For no-one pretends that the amazing migratory abilities of birds is possible without "maps in the head" - or something still more sophisticated and "mental".

This illustrates the truth of the philosopher Wittgenstein's words: "Not to explain but to accept the psychological phenomena - that is what is so

difficult<sup>4</sup>. If the first step in the scientific process is the gathering of all the data relating to the subject, and accepting them as facts, then it must be admitted that much of "scientific" psychology has been far from scientific. It has vigorously refused to accept the existence of abilities in men and animals that are evident to any unprejudiced eye.

**2. Reductionism.** A second methodological error of psychologists has been their tendency to seek for explanations of mental phenomena in more simple, more observable and above all more physical phenomena.

This error, which the Russian philosopher and psychologist Semyon Ludvigovich Frank called "psychical atomism"<sup>5</sup>, and which modern philosophers of science have called "the fallacy of reductionism", led, in its most extreme form, to the so-called science of behaviourism, which dominated Anglo-Saxon psychology for almost fifty years and is even now far from dead.

Behaviourism amounted to the dogma that the description of mental phenomena can always be reduced to the description of physical behaviour; in other words, that mental phenomena as such do not exist! If such a description of behaviourism sounds exaggerated, let me cite my own experience as an undergraduate studying psychology at Oxford University in 1970. One series of seminars I attended, led by an American behaviourist, was entitled "emotion" - a very mental phenomenon, one might think. And yet the whole thrust of the seminars was to prove that emotions as such do not exist. For all emotions, asserted the behaviourist, are simply "conditioned emotional reflexes", i.e. physical movements or behaviour which we then label "emotional"!

Descartes began the history of modern philosophy and psychology with the statement: "I think, therefore I am (a private, mental substance)". Now we can say that behaviourism has ended it with the statement: "I am (a public, physical substance), therefore I do not think". And since even animals have thoughts and feelings, man has been reduced to a status below that of the animals.

One consequence of treating man as if he were a somewhat less complex and profound being than a bird or a bee is that on the few occasions when psychologists start talking about some aspect of human life that has real profundity, their descriptions and explanations seem to be at best obviously wrong, and at worst a mockery of the subject-matter.

Consider, for example, the important phenomenon of falling in love. Frank writes: "What can so-called empirical psychology observe in it? First of all it

---

<sup>4</sup> Wittgenstein, in Gardner, *The Mind's New Science*, New York: Basic Books, 1987, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Frank, *Dusha Cheloveka (The Soul of Man)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1917 (in Russian).

will fall on the external, physical symptoms of this phenomenon - it will point out the changes in blood circulation, feeding and sleep in the person under observation. But remembering that it is, first of all, psychology, it will pass over to the observation of 'mental phenomena', it will record changes in self-image, sharp alterations in mental exaltation and depression, the stormy emotions of a pleasant and repulsive nature through which the life of a lover usually passes, the dominance in his consciousness of images relating to the beloved person, etc. Insofar as psychology thinks that in these observations it has expressed, albeit incompletely, the very essence of being in love - then this is a mockery of the lover, a denial of the mental phenomenon under the guise of a description of it. For for the lover himself all these are just symptoms or consequences of his feeling, not the feeling itself. Its essence consists, roughly, in a living consciousness of the exceptional value of the beloved person, in an aesthetic delight in him, in the experience of his central significance for the life of the beloved - in a word, in a series of phenomena characterizing the inner meaning of life. To elucidate these phenomena means to understand them compassionately from within, to recreate them sympathetically in oneself. The beloved will find an echo of himself in artistic descriptions of love in novels, he will find understanding in a friend, as a living person who has himself experienced something similar and is able to enter the soul of his friend; but the judgements of the psychologist will seem to him to be simply misunderstandings of his condition - and he will be right."<sup>6</sup>

If love fares badly in the hands of scientific psychologists, and not only strict behaviourists, they cope no better with emotion in general.

Thus William James, though in general well aware of the limitations of behaviourism, was still sufficiently under its spell to produce his theory of emotion, according to which emotion is not, as common sense tells us, the cause of facial expressions, motor reactions such as approach or avoidance, and responses of the autonomic nervous system, but rather the effect of their perception. Indeed, he identified emotion with the sensations of these bodily changes: "our feeling of the [bodily] changes *is* the emotion". In other words, we do not cry because we grieve, but grieve because we cry.<sup>7</sup>

There is a kernel of true observation underlying this theory - the fact, namely, that it is in practice very difficult to distinguish the emotion, say, of fear from a physical sensation in the pit of the stomach.<sup>8</sup> But while emotion is linked with visceral sensations, it is no less bound up with cognition or perception. We do not have to deny the contribution physical sensation makes to the experience of emotion to agree nevertheless that all the subtle distinctions between emotions depend on the varieties of perceptual and

---

<sup>6</sup> Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>7</sup> Mandler, G., "Emotion", in Gregory, R.L. (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to the Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 219.

<sup>8</sup> Frank, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-54



cognitive experience in interaction with the environment and the higher levels of personality. It is very often the perception of a match or mismatch between our ongoing plans and motivation and the current state of affairs that is the major determinant of emotion; and the particular quality of emotion will depend on the physical state of the person involved, the precise nature of his ongoing plans, the importance attached to them both by the person himself and by those around him, the degree of match or mismatch between plans and perceptions, the extent to which the match or mismatch was caused by the person himself or was beyond his control, the ability of the person to reconstrue, rationalize or repress any mismatch, and the vast penumbra of associations and other secondary emotions which the perceived state of affairs elicits in him subconsciously. The idea that all such subtleties could be reflected in the state of one's viscera alone is absurd.

Another important point about emotion is that it is irreducibly intentional, as the phenomenologists say; that is, it refers to an object beyond itself that must enter into the description of the emotion. Thus - to revert to our former example - the emotion of falling in love cannot be divorced from the perception of the beloved, as if it were something that could take place inside the head without any reference to the world outside. Or, to take another example from Maslow, "there is in the real world no such thing as blushing without something to blush about"; in other words, blushing always means "blushing in a context".<sup>9</sup> "From this," writes Frankl, "we see how important it is in psychology to view phenomena 'in a context'... Conversely, cutting off the objects to which such experiences refer, must eventuate in an impoverishment of psychology."<sup>10</sup>

Although James' theory has passed into history, its failure is typical of the failure of psychology as a whole. All too often it appears to have adopted the following strategy in relation to mental phenomena:- 1. Deny the phenomenon's existence. 2. If denial becomes untenable, redefine the phenomenon in exclusively behavioural terms (e.g. "emotion" becomes "conditioned emotional reflexes"). 3. If redefinition is inadequate to explain away the phenomenon's mentalist nature, admit its existence but make it strictly dependent on unconscious physical or physiological factors (e.g. emotions are caused by firing of the autonomic nervous system). 4. If the phenomenon's intentional, self-transcending character cannot be denied, expel it from the domain of "scientific" psychology and assign it to some "non-scientific" domain, such as art or psychoanalysis or religion.

The result is that psychology ceases to be the study of the soul or mental life, and becomes a branch of zoology or physiology. For what mental phenomenon of any importance, if examined without prejudice, does not

---

<sup>9</sup> Frankl, V., "Self-transcendence as a Human Phenomenon", *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 1966, vol. 6, no. 2, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> Frankl, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

involve both cognitive and social factors, both consciousness and freewill - at any rate to some degree? And if such an important a phenomenon as emotion, which is closely linked, on the one hand, with the lower, physical and biological sides of our nature, and on the other, with what we perceive to be our highest achievements and the essence of our humanity, is "beyond the pale" of "pure" science, what value does this "purity" have? Surely it is more logical and fruitful to "dirty our hands" from the beginning and proclaim, with Terence: Nihil humanum alienum mihi est - that is, "nothing human is alien to me". In other words, before attempting to explain man, we must see him and describe him without prejudice; we must see and describe him not only in his most primitive aspects, in which he (supposedly) resembles a machine or a "naked ape", but also in his highest achievements - in his intellectual and artistic and religious life - without attempting to reduce the higher to the lower.

**3. *Compartmentalism.*** The methodological and philosophical error of reductionism is closely related to another error, that of compartmentalism. This is the error of failing to understand that man cannot be understood by dividing him into small "bits" or compartments.

Of course, it is very natural, when presented with a very complex problem or object for analysis, to try to analyse it into more manageable "bits", in the hope that, when the separate bits have been analysed, they can be put together to form the whole. The problem with man is that it is very difficult to analyse him into bits, even very large bits. For man is an irreducibly holistic being.

Thus, to adopt a very old and traditional analysis, it is almost impossible to study the human heart in isolation from the mind and the will. For when a man is wanting or feeling something, he is almost invariably thinking and willing something at the same time - and the thinking and willing change the quality of the wanting and feeling in very important ways. Thus, as Vygotsky says, "A true and full understanding of another's thought is only possible when we understand its affective-volitional basis".<sup>11</sup>

Consider, for example, the phenomenon known as "cognitive dissonance". Dissonance occurs when a person is faced with a perceived inconsistency between two of his cognitions, for example: "smoking causes disease" and "I like smoking" or "I have just smoked a cigarette". The emotion created by the inconsistency is motivational; that is, the person who experiences this inconsistency is motivated to think or act in such a way as to remove it by altering the significance of one or other cognition. Thus he may argue that while smoking causes disease, it also decreases tension or reduces weight. Or he may argue that he smoked only in order to keep someone company.

---

<sup>11</sup> Vygotsky, L.S., *Thought and Language*, Boston, Mass.: MIT Press, 1962.

In one experiment by Carlsmith and Festinger, subjects were given a boring task to do and then asked to persuade other subjects to do the same task by telling them that it was in fact interesting and fun. All were able to justify this lie by the fact that they were helping in a scientific experiment. But in addition half the subjects were offered \$1 to do this, and half \$20. According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, the subjects offered less would have greater dissonance since they were less well able to justify their choice, and so would change their minds about the boringness of the task more. And this is what was found.<sup>12</sup>

However, the increase in attitudinal change in these experiments has been found reliably only when subjects feel voluntarily engaged in the counter-attitudinal behaviour and believe that important consequences result from engaging in that behaviour.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the presence or absence of cognitive dissonance and attitudinal change depends on motivation and other social factors. So once again we see how difficult and fruitless it is to "atomize" human nature.

Of course, that human nature is best studied as a whole is not a new idea, and it has come to be accepted even by experimentalists who are accustomed to a "molecular" approach to psychological problems. Thus Neisser ends his survey of the cognitive compartment of psychology with the following words: "It is no accident that the cognitive approach gives us no way to know what the subject will think of next. We cannot possibly know this unless we have a detailed understanding of what he is trying to do and why. For this reason a really satisfactory theory of the higher mental processes can only come into being when we also have theories of motivation, personality, and social interaction. The study of cognition is only one fraction of psychology, and it cannot stand alone."<sup>14</sup>

Again, Gardner writes: "Nearly every conceivable element is relevant to a subject's performance, and few issues having to do with human nature and behavior can be excluded from the laboratory a priori."<sup>15</sup> A fortiori, therefore, they cannot be excluded from the study of man outside the laboratory, in ordinary, everyday life.

Whether we like it or not, and however difficult the task is, we must build a comprehensive model of man as a whole before we can hope to understand him in any of his parts.

---

<sup>12</sup> Festinger, L. "Cognitive Dissonance", *Contemporary Psychology: Readings from Scientific American*, San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Lloyd, P., Mayes, A., Manstead, A., Meudell, P. & Wagner, H., *Introduction to Psychology: An Integrated Approach*, London: Fontana, 1984, p. 619.

<sup>14</sup> Neisser, U., *Cognitive Psychology*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.

<sup>15</sup> Gardner, op.cit., p. 96.

## **2. THE LIMITATIONS OF SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY (B)**

*You would play upon me;  
You would seem to know my stops;  
You would pluck out the heart of my mystery;  
You would sound me from my lowest  
note to the top of my compass.  
And there is much music, excellent voice,  
in this little organ.  
Yet cannot you make it speak...  
Hamlet.*

**4. Scientism.** In the last lecture we considered three of the limitations of scientific psychology: selectionism, reductionism and compartmentalism. In this lecture we shall consider a still more fundamental error: scientism, which may be defined as the error that empirical science is the only path to real, objective knowledge in any sphere.

Modern psychology began with the "discovery" of what Freud called the unconscious but which I would prefer, following Frank<sup>16</sup>, to call the subconscious, because there is in fact no sharp division between it and consciousness, but rather a gradual spectrum from more to less illumined physical sensations, images, memories, moods, desires and feelings. We can most easily become aware of this subconscious element of mental life in drowsiness, or in sudden bursts of passion which come upon us, as we say, "for no reason at all"; but it actually accompanies us, as Frank emphasizes, throughout our conscious life. Psychoanalysis has demonstrated that highly complex conscious structures of perception and thought, purpose and planning may be under the control of the subconscious, together with elaborately "reasonable" justifications of one's behaviour to oneself and others. It is a vast ocean out of which consciousness emerges like a wave or tentacle, to use Frank's simile.

Now the subconscious, by definition, cannot be subjected to conscious analysis. Or rather, if it is so subjected it is found to have radically changed in quality or even disappeared, as darkness disappears in the light of a torch, or mist in the warmth of the morning sun. The question then arises: is it possible to know the subconscious? The answer to this question is: yes, but not by empirical, scientific means. Freud believed that the subconscious could be known through the interpretation of dreams. But this is a quasi-scientific method of analysis akin to literary criticism which also distorts its object in the process. The subconscious is known without distortion, I believe, in *art* and especially in *religion*.

---

<sup>16</sup> Frank, S.L., *Dusha Cheloveka (The Soul of Man)*, Paris: YMCA Press, 1917 (in Russian).

Art is also important in the understanding of certain extreme forms of mental illness, such as schizophrenia. For the primary problem here is not how to explain, but how to describe the phenomenon. And for that we need the empathic, artistic description of a clinician or former sufferer.

We shall return to the role of art and poetry in the knowledge of the subconscious in a later lecture; but for the moment it is sufficient to establish that empirical analysis cannot provide objective knowledge of the subconscious. This could be called a psychological analogue of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle in physics. Just as the very process of empirical observation prevents physicists from knowing the position and speed of subatomic particles simultaneously, so the very process of empirical analysis prevents psychologists from knowing the quality and depth of the subconscious sphere of mental life.

If we turn from the sphere of the subconscious to that of conscious thought and perception, we again find that the scientific bias of empirical psychology imposes crippling limitations on its understanding. The most important of these is the fact that empirical science can study a process only by dividing it into spatio-temporal parts that are causally dependent on each other. However, as many philosophers and psychologists since Kant have demonstrated, even the simplest act of perception involves a relationship of intentionality between a perceiving subject and a perceived object which cannot be represented in spatiotemporal, causal terms. The conscious ego is always "free" of that which it perceives or thinks about, because the relationship between subject and object is not in space-time, but orthogonal to it, as it were. (By the word "object" here I do not mean only external objects, but anything whatsoever, real or imaginary, that can be an object of perception or thought.)

Thus three events in the external world may be represented in a causal nexus:  $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$ . And each of these events may give rise, through a causal process involving the visual pathways of the brain, to a corresponding perception:  $A \rightarrow A1$ ,  $B \rightarrow B1$ ,  $C \rightarrow C1$ . However, an analysis of each of these perceptions,  $A1$ ,  $B1$  and  $C1$ , reveals a non-causal, intentional relationship between a perceiving subject and a perceived object. Moreover, the perception or thought that  $A$ ,  $B$  and  $C$  actually constitute one event, one causal nexus, cannot be said to be caused by  $A$ ,  $B$  and  $C$ , or by  $A1$ ,  $B1$  and  $C1$ . Insofar it is an objective perception or thought, it is not caused by anything; for it is not a subjective reaction to anything taking place in the world or in the mind, but an objective reflection on it.

Now scientists under the influence of scientism have speculated that everything that takes place, not only in the world, but also in the mind, can be fully represented in causal, spatio-temporal nexuses. In psychology this is sometimes called the Artificial Intelligence or "AI" hypothesis. According to

this hypothesis, mental states can be identified with brain states or computer states in such a way that if the behaviour of a computer were indistinguishable from what we recognize as the behaviour of a human being, then we would be forced to admit that the computer is a human being.

However, the philosopher John Searle has argued that however accurately a machine could mimic the behaviour of an intelligent human being, it cannot be said to understand what it is doing. And he proves his contention by describing an imaginary "Chinese room" experiment. Suppose a person is locked in a room and is given a large amount of Chinese writing. Suppose, further, that he understands not a word of Chinese, but is given a set of instructions in a language he does understand which teaches him to correlate one set of Chinese symbols with another. If the rules correlating input and output are sufficiently complex and sophisticated, and if the man becomes sufficiently skilled in manipulating them, then it is possible to envisage a situation in which, for any question given him in Chinese, the man will be able to give an appropriate answer also in Chinese in such a way that no-one would guess from his answers that he knows not a word of Chinese!<sup>17</sup>

Thus scientists will never be able to explain their own thought processes by purely scientific means - for example, by building a model of the brain on a computer. For such functions as "understanding meaning" and "intending" cannot be simulated on a machine, no matter how sophisticated. As Michael Polanyi writes: "These personal powers include the capacity for understanding a meaning, for believing a factual statement, for interpreting a mechanism in relation to its purpose, and on a higher level, for reflecting on problems and exercising originality in solving them. They include, indeed, every manner of reaching convictions by an act of personal judgement. The neurologist exercises these powers to the highest degree in constructing the neurological model of a man - to whom he denies in this very act any similar powers."<sup>18</sup>

This conclusion reached by philosophical thought is confirmed by the findings of mathematicians. Thus the Oxford professor Roger Penrose, relying on the work of other mathematicians such as Godel and Turing, has given some excellent reasons for not believing that minds are algorithmic, i.e. mechanistic entities. For example, there are certain necessary mathematical truths which are seen to be true but cannot be logically deduced from the axioms of the system to which they belong; that is, although we know that they are true, we cannot prove them to be true. This suggests that the seeing of mathematical truths is a spontaneous, uncaused, yet completely rational act. Penrose believes that mathematical truths are like Platonic ideas, which exist independently both of the mind and of the physical world. Whether or

---

<sup>17</sup> Searle, J., *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, Cambridge University Press, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> Polanyi, M., *Personal Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 262.

not he is right in this, he has clearly demonstrated that mathematical thinking cannot be described or explained in deterministic terms. And if mathematical thinking, the most rigorous and logical of all kinds of thought, is free and not determined, the same must be true of scientific thought in general.<sup>19</sup>

It follows that if psychologists try to deny that thinking is free, they cut the ground from under their own feet and deprive their own thought of any conviction. For let us suppose that the thinking of psychologists is in fact determined by certain natural laws, and not free. The question then arises: if that is so, what reason do we have for believing that their reasoning is rational and true? For if a man speaks under some kind of compulsion, we conclude either that he does not understand what he is saying, or that he is lying, or that he is telling the truth "by accident", as it were. In any case, we attach no significance to his words; for free and rational men believe only the words of free and rational men.

Now just as rational thought presupposes freedom, so does responsible action. The whole of morality and law is based on the premise that the actions of men can be free, although they are not always so. If a man is judged to have committed a criminal offence freely, then he is blamed and punished accordingly. If, on the other hand, he is judged to have been "not in his sound mind", he is not blamed and is sent to a psychiatric hospital rather than a prison. If we could not make such distinctions between various degrees of freedom, civilized society would soon collapse.

Freedom of will is only faintly discerned at the subconscious level. For at this level we feel that we are being pushed and pulled in a dark sea of desires and aversions, of attractions and repulsions. But insofar as the ego feels itself to be the victim of these forces that it cannot yet conceptualize or control, it also feels itself distinct from them, and therefore potentially able to resist them.

Moreover, at the higher level of consciousness, this feeling of passive "victimization" is translated into active attention to objects and resistance to (some) desires; Prometheus bound becomes Prometheus unbound, at least in relation to some elements of his mental life.

The phenomenon of attention is of particular interest here because it is at the same time the *sine qua non* of all perception and thought and the first real manifestation of freedom of the will, the will being bound at the lower, subconscious level. As Frank points out, some element of will is present in all perception and thought insofar as it is not imposed by either the environment or the subconscious. Even if our attention is involuntarily drawn to an object, the perception of it as occupying a definite place in the objective world requires an effort of will directing our cognitive faculties upon it. Thus my

---

<sup>19</sup> Penrose, R., *The Emperor's New Mind*, London: Vintage, 1989.

attention may be involuntarily drawn by a bright light or a pretty face - at this moment I am under the control of subconsciously registered images, sensations and desires. But immediately I try to perceive where and what it is that has attracted my attention, I am displaying freedom of will.<sup>20</sup>

However, it is above in all in the experience of resisting one or other of our desires that we become conscious that our will is free. This freedom is only relative insofar as the resistance to one desire is conditioned by submission to another, stronger one. But introspection reveals that in any struggle between two desires at the conscious level there is always a third element, the ego, that chooses between them, however overwhelmed by one of the desires the ego may feel itself to be. It is in the hesitation before choice that we become conscious of our freedom. And it is in the consciousness that we could have chosen differently that we become conscious of our responsibility.

The question arises: how can we acquire knowledge of this freedom of will that is such an important element of the whole of our waking lives? It is obvious that empirical psychology cannot provide us with this knowledge insofar as it is dominated by the dogma of scientism. In the most extreme manifestation of psychological scientism, behaviourism, even the word "action" is removed from the scientific vocabulary and replaced by the word "behaviour", which has fewer connotations of free will and choice. Fortunately, behaviourism is now generally admitted to have been a mistake; but we must not underestimate the continued influence of scientific modes of thought in psychology. If the mechanistic model of the behaviourists is simply replaced by the computer models of the cognitive scientists, then we are no nearer the truth now than we were in the 1950s.

I believe that freedom and action can be understood through *history*, and especially through *drama* (the Greek word "drama" means "action"). History and drama are not the only means to this understanding; and I shall also be considering religious modes of understanding that penetrate even deeper into these functions. But particular attention will be paid to drama in these lectures, in which I shall be using drama, not simply as a source of scattered insights into personality, but as a theoretical model or metaphor of the human soul. For I agree with John Morris that of the various metaphors that have been used in psychology over the years - metaphors drawn from building, engineering, agriculture, zoology, medicine and the theatre, - it is only the theatrical model "that enables human beings to be seen in their full humanity".<sup>21</sup>

Nor shall I be using the theatrical model as the sociologists have used it, concentrating on the idea of the man as a social actor, and hence on acting and

---

<sup>20</sup> Frank, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Morris, J., "Three Aspects of the Person in Social Life", in Ralph Ruddock, *Six Approaches to the Person*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, p. 73.



performance. No less important is the idea of the role itself considered independently of the actor - that is, in its psychological rather than its sociological aspect, - and the idea of the dramatist. Thus I shall be developing a model of man as dramatist, role and actor, or person, personality and personae, which is close to the traditional Christian model of man as composed of spirit, soul and body.

**5. *Abstractionism*.** Before turning from the subject of scientism, I should like to say a few words about one variety of it which has been particularly important in personality theory. This is the tendency to see an individual man almost exclusively in terms of certain abstract dimensions at the expense of that which is unique and most personal in him.

Now that approach to personality which stresses the unique and personal is called *idiography*, while the contrasting, more abstract approach is called *nomotheticism*.<sup>22</sup> "Idiography" means the drawing (Greek graphe) of that which is personal (idios); and this approach involves the use of quasi-artistic, "projective" techniques in the drawing of human uniqueness and idiosyncrasy. "Nomotheticism", on the other hand, means the placing (thesis) of that which is lawful (nomikon); and this approach involves the use of scientific techniques in the plotting of each man's place on certain universal dimensions of behaviour which have a basis in the laws of nature - as extraversion-introversion, for example, has a basis in the laws of classical conditioning.

The contrast is not as sharp as might at first appear. Insofar as both idiographers and nomotheticists aim to produce descriptions of people which are communicable and comparable with other descriptions, they both use classifications and therefore abstractions. Thus a graphologist will, on the basis of the slant, width, connectedness, etc. of a man's handwriting draw certain conclusions about his sociability, generosity, sensuality, etc.; while a psychometrist will make not dissimilar kinds of judgements on the basis of answers to questionnaires or behavioural tests. The idiographer's description may be more detailed and therefore in a sense more personal (and less reliable, according to his critics). But the categories he uses will be no more and no less abstract and universal than the nomotheticist's. The difference between the two methods is rather in the material they admit as evidence for their conclusions, in their input rather than their output, as it were. The idiographer will admit more complex, natural and idiosyncratic material - handwriting, for example; while the nomotheticist will "set up" a much more narrowly controlled range of possible inputs - "yes" and "no" responses in questionnaires, for example, or response times in a laboratory situation.

---

<sup>22</sup> Jones, D. Gareth, "In Search of an Idiographic Psychology", *The Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, 1971, 24, pp. 279-80.

Now science is concerned with finding common laws, regularities and identities beneath the bewildering flux of everyday experience. We may be said to understand a certain phenomenon if we are able to relate it to a range of other phenomena by their possession of a common property or structure. Thus the greenness in a vast range of plants is owing to their common possession of chlorophyll, which is essential to the process of photosynthesis. Again, all water is watery because its chemical structure is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. The differences between the varieties of greenness and wateriness are irrelevant from the point of view of chemical analysis, just as one hydrogen atom may be considered to be for all practical purposes (that is, above the level of quantum mechanics) identical to any other.

Not so with people. Of course, we can and do analyse people in terms of their possession of certain abstract characteristics, and knowing that such-and-such a person has such-and-such a character can certainly be said to increase our knowledge of him. But it is commonly felt that no amount of such analysis will ever exhaust our knowledge of a person; for each person is unique and idiosyncratic. And this is not simply because each person is a uniquely different mixture of physical and psychological properties, such as extraversion or aggression, sensuality or intelligence (probably each plant and each drop of water could be said to be unique in this sense, certainly if we extended our analysis to the atomic level). Even if we found two people - say, two identical twins - who scored identically on all physical and psychological dimensions, so that the only way we could tell them apart was by their spatio-temporal coordinates, we would still be inclined to say that there is something essential about each of them individually which has escaped analysis, something which is more than the sum of their attributes, which underlies, as it were, their human nature.

We may express this fact by saying, following the Russian theologian Vladimir Lossky, that a person cannot be reduced to his personality or nature.<sup>23</sup> In Greek this fact is expressed by the word for "person", hypostasis, which literally means "standing under". Thus the person, or hypostasis, is that which "stands under" or "underlies" or "subsists" the personality. (In Latin, on the other hand, the word persona means "mask", which overlies the personality.)

\*

In concluding this lecture, I should like to draw attention to another fact about human nature which cannot be accommodated within any empirical psychological theory, and which therefore demands that we raise our thinking above the level of science understood in the narrow, positivist sense. This is the fact of inter-personal communion which enables two people to

---

<sup>23</sup> Lossky, V., *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London: James Clarke, 1957.

relate to each other not as subjects and objects but as inter-penetrating subjects whose knowledge of each other is objective, as it were, only by being (inter-) subjective. As Heron puts it: "My awareness of myself is in part constituted by my awareness of his awareness of me, and my awareness of him is in part constituted by my awareness of his awareness of me."<sup>24</sup>

I am not here talking simply about empathy, which is another basic psychological phenomenon that transcends empirical science. Empathy lies at the root of art, and has been described by one Russian scientist as "a necessary and most important, although not the only condition of creativity in any sphere of human activity".<sup>25</sup> But empathy is a one-way relationship, like art itself: here we are talking rather about mutual and simultaneous empathy which creates a new content as well as form of consciousness.

Thus two people in relation to each other as people are like two mirrors placed opposite each other. That which is reflected in mirror A is mirror B, and that which is reflected in mirror B is mirror A. The "knowledge" that each has is therefore objective and subjective at the same time; in fact, the objectivity and subjectivity of the vision or visions are logically and chronologically inseparable. But this amounts to a radically different kind of knowledge from that of scientific, empirical knowledge, which Frank calls "object consciousness".<sup>26</sup> For whereas object consciousness entails a radical separation between a spaceless and timeless subject and a spatial (if material) or temporal (if mental) object, person consciousness entails an equally radical identity-in-diversity of subject and object which we may call *communion*.

Frank describes communion as follows: "When we speak to a person, or even when our eyes meet in silence, that person ceases to be an 'object' for us and is no longer a 'he' but a 'thou'. That means he no longer fits into the frame-work of 'the world of objects': he ceases to be a passive something upon which our cognitive gaze is directed for the purposes of perception without in any way affecting it. Such one-sided relation is replaced by a two-sided one, by an interchange of spiritual activities. We attend to him and he to us, and this attitude is different from - though it may co-exist with - the purely ideal direction of attention which we call objective knowledge: it is real spiritual interaction. Communion is both our link with that which is external to us, and a part of our inner life, and indeed a most essential part of it. From an abstract logical point of view this is a paradoxical case of something external not merely coexisting with the 'inward' but of actually merging into it. Communion is at one and the same time both something 'external' to us and

---

<sup>24</sup> Heron, J., "The Phenomenology of the Social Encounter: The Gaze", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1970-71, XXXI, pp. 243-264.

<sup>25</sup> Basin, E.Y., "Tvorchestvo i Empatia" ("Creativity and Empathy"), *Voprosy Filosofii (Questions of Philosophy)*, 1987, 2, p. 55 (in Russian).

<sup>26</sup> Frank, *op. cit.*

something 'inward' - in other words it cannot in the strict sense be called either external or internal.

"This can still more clearly be seen from the fact that all communion between 'I' and 'thou' leads to the formation of a new reality designated by the word 'we' - or rather, coincides with it."<sup>27</sup>

The fact is that human beings can relate to themselves and each other not only in the scientific, "I-it" mode, but also in the artistic "I-thou" mode, and in what we may call the religious "I-we" mode.<sup>28</sup> It follows that if we as psychologists are to truly understand our subject, and not dehumanize man by pretending that he exists only on the "I-it" mode of our limited scientific understanding, then we must be prepared to ascend to the "I-thou" and "I-we" modes, and understand him in these, more intimate and at the same time more comprehensive and universal modes. For how can we understand the humanity of another man if we do not exert our own humanity to its fullest extent?

Thus the psychologist, to paraphrase the Apostle Paul (I Cor. 9.22), must see all things in all men so as to be able to capture, if it is possible, at any rate one single man in his full humanity...

---

<sup>27</sup> Frank, S.L., *Reality and Man*, London: Faber & Faber, 1965, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> John Macmurray, *Interpreting the Universe*, London: Faber, 1933; *Reason and Emotion*, London: Faber, 1935; *Persons in Relation*, London: Faber, 1965.

### **3. ART, THERAPY AND THE SUBCONSCIOUS**

*The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.  
A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

In the last lecture we examined some of the limitations of scientific psychology in the understanding of man. We saw limitations at both the subconscious, the conscious and what we may call the super-conscious levels of human nature. Thus at the subconscious level, scientific psychology is limited because it cannot even describe that which it is studying without radically distorting its nature. At the conscious level it is even more handicapped because its positivist roots deny the existence of freewill, without which objective thought and rational action are inconceivable. And at the super-conscious level it finds itself helpless either to describe or to explain the phenomenon of inter-personal communion, which transcends all categories of individual substance and causality.

In this lecture, we shall return to the sphere of the subconscious and consider whether there are other disciplines that enable us to gain a certain objective knowledge of it.

Now the credit for discovering the subconscious has been attributed to the quasi-scientific discipline of psychoanalysis at the beginning of this century. I say "quasi-scientific", because I agree with the behaviourist criticism that psychoanalysis is not a real science. Except that I do not take it as a criticism; for, as I argued in the last lecture, the subconscious cannot be studied by normal scientific methods... Experimental psychology has tended to avoid the subconscious altogether, concentrating almost entirely on unconscious, as opposed to subconscious processes - that is, on those physiological processes that condition or cause subconscious and conscious experience, but do not constitute it. Perhaps the closest that experimental psychologists have come to the study of the subconscious is in certain experiments on attention which have established that information given to an unattended channel (usually an ear) is processed and recorded, at least to some extent. But it is characteristic that these studies have inferred the activity of subconscious processing only indirectly, by studying the effect that the information given to the unattended channel has on information-processing in the attended channel<sup>29</sup> - in other words, by the effects of subconscious processes on consciousness.

---

<sup>29</sup> Lloyd, P., Mayes, A., Manstead, A., Meudell, P. & Wagner, H., *Introduction to Psychology: An Integrated Approach*, London: Fontana, 1984, pp. 240-245.

Even if we include introspection among the normal methods of science, science can do no more than describe the general characteristics of the subconscious as revealed in, for example, drowsiness or extreme passion or hypnosis. The subconscious is like a house that is locked and shuttered from all sides. The scientist can walk round it and take note of certain signs that betray an inner life, such as the glint of light through the shutters or the curls of smoke through the chimney. But he cannot enter the house and discover its real purpose and dimensions, and similarities to other houses – unless he finds the key. And the key to the subconscious, even more than the dreams on which psychoanalysts have concentrated their attention, is *art...*

\*

Art is a form of objective, but non-conceptual knowledge; it gives a knowledge, not of laws and abstract truths, but of the lived quality of experience, both conceptual and non-conceptual, which remains inaccessible to scientific analysis.

Thus Frank writes: "Experience is wider than thought,.. and in virtue of it we can come into touch with that which eludes the conceptual form. But must such experience remain dumb and inexpressible, and therefore unconscious and utterly inaccessible to thought? There is at least one actual testimony to the contrary - namely, art, and in particular poetry as the art of the word. Poetry is a mysterious way of expressing things that cannot be put into abstract logical form. It expresses a certain concrete reality without breaking it up into a system of abstract notions, but taking it as it actually is, in all its concreteness. This is possible because the purpose of words is not limited to their function of designating concepts: words are also the means of spiritually mastering and imparting meaning to experience in its actual, super-logical nature. The existence of poetry shows that experience is not doomed to remain dumb and incomprehensible, but has a specific form of expression, i.e., of being 'understood' just in that aspect of it which transcends abstract thought."<sup>30</sup>

The difference between scientific description and artistic expression can be illustrated by the example of a rose. The scientist will attempt to classify it, that is, describe its features along various abstract dimensions that allow it to be compared with all other roses: location, genus, colour, size, etc. Such a description may be very precise even without spatio-temporal location, so that only one rose in the whole world will in actual fact have that particular list of attributes. Nevertheless, the description will be abstract, in that every part of it will involve the placing of the rose into a certain abstract category; so that it would be theoretically possible for another rose of such a description to exist. Finally, the scientist may take a photograph of the rose. This

---

<sup>30</sup> Frank, S.L., *Reality and Man*, London: Faber & Faber, 1965, pp. 41-42.

photograph will not aim to capture the particular concrete quality of the rose so much as the presence of those abstract attributes that go to make up his verbal description. It may have artistic expressive qualities, but this quality of expressiveness will be incidental to its purpose.

The artist, on the contrary, will not be interested in abstract classification. Even if he uses abstract categories - and if he uses language, he cannot escape that - his aim will not be precision of abstract classification but precision of concrete expression. He will aim to capture the unique character of the rose as experienced at that particular time and as filtered through the consciousness of that particular artist. If words are inadequate to describe his experience, he may attempt to paint the rose. In this painting he will attempt to catch those qualities, like the magical sheen of the leaves, or the poignancy of the fragrance, which cannot be captured in a photograph or conveyed in a scientific description. The rose and his experience of it are unique, and his art will attempt to express that uniqueness.

Let us dwell a little on the word "expression". It means literally "pressing out", as grape-juice might be pressed out of grapes. The implication is that that which is pressed out is inaccessible except through the pressing. It also implies that that which is pressed out is changed to a certain degree in the action of pressing. There are therefore three elements involved: a hidden content, a revealed content, or form, and a process which transforms the one into the other.

Now let us turn to Shakespeare's description of artistic expression:

*The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
And as imagination bodies forth  
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name.*

A Midsummer Night's Dream, V, 1.

The emphasis here is on the transformation that artistic expression imposes upon its material. Before expression in artistic "forms and shapes", the content of art is "things unknown", "airy nothing"; it has neither a habitation nor a name. It therefore closely corresponds to the non-spatial and unclassified contents of the subconscious. It follows that the process of artistic expression has close similarities to that of psychotherapy. Both activities aim to bring the contents of the subconscious into light, to embody them in forms - the artist in the forms of his works of art, and the therapist in the forms of his client's life.

Let us now look at the first and most famous therapist who took this idea seriously - Freud.

\*

There is a profound relationship between art and psychotherapy, as has been recognized by the most famous psychotherapists. Thus Freud always acknowledged his debt to the Greek tragedians, Goethe and Shakespeare; in his *Leonardo* he felt the need to forestall the criticism that he had merely written "a psycho-analytic novel"<sup>31</sup>; and he included literary history and literary criticism among the disciplines to be studied in the ideal Faculty of Psychoanalysis. And as appears already in his early obituary on Charcot written in 1893, he clearly saw the relationship between "the poet's eye" and the gift of clinical diagnosis.<sup>32</sup>

Philip Rieff writes: "That Freud owed most to Sophocles and Shakespeare (cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, Part I, 264) and least to the scientific psychology of his era shows us how dangerous scientific training can be to the mental life of the scientist when poetry is excluded from what is conceived as significant in his training. William James said this best, in the conclusion to his Gifford Lectures, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: 'Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow "scientific" bounds' (London, rev. ed., 1902, p. 519)."<sup>33</sup>

Norman Holland writes: "What Freud admires in the writer are his powers as a seer, his ability to grasp intuitively truths the psychologist gets at only by hard work. As early as 1895, he wrote, 'Local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight'. 'Creative writers,' he wrote in *Delusions and Dreams*, 'are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream'. Writers could see, for example, the 'necessary conditions for loving' before psychologists could. Shakespeare had understood the meaning of slips of the tongue long before Freud, and not only that, he had assumed that his audiences would understand, too, The writer, however, knows these things 'through intuition - really from a delicate self-observation', while Freud himself had to 'uncover' them through 'laborious work'."<sup>34</sup> Holland concludes that Freud was a scientist "with a particular need to create like an artist and through his intellectual offspring win that immortality that few but artists win. In a real

---

<sup>31</sup> Freud, S., *Leonardo*, London: Penguin Books, 1957.

<sup>32</sup> Freud, S., "Charcot", *Standard Edition*, London: Hogarth, vol. III, pp. 11-23.

<sup>33</sup> Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 385, footnote.

<sup>34</sup> Holland, N., "Freud and the Poet's Eye", in Mannheim, L. & Mannheim, E., *Hidden Patterns: Studies in Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*, New York: Macmillan, 1966, p. 153.



sense, by discovering psychoanalysis, Freud joined to the probing eye of the scientist the creating eye of the poet. Freud's own vision bodied forth the forms of things unknown and gave them a local habitation and a name.<sup>135</sup>

Freud defined the difference between conscious and unconscious contents in terms of the element of naming or verbalization which belongs to the conscious content alone: "What we have permissibly called the conscious presentation of the object can now be split up into the presentation of the word and the presentation of the thing... We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the representation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone... Now, too, we are in a position to state precisely what it is that repression denies to the rejected presentation in the transference neuroses: what it denies to the presentation is translation into words which shall remain attached to the object. A presentation which is not put into words, or a psychical act which is not hyper-catheted, remains thereafter in the Ucs in a state of repression."<sup>136</sup>

Dreams, according to Freud, are a kind of language for repressed presentations; we are to read them as we read a poem, treating the techniques of "dream work" - displacement, condensation, symbolization, dramatization, etc. - as a critic might treat the devices of poetry, such as metaphor and allegory. Indeed, the critic Lionel Trilling identified as Freud's greatest achievement his discovery that "poetry is indigenous to the very constitution of the mind", which is "in the greater part of its tendency exactly a poetry-making organ". Thus psychoanalysis is, in effect, "a science of tropes, of metaphor and its variants, synecdoche and metonymy."<sup>137</sup>

Dreams are like the first draft of a poem, the expression of an unconscious content in a semi-conscious form. More work needs to be done on them in order to bring them into the full light of consciousness, work which the patient must carry out with help from the psychotherapist. In this way psychotherapy is a kind of artistic collaboration, with the therapist encouraging his patient to do as Shakespeare exhorted:

*Look what thy memory cannot contain  
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find  
Those children nurs'd, deliver'd from thy brain,  
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.*

Sonnet 77.

---

<sup>35</sup> Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

<sup>36</sup> Freud, S., "The Unconscious", 1915, *Standard Edition*, vol. XIV, pp. 201-202.

<sup>37</sup> Trilling, L., "Freud and Literature", in *The Liberal Imagination*, New York: Doubleday, 1947.

Of course, there are important differences between dreaming and psychotherapy, on the one hand, and artistic creation, on the other. Unlike artistic creation, dream work, as Freud calls it, the activity which transforms the unconscious latent content into the manifest content of the dreams as recollected, is not communicative. On the contrary, the mechanisms of condensation, displacement and dramatization (representation) are aimed at hiding the latent content from what Freud calls the dream censor. Thus dreams are unwitting signs or symptoms of the unconscious rather than deliberate, structured symbols of it; they are expressive in the way that a safety valve is expressive rather than in the way a work of art is. That is the reason why they also have no, or very little aesthetic merit. Art, on the other hand, not only reveals, but also masters and transforms and above all communicates the unconscious. For, as the critic Northrop Frye says, "poetry is, after all, a technique of communication: it engages the conscious part of the mind as well as the murkier areas, and what a poet succeeds in communicating to others is at least as important as what he fails to resolve for himself."<sup>38</sup>

Secondly, the work of the therapist in inferring the latent from the manifest content is not artistic as such, although it benefits greatly, as we have seen, from a knowledge of artistic techniques. In fact, it is closer to the work of the art or literary critic than that of the artist himself. Just as the critic strives to understand the artist through the significance of the symbols he uses, so the therapist strives to understand his patient through the signs or symptoms he displays. His most creative and important role is actually that of providing a kind of sympathetic "waste blank" upon which the patient can "write" or further reveal the latent content of his unconscious.

Thirdly, whereas according to Freud dreams are simply wish-fulfilment, the expression almost entirely of infantile sexuality, art expresses a far wider content - the concrete, lived quality not only of unconscious but also of conscious life - that is, experience in all its fullness. Indeed, some of Freud's followers have done a disservice by suggesting that art is no more than a quarry of infantile wishes and memories. The error, once again, is that of confusing the artistic symbol with the neurotic symptom, and of forgetting the vastly wider scope and power of the former. The artist may share much of the motivation of the neurotic; he may even be neurotic himself. But in his art he transcends his neurosis in a way that the simple neurotic, sadly, does not.

As Trilling writes: "Disease and mutilation are available to us all - life provides them with prodigal generosity. What marks the artist is his power to shape the material of pain we all have..."

---

<sup>38</sup> Frye, N., "The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism", *Daedalus*, 1970, vol. 99, no. 2, pp. 268-342; reprinted in Burns, E. & Burns, T., *The Sociology of Literature and Drama*, London: Penguin Books.

"The artist is... unique in one respect, in the respect of his relation to his neurosis. He is what he is by virtue of his successful objectification of his neurosis, by his shaping it and making it available to others in a way which has its effect upon their own egos in struggle. His genius, that is, may be defined in terms of his faculties of perception, representation, and realisation, and in these terms alone. It can no more be defined in terms of neurosis than can his power of walking and talking, or his sexuality. The use to which he puts his power, or the manner and style of his power, may be discussed with reference to his particular neurosis, and so may such matters as the untimely diminution or cessation of its exercise. But its essence is irreducible. It is, as we say, a gift."<sup>39</sup>

Thus Freud provides us with the valuable insight that the difference between the subconscious and consciousness lies in verbalization, naming, and symbolization. An unconscious content becomes conscious when it acquires symbolic form. As in the creation story in *Genesis*, it is the creative activity of the *Word* that gives light to the primeval chaotic darkness.

However, Freud's approach is limited by his failure to indicate the vital difference between dream symbols, which are merely symptoms of the subconscious and do not, before interpretation, provide real knowledge or control of the subconscious, and artistic symbols, which are true names providing real, albeit limited, knowledge and control of the artist's neurosis. Even the interpretation of the patient's dreams by the analyst gives only superficial relief; for the literary critic (which is what the analyst qua interpreter really is) cannot take the place of the writer himself. If the patient is to be truly cured, he must learn, not to dream, but to write, to create real art - or, at any rate, to give a true name to that which is torturing him...

\*

Freud's disciple Jung modified and broadened the Freudian approach in three important ways. First, he criticized Freud's classification of the instincts as either self-preservative or sexual, thereby broadening the potential scope of the interpretation of dreams and of the unconscious generally. Secondly, he suggested that the symbols in dreams may have a collective as well as a personal significance, being archetypal images common to human experience as a whole. Thirdly and most importantly, he introduced the concepts of individuation and active imagination, which are processes directed towards the attainment of psychic integration and which are most clearly evident in the work of artistic geniuses.

---

<sup>39</sup> Trilling, L., "Art and Neurosis", in *The Liberal Imagination*, New York: Doubleday, 1947, pp. 173, 177.

Individuation has been defined by the Jungian-trained psychiatrist Antony Storr as "coming to terms with oneself by means of reconciling the opposing factors within". He continues: "We are all divided selves, and that is part of the human condition. Neurotics, because of a deficiency in the controlling apparatus (a weak ego), suffer from neurotic symptoms, as we all may do at times. Creative people may be more divided than most of us, but, unlike neurotics, have a strong ego; and, although they may periodically suffer from neurotic symptoms, have an especial power of integrating opposites within themselves without recourse to displacement, denial, repression and other mechanisms of defence. Creative people, and potentially creative people, therefore, may suffer and be unhappy because of the divisions within them, but do not necessarily display neurosis."<sup>40</sup>

"Creative people," continues Storr, "show a wider than usual division in the mind, an accentuation of opposites. It seems probable that when creative people produce a new work they are in fact attempting to reconcile opposites in exactly the way Jung describes. Many of Jung's patients drew and painted so-called mandalas, circular forms which express and symbolise the union of opposites and the formation of this new centre of personality...

"Works of art have much in common with mandalas, just as mandalas can be regarded as primitive works of art. For the artist, the work of art serves the same purpose; that is, the union of opposites within himself, and the consequent integration of his own personality. Jung and his followers tend to describe the individuation process in terms of a once-for-all achievement, like maturity, or self-realisation, or self-actualisation, or genitality for that matter. But every experienced psychotherapist knows that personality development is a process which is never complete; and no sooner is a new integration achieved, a new mandala painted, than it is seen as inadequate. Another must follow which will include some other omitted element, or be a more perfect expression of the new insight."<sup>41</sup>

Then he explains why this artistic kind of integration is important for all of us: "By identifying ourselves, however fleetingly, with the creator, we can participate in the integrating process which he has carried out for himself. The more universal the problem with which the artist is dealing, the more universal the appeal. That is why the pursuit of the personal, the neurotic and the infantile in the work of artists is ultimately unrewarding, although it will always have some interest... The great creators, because their tensions are of universal rather than personal import, can appeal to all of us when they find, in their work, a new path of reconciliation."<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Storr, A., *The Dynamics of Creation*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1972, p. 229.

<sup>41</sup> Storr, *op. cit.*, pp. 233, 234-35.

<sup>42</sup> Storr, *op. cit.*, pp. 236, 237.

In conclusion, therefore, art gives us knowledge of the subconscious in three ways. First, it reveals the presence of a subconscious content in the way that a symptom unwittingly expresses an illness - this is the most primitive function of art, which likens it to dreams. Secondly, it names, objectifies and controls the subconscious content by expressing it in an artistic symbol, which thereby represents a union between conscious form and subconscious content (the Greek word symbole means "putting together"). And thirdly, it integrates and reconciles opposing elements of the subconscious, such as sex and aggression - this is Jung's main contribution to the theory of art.

In the next lecture I propose to discuss a fourth way in which art gives knowledge of the subconscious - *personification*, and to show how this method is applied in the most psychological art of - *drama*.

#### **4. PSYCHOLOGY, DRAMA AND HISTORY**

*Whose end, both at the first and now,  
was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the  
mirror up to nature; to show virtue  
her own feature, scorn her own image,  
and the very age and body of the time  
his form and pressure.*  
Hamlet.

In the last lecture, we discussed three ways in which the subconscious is objectively known through art: art as a symptom of the subconscious, art as an objectifying and controlling symbol of the subconscious, and art as a reconciling integrator of the subconscious. In this lecture we turn from the consideration of art in general to the examination of the art of drama in particular, and to a fourth way in which art gives knowledge of the subconscious - *personification*. We shall also be comparing the knowledge provided by drama with that provided by history.

Drama is the most complex of the ancient art forms. It contains elements of all the other arts - poetry, music, dance, poetry and sculpture. At the same time its form is very specific and not identical to that of any the other art form. The form of drama is a single unified action having, as Aristotle said, a beginning, a middle, and an end. The action of drama usually centres on the later part of the life of a great hero, such as Oedipus or Hamlet. Sometimes, however, it centres, not on a single individual, but rather on a whole society in a critical period of its history, as in Euripides' *The Trojans*.

Now Aristotle wrote that the function of the poet (by which he meant the dramatist) was to describe "the kind of things that might happen, that is, that could happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary".<sup>43</sup> So, beginning with an initial set of circumstances and characters, the dramatist strives to

*look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not.*  
Macbeth, I, 3.

The plot then unfolds in accordance with what seems, to the spectator, to be the strictest laws of psychological probability, until the apparently inevitable denouement. The effect is to give the spectators both aesthetic pleasure and the sense of having come to know a person - the individual hero or society that is the subject of the drama. We may say, therefore, that the content which is expressed in the dramatic art-form is the person.

---

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics*.

The interest of such a definition to psychologists is obvious. For, on the one hand, - as has been recognized by psychiatrists<sup>44</sup>, symbolic interactionists<sup>45</sup>, psychologists of skills<sup>46</sup> and phenomenological psychologists<sup>47</sup>, - the imaginative, dramatic anticipation of events and actions of both self and others is basic to everyday life. And on the other hand, the work of the dramatist as Aristotle defines it is surely what psychologists do or should be doing - that is, studying persons in their natural social settings and making predictions about them.

For let us suppose that a psychologist is presented with the task of understanding and predicting the actions of a modern-day Hamlet - perhaps the son of a famous politician whose father, the former prime minister of the country, has been killed and whose death the son wants to avenge. The psychologist may apply the whole armour of experimental, physiological, psychometric and psychotherapeutic techniques to this Hamlet-like figure. He may give him MMPIs and grid tests, study his extraversion and neuroticism, analyse his dreams and give him Rorschach tests, study the dynamics of his family and political relationships and the sociological structures in which he lives. In the end, however, in order to make all this information accessible and useful, he has to draw a picture of him in action; that is, he has to do essentially that which the dramatist does.

Now both psychologists and dramatists recognize the primacy of the category of action in the understanding of man. Of course, as we have already discussed at some length in the previous lectures, there are some psychologists who prefer to talk about behaviour rather than action, by which they mean action divorced from its motives and goals rather than action in the context of motives and goals. Today, however, there are few psychologists who would disagree with the fundamental postulate of drama, which is that a man is shown by his acting only in the context of the total action or drama, which includes not only his own motives and past actions, but also the motives and actions of all the people with whom he interacts. Thus we understand a man by seeing him act out his inner mental life in word and deed in interaction with the words and deeds of others.

\*

---

<sup>44</sup> Rioch, D.M., "Psychiatry as a Biological Science", *Psychiatry*, 1955, vol. 18, pp. 313-21.

<sup>45</sup> Hewitt, J., *Self and Society: A Symbolic Interactionist Social Psychology*, 1979, Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

<sup>46</sup> Neisser, U., "Toward a Skillful Psychology", in Rogers, D. & Sloboda, J.A. (eds.) *The Acquisition of Symbolic Skills*, New York: Plenum, 1983, pp. 1-17.

<sup>47</sup> Minchev, B., "Chuvstvo za Situatsia i Obraz na Situatsia vev Vsekiknevieto", *Bulgarsko Sisanie Po Psykholgia*, 1993, no. 1, pp. 24-35 (in Bulgarian).

However, before pursuing the analogy between psychology and drama in more detail, it will be useful to turn to another discipline which is similarly concerned with understanding human beings through their actions - history.

First let us consider whether history can be called scientific. The biologist Lewis Wolpert writes: "Is there anything more to successful science than common sense, and the pursuit of logical internal consistency and correspondence with the external world? My own view is that what I do really differs very little in essence from the work of a historian; a search for explanation and connection, the process of validation or verification, the falsification of ideas. What makes the study of history different is less the approach than the subject matter."<sup>48</sup> Thus the subject-matter of history is the life of persons, whereas the subject-matter of biology is life at the sub-personal level.

Now if science and history are so close, psychological science must be the closest of all, for its subject matter is the same as that of history - the actions and motivations of men. But if both history and psychology study human nature, and if they both use the methods of logical internal consistency and verification, why should there be any difference between them? And since there manifestly are important differences between them, does this not imply that one or other of the disciplines is wrongly conceived?

There are, I believe, three main differences between history and psychology. The first is that history is more concrete, being concerned first of all with individual men rather than universal laws of human nature. A historian like Thucydides may draw universal conclusions from his studies, but they are not essential to his work as a historian, being rather "the lessons of history". The second is that a historian, being concerned with the past rather than the present or future, cannot experiment on his subjects or make predictions about them. Or if he does make predictions, these, again, are not the essence of his work as a historian. And thirdly, the historian is much less inhibited than the (non-psychodynamic kind of) psychologist in making direct - that is, intuitive or empathic - inferences about the inner life of his subjects.

Indeed, some historians consider that making inferences about the inner life of men - that is, psychologizing - is the essence of history. Thus R.G. Collingwood argued that "whereas the right way of investigating nature is by the methods called scientific, the right way of investigating mind is by the methods of history". Therefore "the work which was to be done by the (seventeenth and eighteenth) science of human nature is actually done, and can only be done, by history".

---

<sup>48</sup> Wolpert, in Rassam, C., "A Tale of Two Cultures", *New Scientist*, 26 June, 1993, no. 1879, p. 31.



Consider, for example, the question: "Why did Brutus stab Caesar?" Now this question is psychological in form - it seems to be about the causes and effects of mental events. But it cannot be treated as a typical scientific question like "Why did that litmus paper turn pink?" For whereas the scientific question can be answered by generalizing it to the non-historical form: "On what kinds of occasions do pieces of litmus paper turn pink?", the psychological question is equivalent to: "What did Brutus think, which made him decide to stab Caesar?" - which can only be answered by means of a concrete historical inquiry. Therefore psychology cannot be a non-historical science in the way that physics and chemistry are: it can only be a science "which generalises from historical facts". Moreover, "in order to serve as data", these facts "must first be historically known; and historical knowledge is... the discerning of the thought which is the inner side of the event".

Collingwood goes on to criticize a false, positivist idea of history in a way that applies directly to certain similarly false conceptions of psychology: "The methods of modern historical inquiry have grown up under the shadow of their elder sister, the method of natural science; in some ways helped by its example, in other ways hindered. Throughout this essay it has been necessary to engage in a running fight with what may be called a positivistic conception, or rather misconception, of history, as the study of successive events in a dead past, events to be understood as the scientist understands events, by classifying them and establishing relations between the classes thus defined. This misconception is not only an endemic error in modern philosophical thought about history, it is also a constant peril to historical thought itself. So far as historians yield to it, they neglect their proper task of penetrating to the thought of the agents whose acts they are studying, and content themselves with determining the externals of these acts, the kind of things about them which can be studied statistically. Statistical research is for the historian a good servant but a bad master. It profits him nothing to make statistical generalisations, unless he can thereby detect the thoughts behind the facts about which he is generalising." <sup>49</sup>

In recent decades the deficiencies of the statistically oriented, anti-historical approach to psychology has been quite generally recognized by psychologists. One of the first to do so was the English personal construct psychologist Bannister (1975), who asked: "If we were to use biographies and autobiographies as a focus of study, a source of material and basis for argument in psychology, what effect would it have on our thinking as psychologists?" And in answer to this question, he suggests that we should probably become more sensitive to the following five issues:

1. "The shifts of a person over time and within circumstances - the whole man".

---

<sup>49</sup> Collingwood, R.G., *The Idea of History*, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 228; cf. Popper, K., *The Poverty of Historicism*, 1960, pp. 146-47.

2. "The significance of the differences in the contexts within which people live".

3. "The whole issue of whether formal psychology can be or ought to be impersonal while it is rightly struggling to be public".<sup>50</sup>

4. "The question of why people make choices", "the nature of major choices" and "the issue of consistency of choice throughout a person's life".

5. "The nature of the 'psychological' situation wherein one person is always seen through the eyes of another".<sup>51</sup>

However, we can do more than simply take biographies as "a source of material and basis for argument in psychology". For that implies that scientific psychology is still the primary way of learning about people, and that the study of history and biography is simply an aid to that primary discipline. I believe that we should be more humble and confess that scientific psychology has failed as a means of learning more about people, and that history and biography, and even the personality theory which is implicit in our ordinary, everyday language, have proved to be better means.

Thus Clarke writes: "The richest and most useful picture of human nature and action currently available is to be found outside the rigorous social sciences. The humanities, the helping professions, and the theory of action embodied in natural language, with its vocabulary of intention, feeling and thought, all subscribe to much the same picture of how people work. This is sometimes called the anthropomorphic model of man."<sup>52</sup>

History and biography employ this anthropomorphic model of man. And for purposes of prediction and understanding no other model has yet been found to better it. However, since what distinguishes history from "true" science, in the opinion of many, is its artistic element, we must return to the artistic methods of describing the nature of human beings, and especially to the most basic and important of such methods - that is, drama.

\*

Let us recall Aristotle's words that the function of the dramatist is to describe "the kind of things that might happen, that is, that could happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary". Now

---

<sup>50</sup> Glouberman, D., "Person Perception and Scientific Objectivity", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1973, no. 3, pp. 241-253.

<sup>51</sup> Bannister, D., "Biographies as a Source in Psychology", paper read at PPA Conference, in *Alternatives in Psychology*, London: Free Press, 1975.

<sup>52</sup> Clarke, D., *Language and Action*, Oxford: Pergamon, 1983, p. 2.

this dramatistic function, we noted, is basic not only to the very specialized domain of dramatic art, but also to everyday life and to psychology. We noted, moreover, that the plot of a good drama unfolds in accordance with what seems, to the spectator, to be the strictest laws of psychological probability, until the apparently inevitable denouement.

Psychological scientists may jibe at the use of the word "law" here. For what relationship has this kind of "law" to a "real" psychological law of behaviour? Very little, it is true. And yet that is not something to be greatly lamented. For the "real" psychological laws of behaviour are either too trivial or riddled with exceptions to be of interest, or psychophysical or physiological, as opposed to truly psychological in nature.

The actions of the heroes of great drama are lawful in a sense that is readily understandable to any theatre-goer. They are lawful in the sense that they conform with the inner logic or causality of life as lived in its concrete fulness. This lawfulness is, in Ricoeur's words, "the logic of subjective probability", which is not verified in the way that scientific laws are verified, but is validated, the validation being "an argumentative discipline comparable to the juridical procedures of legal interpretation".<sup>53</sup>

It is characteristic of this kind of lawfulness or logic that it is both determined and free. It is determined, on the one hand, because the actions of the characters grow out of their previous actions in a seemingly inevitable way. And it is free, on the other, because they are indeed felt to be the actions of free men, and not of animals or automata.

We might call this kind of law enactive, rather than descriptive or explanatory in the scientific sense. It is enactive laws that are needed in order to understand life, as opposed to mechanism; for, as Miller, Galanter and Pribram write, "life is more than a thing, an object, a substance that exists. It is also a process that is *enacted*. We have a choice in our approach to it. We can choose to describe it, or we can choose to re-enact it."<sup>54</sup> I would prefer to say that we describe life, as opposed to mechanism, by acting or re-enacting it in our mind's eye. For analytic description, as we have seen, is useless unless it can be projected or translated into a dramatic image. Thus to learn that a person is, for example, mildly extraverted and neurotic tells us very little about him unless we can imagine him expressing or acting out his extraversion and neuroticism in a concrete situation, with all the limitations on, and opportunities for, acting that such situations provide.

Now Freud said: "Our understanding reaches as far as our anthropomorphism." What did he mean by "anthropomorphism" here? I

---

<sup>53</sup> Freeman, M., *Rewriting the Self*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 163, 164.

<sup>54</sup> Miller, G.A., Galanter, E.A. & Pribram, K.H., *Plans and the Structure of Behavior*, New York: Holt-Dryden, 1960, p. 213. (Italics mine, V.M.).

believe that he meant something very close to the common-sense, "anthropomorphic model of man" which Clarke was quoted as referring to above. But in order to apply our "anthropomorphic model" in everyday life, we have to use the faculty of dramatic imagination and personification that we have been talking about. We can therefore interpret this sentence to mean that our understanding of ourselves as persons reaches as far as our ability to project images of our personhood in quasi-dramatic scenarios or roles, that is, to personify different aspects of our mental life and then let these role-images develop and interact on the internal stage of our minds.

The importance of dramatic imagination and personification has been recognized by psychologists of various theoretical approaches. Thus the English personal construct psychologist Mair defines personification as follows: "Personification involves treating events, experiences, things, feelings, as if they were persons with whom we are engaged in some kind of relationship. In using this metaphoric mode it is possible sometimes to 'enter' and sense as if from the 'inside', some of our experiences which may otherwise remain external to us, separated, little known or unthreateningly formulated.. In personification we are attempting to penetrate a mystery by using the form of the mystery itself... It is often readily possible for people to formulate aspects of their awareness as if different sub-selves were involved."<sup>55</sup>

It follows that the art of the dramatist is simply the elaboration and perfection of an ability that is common to us all and is basic to our understanding of ourselves. We are persons, not animals or automata. Therefore we can understand our personhood only by personalizing its elements. To use any other method is ultimately to depersonalize and dehumanize ourselves. Thus we "penetrates the mystery" of our being, as Mair says, "by using the form of the mystery itself".

\*

Another theoretical approach which attaches importance to the concept of personification and which is congruent with the argument that I am developing, is that of symbolic interactionism as represented by the work of such thinkers as George Herbert Mead and John Hewitt.

Central to the symbolic interactionist approach, as to mine, is the concept of the act. The act, according to Mead, encompasses much more than physical actions; it begins in an impulse and proceeds via the perception of objects and manipulation, i.e. overt action, towards its consummation, i.e. adjustment to the social consequences of the act. In a similar way, the action of drama begins with an impulse and proceeds via perception and overt climactic action to a final chorus or cathartic resolution.

---

<sup>55</sup> Mair, J., "Metaphors for Living", *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 1975, pp. 48, 51, 52.

Personification becomes important in the perceptual phase of the act, when the actor has to make a symbolic representation of his environment and anticipate several possible scenarios of action - both his own actions and those of others. Thus Hewitt (1979) writes: "How could the individual anticipate his own acts? From the perspective of an individual organism, the world is outside itself, and the organism is not part of that world at all - it merely responds to and acts on it. Thus, in saying that the individual would have to anticipate his own actions - and see them in relation to the actions of others - we seem to be imposing an impossible requirement.

"But not quite. For the individual does have access to a means of anticipating his own conduct, for visualizing himself as a part of his environment, and for seeing his own acts in relation to those of his fellows. That means is the symbolic designation of others and self..

"By naming group members and themselves, individuals accomplish the feat of importing the social process within the individual mind. As individuals engage in social activity, then, each can represent that activity within his own mind, and act according to how he thinks others will act. Indeed, not only does the individual represent the activities of the group as a whole and imagine various scenarios taking place, but he also interacts with himself. This can be accomplished because the act of giving himself the name that others give him also has the result of constituting the individual as an object in his own world. The individual does not merely represent a world of social objects - people - of which he is a part, but he acts towards (and interacts with) those objects, including himself."<sup>56</sup>

Mead introduced the important concepts of role-taking and role-making. Role-taking takes place when an individual self-consciously views himself from the standpoint of others, whether a specific individual, or a whole group to which the individual belongs. "Role-taking," writes Hewitt, "implies role-making. The sense of group structure that is created as individuals view their own acts from the perspective of others helps people to make roles for themselves that 'fit' the roles of others in the situation... The common place image of people in society as 'playing' roles - imagery used by sociologists and laymen alike - can be somewhat misleading. The father in his family and the physician in her practice do not 'read their lines' or enact the requirements of a rigidly defined social role in a mechanical or fully determined way. Rather they engage in social acts in countless situations. As they do, they take the role of others toward themselves and make role performances to match. They have ideas, to be sure, about how the script should be written as they go along, and they derive these ideas from the definition of the situation in which they find themselves as well as from remembering previous such situations. In this restricted sense, then, people may 'read lines' they have

---

<sup>56</sup> Hewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 58.

previously written. Even so, each time people interact they write the script anew, even if they use lines from previous performances. Thus, it is more accurate to speak of role-making than of role-playing."<sup>57</sup>

This emphasis on the creative nature of role-making or personification is a valuable corrective to the usual view, and a point that I shall be returning to frequently in these lectures. For, as John Morris has pointed out, social interaction does not consist entirely of routines or rituals, in which we are to a large extent actors acting out a predetermined script: it also consists of dramas in which we have to make up the script as we go along - and change ourselves in the process.<sup>58</sup> Thus man is not only an actor: he is also, and primarily, a dramatist.

In the following lectures I shall be turning to the greatest of all dramatists, Shakespeare, in order to learn not only what insights he provides into the nature of man the dramatist, but also how he used the form of drama to know and change the content of his own personality.

---

<sup>57</sup> Hewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>58</sup> Morris, "Three Aspects of the Person in Social Life", in Ralph Ruddock, *Six Approaches to the Person*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972.

## **5. SHAKESPEAREAN PSYCHODRAMA**

*The play's the thing,  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.*  
Hamlet II, 2.

In the last two lectures, we discussed several different ways in which art gives us psychological knowledge - knowledge that empirical science cannot provide us with. And in the last lecture we paid particular attention to personification - that is, the faculty of creating imaginary scenarios of action - in both the art of drama and on the stage of our everyday mental life. In this lecture I want to study one concrete case in some detail - the life and work of Shakespeare. I shall try to demonstrate that Shakespeare used the techniques of his art, and in particular personification, not only in order to earn his living as a dramatist but also in order to understand the mystery of his own personality and in some degree to change it. I have called this "Shakespearean psychodrama" because of the obvious analogy between what Shakespeare is trying to do and the psychotherapeutic technique of psychodrama as developed by J.L. Moreno; but I shall try to show that Shakespearean psychodrama has close analogies with other kinds of therapy and theoretical approaches.

We may begin with a speech by Shakespeare's King Richard II from the play of the same name, in which Richard very vividly describes the process of personification. It begins as follows:

*I have been studying how I may compare  
This prison where I live unto the world;  
And, for because the world is populous  
And here is not a creature but myself,  
I cannot do it. Yet I'll hammer it out.  
My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,  
My soul the father; and these two beget  
A generation of still-breeding thoughts,  
And these same thoughts people this little world,  
In humours like the people of this world,  
For no thought is contented...*

Richard II, V, 5.

Thus instead of "all the world's a stage", the basic text of sociological role theory and of those who define man in terms of the tasks he carries out or the roles he performs, we have here: "this stage is all my world". That is, the possibilities of personhood are defined, not by the stage of the external world, and the roles which the external world and other people impose on a man, but by the inner stage of his imagination, where his will is free. This major postulate of what we may call psychological, as opposed to sociological role

theory is, of course, at the same time a major thesis of existentialist philosophy. For, as the existentialist philosopher John Macquarrie writes: "Man is more than the tasks he performs and the roles he plays. He is the unity of a person who expresses himself in all these activities. His actions are more than empirically observable deeds, for in them he is both projecting and realising an image of personhood."<sup>59</sup>

Now at this point in the play King Richard has just lost his main sociological role, his kingship, in the context of which he constructed most of his psychological roles and image of himself. Therefore he must in a sense create or recreate himself, imagine what he might be or become in the completely new and shattering circumstances in which he finds himself. And these possible "images of personhood" he calls "still-breeding thoughts" which are "not contented". They are "still-breeding" because they are dynamic; and they are dynamic because they are images of action. And, being images of action, they are "not contented" because no action comes to rest until it has attained its goal. And what are these "thoughts"? Thoughts of "things divine" (how to save his soul). Thoughts "tending to ambition" (how to break out of prison and regain his kingdom). Thoughts "tending to content" (how to remain in prison and renounce all further attempts at the throne).

Richard continues:

*Thus play I in one person many people,  
And none contented. Sometimes am I king;  
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,  
And so I am. Then crushing penury  
Persuades me I was better when a king;  
Then am I king'd again; and by and by  
Think I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,  
And straight am nothing...*

Each personification is examined for its potential benefits and pitfalls. Thus each of the two major roles (in the psychological, rather than the sociological sense) of king and pauper are imaginatively projected into the future, and each is found to lead to undesirable likely ends - dethronement by the hated Bolingbroke, in the one scenario, and "crushing penury", in the other. Therefore a third scenario involving the renunciation of all scenarios, all goal-oriented action, is contemplated; for, says Richard,

*whate'er I be,  
Nor I, nor any man that but man is,  
With nothing shall be pleased till he be eas'd  
With being nothing.*

Richard II, V, 5.

---

<sup>59</sup> Macquarrie, J. *Existentialist Philosophy*, 1973, p. 137.



Thus the renunciation of action logically leads to the annihilation of personality. Conversely, however, personality begins with personification, with the imagination of possible actions leading to desired or hated goals.

Now ordinary life involves the enactment of many, often conflicting, scenarios of action. Experience of conflict in turn modifies the imagination and enactment of these scenarios. Through personification, therefore, personality develops and self-knowledge is acquired. Thus by slightly altering the situation in which the personified trait plays its part, or by changing the mix of other traits with which it is combined, a deeper, subtler and more practical understanding of the trait is obtained. There is, for example, a progressive widening and deepening in Shakespeare's portrayal of jealousy from Troilus in *Troilus and Cressida* to Othello in *Othello* to Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In the first play the bitterness of the emotion is well expressed, but little more is learned. In the second, we learn how much it is bound up with self-love and "honour", and therefore how blind it often is. In the third, we see how by the loss of "honour" and the humbling of self-love it can be entirely purged. Thus personification pursued in a purposive and artistic manner can give us knowledge both of what we feel and how we can change our feelings by projecting their possible scenarios. It can not only locate the boil, as it were, but also show us how to lance it.

\*

Before going on to consider how Shakespeare employed personification in order to understand his own personality, let us consider what analogous techniques there are in the psychological literature.

By the term "repetition compulsion", Freud referred to the psychological need to re-enact highly disturbing experiences.<sup>60</sup> Erikson describes it as follows: "The individual unconsciously arranges for variations of an original theme which he has not learned either to overcome or to live with." He comes to master the situation and integrate the experience into his personality by "meeting it repeatedly and of his own accord".<sup>61</sup>

We have already mentioned Moreno's technique of psychodrama, which aims to change a man's perception of himself by means of his acting out a role which either mimics his own life-role, or is a reversal or a parody of it.<sup>62</sup> Many of Shakespeare's characters practise psychodrama in relation to others, such as Hamlet in "the play within the play" or the Fool in *King Lear*. We see something similar in a psychotherapeutic technique invented by George

---

<sup>60</sup> Freud, S., *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, London: Hogarth, 1950, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Erikson, E.H., *Childhood and Society*, New York: Norton, 1950, p. 189.

<sup>62</sup> Sillamy, N., "Psychodrame", *Dictionnaire de Psychologie*, 1980, vol. 2, Paris: Bordas (in French).

Kelly<sup>63</sup> and described by Radley as follows: "In order to encourage an individual to spell out the detail of a role which he has failed to consider, or to explore alternatives to those he currently plays, Kelly outlined the technique of controlled elaboration. This technique involves asking the person to spell out in detail how, for example, his life would have been different if he had been cast in a different role from the one in which he now finds himself. In this way he may be encouraged to elaborate alternatives to those roles which he currently plays, e.g. how would he have acted if he had been a strong (as opposed to a weak) person? Kelly's technique of controlled elaboration and Sarbin & Jones' role-playing method are both based upon the proposition that the person may change himself through elaborating roles which he does not currently play... The covert sketching out of what he might do or become is an active process made possible by his assumption of the perspective which that alternative offers."<sup>64</sup>

Bonarius has described a development of this technique called "fixed-role therapy", in which the client, after giving the therapist a characterization of himself, is given a new role to act by him. This role, while not diametrically opposite to his former one, is nevertheless significantly different in certain respects; it is at 90 degrees to the former one, as it were. This role is rehearsed with the therapist, then acted in real life, and finally altered again by the therapist in view of his client's experiences, until a viable new life-style is achieved.<sup>65</sup>

It will be immediately obvious that this kind of therapy is very close to the theatre, and that the therapist's art is a combination of the skills of dramatist, director, actor and dramatic critic.

The first stage in the process is similar to the first stage in any act of artistic creation: a receptive, intuitive contemplation of reality, which is immediately transformed into a mental image of that reality. In this case, the therapist forms an image of the client's present role in life on the basis of the client's own self-description. The next stage - the imagination of a new fixed role for the client by the therapist - is still more obviously artistic. For the creation of a new role in life with all that that entails with regard to relations with parents, spouse, friends, enemies and his old self, can only be the product of the dramatic imagination. Thirdly, the rehearsal of the client's new role with him is nothing more nor less than the director's art. Fourthly, the acting out of the role in real life is clearly the actor's art. And finally, the critical re-appraisal of the client's performance in his new role is the dramatic critic's contribution.

---

<sup>63</sup> Kelly, G.A., *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, New York: Norton, 1955.

<sup>64</sup> Radley, A.R., "The Effect of Role-Enactment on Construed Alternatives", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1974, vol. 47, p. 313.

<sup>65</sup> Bonarius, J.C.J., "Fixed Role Therapy: A Double Paradox", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1970, vol. 43, pp. 213-219.

It is in this context that the truth of Macmurray's remark is evident: "Art includes and uses science, and... is the master for whom science toils."<sup>66</sup>

\*

I turn now to the question of how Shakespeare set about personifying the elements of his personality in his art and thereby changing them. The approach I shall adopt involves studying only Shakespeare's art, with a minimum of attention paid to the facts of Shakespeare's biography. Since this exclusion of biographical material may seem strange to some, it requires some preliminary justification.

An obvious negative reason for this approach is that very little is in fact known about Shakespeare's life. We know that he was born in Stratford in 1564; married a woman named Anna some six years older than himself; had a son called Hamlet; moved to London, where he had a career as an actor-dramatist; and returned to Stratford in about 1613, dying some years later. That is just about all we know; and while some of these meagre facts, such as the name of his son, are intriguing, they hardly constitute a basis on which to build a character-portrait.

So we have to resort to the art. But at this point we can take one of two approaches to the art. Either we approach it in a philistine way, not as art, but as a source of biographical material; or in an artistic way, as the form of self-expression chosen by the artist himself and therefore likely to be much more revealing than any amount of biographical material - but only if it is understood first in its own terms.

Now it is an unfortunate fact that psychologists have almost always approached art in the former way - that is, as no more than a source of biographical material. A typical example is the work of the psychoanalyst Ernest Jones on *Hamlet*. He began from the premise that the character of Hamlet was a more or less direct expression of the personality of Shakespeare, went on to speculate that Shakespeare, like Hamlet, had an adulterous mother, and concluded that Shakespeare had an Oedipus complex.

The psychoanalytic approach has proved difficult to shake off. Thus Carrere points out that "the psychological literature dealing explicitly with tragedy is scarce and entirely psychoanalytic in its focus."<sup>67</sup>

Now as we have already seen, in our discussion of Freud, it is impossible to make direct inferences from the content of a work of art to the artist's

---

<sup>66</sup> Macmurray, J., *Reason and Emotion*, London: Faber, 1935.

<sup>67</sup> Carrere, R., "Psychology of Tragedy: A Phenomenological Analysis", paper read at the Fifth International Human Science Research Conference, May, 1986, Berkeley, Ca., p. 1.

personality. The relationship between art and life is much more complex and profound than that. Thus Wellek & Warren write: "One cannot, from fictional statements, especially those made in plays, draw any valid inference as to the biography of a writer. One may gravely doubt even the usual view that Shakespeare passed through a period of depression, in which he wrote his tragedies and his bitter comedies, to achieve some serenity of resolution in *The Tempest*. It is not self-evident that a writer needs to be in a tragic mood to write tragedies or that he writes comedies when he feels pleased with life. There is simply no proof for the sorrows of Shakespeare... The relation between the private life and the work is not a simple relation of cause and effect."<sup>68</sup>

Wellek & Warren continue: "The biographical approach ignores also quite simple psychological facts. A work of art may rather embody the 'dream' of an author than his actual life, or it may be the 'mask', the 'anti-self' behind which his real person is hiding, or it may be a picture of the life from which the author wants to escape. Furthermore, we must not forget that the artist may experience life differently in terms of his art: actual experiences are seen with a view to their use in literature and come to him already partially shaped by artistic traditions and preconceptions."<sup>69</sup>

We may agree, then, that there is no direct causal relationship between Shakespeare and his work; for the relationship between an artist and his art is one of intentionality in the phenomenological sense rather than causality. We may also agree that elements of Shakespeare's art may rather express his mask or anti-self than his true self; for he may be "trying out" roles that differ from his true personality, as in fixed-role therapy, in order to test the possibilities and limits of what he might be able to do in real life. Thus in describing Othello's murder of Desdemona Shakespeare is exploring one possible scenario his sexual pride and jealousy; while in describing how Antony forgave Cleopatra he is exploring another possible scenario - both plays being essential stages in his quest for self-knowledge and self-therapy.

My approach to Shakespeare is based on two hypotheses. First, that the purpose of his art was to understand and change himself by means of a sublime form of psychodrama or fixed-role therapy. And secondly, that the plots and main characters of all his major plays are variations on a single "myth" or "paradigm" by means of which he was trying to understand himself.

The initial clue to this paradigm was given me to me by the poet Ted Hughes, who postulated that the basic Shakespearean "myth" is to be found in a combination of the plots of Shakespeare's two early narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* (1592) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1593). "In the first [poem] a love-

---

<sup>68</sup> Wellek, R. & Warren, A., *Theory of Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1963, pp. 76-77.

<sup>69</sup> Wellek & Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

goddess - the love-goddess - tries to rape Adonis, a severely puritan youth. In the second, the lust-possessed king, Tarquin, rapes the severely puritan young wife, Lucrece.<sup>70</sup> The link between the two poems is the wild boar that kills Adonis, which, according to Hughes, symbolizes Shakespeare's "own repressed lust - crazed and bestialized by being separated from his intelligence and denied. The Venus which he refused became a demon and supplanted his consciousness."<sup>71</sup> The result is that Adonis becomes Tarquin and rapes Lucrece.

That Shakespeare feared that he was, or might become a Tarquin is evident from his *Sonnets*:

*Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,  
Which like two angels do suggest me still;  
The better angel is a man right fair,  
The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.  
To win me soon to hell, my female evil  
Tempteth my better angel from my side,  
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,  
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.  
And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend,  
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;  
But being both from me, both to each friend,  
I guess one angel in another's hell.  
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,  
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.*

Sonnet 144

The *Sonnets* date from about the same time as *Hamlet*, that is, 1600; and we may speculate that at about this time Shakespeare suffered some personal tragedy - perhaps a failed love-affair - which, on the one hand, reactivated the myth about Tarquin in his imagination, giving it a greater depth and resonance; and, on the other hand, demanded that he construct what was for him a new art form - tragedy - in which to comprehend the personal tragedy that was testing his personality to the limit. For, as Carrere points out, "[personal] tragedy is straining, for it demands that the participant act, feel, think in ways for which he or she is psychologically unprepared."<sup>72</sup>

Now if we look at the plot of *Hamlet* we can see immediately that it is a variation on the combined plots of *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. It begins with a wife's perceived betrayal of her husband, to which her son reacts with puritanical disgust. Here the wife, Gertrude, is clearly in the role of Venus, while her son, Hamlet, is in the role of Adonis. Then he learns that

---

<sup>70</sup> Hughes, T., *A Choice of Shakespeare's Verse*, London: Faber, 1971, p. 189.

<sup>71</sup> Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>72</sup> Carrere, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

his mother's lover has murdered his father. He decides on revenge, and eventually succeeds, but at the price of the deaths of himself, his mother and his girlfriend Ophelia. Thus by the end of the play Hamlet has become Tarquin, while Gertrude and Ophelia have taken the role of Lucrece. This analysis solves one of the major problems in the interpretation of Hamlet - his cruel treatment of the innocent Ophelia. The explanation lies in the fact that Hamlet sees Ophelia as being as lustful as his mother because they are of the same sex - "frailty, thy name is woman". For him she is an embodiment of Venus, and is therefore subjected to a kind of rape, turning her into Lucrece.<sup>73</sup>

Having established that the plot of *Hamlet*, - which most commentators agree is Shakespeare's most personal play, - is a variation on the central myth or paradigm, the next step is to consider whether it has any close structural similarities to the surface plots of the other major plays. We might then be in a position to infer the existence of a psychological "deep structure" which underlies all the plays. And indeed, if we compare the plot of *Hamlet* with the plots of all the plays he wrote in his greatest, tragic period from 1600 to 1607, with only the partial exception of *Macbeth*, we find that sexual betrayal is the main or a subsidiary theme.

Only in *Hamlet* and *Lear* is this theme linked with parent-child relationships. So, contrary to the psychoanalytic hypothesis, we have no firm evidence for such a linkage in the "deep structure" of Shakespeare's personality. But there is the clear suggestion that Shakespeare has a sexual problem, the symptoms of which are to be found especially in *Lear*'s and *Timon*'s ferocious invectives against lust. The evidence becomes compelling if we include the Dark Lady *Sonnets* and "the distinctive structure of imagery"<sup>74</sup> which, from *Venus and Adonis* onwards, links lust with gluttony, avarice and murder.

This "structuralist" approach to Shakespeare may be compared with the structuralist study of myth and totems as practised by Levi-Strauss. As Levi-Strauss's interpreter, Leach writes: "Considered as individual items of culture a totemic ritual or myth is syntagmatic - it consists of a sequence of details linked together in a chain; animals and men are apparently interchangeable, Culture and Nature are confused. But if we take a whole set of such rituals and myths and superimposed one upon another, then a paradigmatic-metaphoric pattern is seen to emerge - it becomes apparent that the variations of what happens to the animals are algebraic transformations of the variations of what happens to men."<sup>75</sup> The variations of what happens to Shakespeare's tragic heroes in relation to their lovers are "algebraic transformations" of what happened to Shakespeare himself in relation to the Dark Lady; while the

---

<sup>73</sup> Moss, A.E.St.G., "Hamlet and Role-Construct Theory", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1974, vol. 47, pp. 253-264.

<sup>74</sup> Clemens, W.H., *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery*, London: Methuen, 1951.

<sup>75</sup> Leach, E., *Levi-Strauss*, London: Fontana, 1970, pp. 49-50.

general relationship of Culture to Nature in myth is paralleled by that of Art to Life in *The Complete Works*.

Now according to Levi-Strauss, the purpose of myth is to provide a logical model capable of overcoming a contradiction.<sup>76</sup> The purpose of Shakespeare's "myth" is to overcome the contradiction between love and lust<sup>77</sup>:

*Love surfeits not: Lust like a glutton dies.  
Love is all truth: Lust full of forged lies.*

Venus and Adonis, 803.

The great tragedies from *Hamlet* on may be construed as successively more accurate and profound attempts to represent what happens when Venus gets under the skin of Adonis, when Shakespearean man's "bad angel" fires his good one out. The plot of *Hamlet* is a "syntagm", as Levi-Strauss would say, of this basic "paradigmatic-metaphoric pattern", with Hamlet playing the roles of Adonis and Tarquin, Gertrude the role of Venus, and Ophelia the role of Lucrece. All the other tragic heroes are embodiments of Adonis and/or Tarquin (in Macbeth's case, purged of the specifically sexual element); while the tragic heroines are embodiments of Venus and/or Lucrece.

The climax is reached in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in which a third stage is added to the plot: the mutual reconciliation and redemption of Adonis-Tarquin and Venus-Lucrece, and the purification of lust through self-sacrificial love. Antony (Adonis-Tarquin) and Cleopatra (Venus-Lucrece) undergo a kind of death and resurrection in the form of the chaste lovers of Shakespeare's third and last narrative poem, *The Phoenix and the Turtle*:

*Death is now the turtle's nest;  
And the turtle's loyal breast  
To eternity doth rest  
Leaving no posterity -  
'Twas not their infirmity,  
It was married chastity.*

The Phoenix and the Turtle, 56.

Now I have argued that Shakespeare's dilemma was not only sexual, as Hughes argues, and revolved round other archetypes than those of the lover and his victim. I have argued that the major archetypes in Shakespeare's plays are those of the lover, who is perceived as veering between the emotional poles or personal constructs of lust and chastity, the soldier, who veers

---

<sup>76</sup> Compare the idea, discussed above, that the purpose of the symbol is to reconcile opposites (Jung, C.G., *Psychological Types*, London: Kegan Paul, 1946, pp. 326, 313).

<sup>77</sup> Compare the comment of the poet W.B. Yeats that for every man there is one particular myth "which, if we but knew it, would make us understand all he did and thought" ("At Stratford-on-Avon", in *Essays and Introductions*, New York: Macmillan, 1961, p. 107)

between pride and humility, and the justicer, who veers between mercy and revenge. In addition to these there are two "metapsychological" archetypes that subsume all the others and put the player in relation to the off-stage realities - the creator (dream-reality) and the creature (noise-harmony).<sup>78</sup>

Having said this, it is nevertheless obvious that the sexual conflict is central; and I accept that the myth which Hughes constructs out of the two early narrative poems is indeed the central matrix, as it were, of the whole of Shakespeare's output. However, I hope it is clear that I am not here reducing the universality of Shakespeare's art, in Freudian fashion, to simple sex and aggression. On the contrary: I am trying to show how the universality of his art grows out of the attempt to understand these personal dilemmas by dramatizing or personifying them in symbolic forms. For it is through this painful process of the artist's trying to understand his personal dilemmas in symbols that his art acquires a universal stature.

---

<sup>78</sup> Moss, A.E.St.G., "Shakespeare and Role-Construct Therapy", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1974, vol. 47, pp. 235-252; "Drama as the Deep Structure of Psychology", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Surrey, 1978; "Towards a More Literate Psychology", *Constructive Criticism: A Journal of Construct Psychology and the Arts*, December, 1991, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 214-265.



## **6. THE DRAMATIC IMAGE OF MAN**

*Every individual human being, one may say,  
carries within him, potentially and  
prescriptively, an ideal man, the archetype  
of a human being, and it is his life's task  
to be, through all his changing  
manifestations, in harmony with the  
unchanging unity of this ideal.*  
Schiller.

In an earlier lecture, we examined how Shakespeare used his drama in order to explore his personality and try to change it. The process of dramatic imagination is, of course, free and creative; no scientist has traced, or ever will trace, a causal chain between Shakespeare's personal life, his desire to understand it, and the *Complete Works*. The most we can do is look back from the works to the emotions and problems they try to express and resolve; and this is what we did. Thus we traced, not a line of empirical causation, but a channel of artistic expression and exploration, between the dramatist and his works. And in so doing we provided some confirmation for the central postulate of Kelly's theory of personal constructs: "A person's processes [e.g. his artistic creativity] are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events."<sup>79</sup>

In this lecture, I want to turn away for the time being from the process of dramatic imagination and personification in order to focus on the finished product of that process, the script and its roles, and in particular on the nature of a dramatic role as it is in itself - the role, that is, not as a persona which faces towards the audience (this is the aspect which sociologists have especially seized upon), but rather as an image of the person or ideal of personhood.

Now the striking thing about a famous dramatic role - Hamlet, for example - is that although he is a fictional character who exists, strictly speaking, only in the words and actions that are contained in the script, our response to him presupposes the existence of a person who has metaphysical depth, that is, who projects himself as existing, like any real person, well beyond the words and actions that we read in the script or perceive on the stage.

Indeed, dramatic characters can appear more substantial and alive than people in real life. For, as Langer points out, characters and their situations in drama "become visible on the stage, transparent and complete, as their analogues in the world are not".<sup>80</sup> She then cites the German critic Peter

---

<sup>79</sup> Kelly, G.A., *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, New York: Norton, 1955.

<sup>80</sup> Langer, S., *Feeling and Form*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953.

Richard Rohden: "What distinguishes a character on stage from a 'real' person? Obviously the fact that the former stands before us as a fully articulated whole. Our fellowmen we always perceive only in a fragmentary fashion, and our power of self-observation is usually reduced, by vanity and cupidity, to zero. What we call 'dramatic illusion' is, therefore, the paradoxical phenomenon that we know more about the mental processes of a Hamlet than about our own inner life. For the poet-actor Shakespeare shows not only the deed, but also its motives, and indeed more perfectly than we ever see them together in actual life."<sup>81</sup>

Thus corresponding to the dramatist's act of creative imagination, which creates the words and actions of his hero, there is the audience's act of creative imagination, whereby it "fills out", as it were, these words and actions, and makes out of them a lifelike person - while at the same time being fully aware that this person does not exist in reality. We shall return to the subject of the audience's empathic imagination in a later lecture. For the time being it is sufficient to point to the fact that the dramatist's creations can be no less lifelike, and even more lifelike, than people in everyday life. Thus the English Queen Elizabeth I was so convinced of the reality of Falstaff in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* that she demanded to know how he would behave when in love, thereby providing the stimulus for the writing of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Again, Russian intellectuals of the nineteenth century went to Dostoyevsky's novels to discover their own selves, so accurate and profound and lifelike were the great novelist's creations.

Let us recall Aristotle's dictum that the function of the poet is to describe "the kinds of things that might happen, that is, that could happen because they are, in the circumstances, either probable or necessary". Shakespeare's portrayal of, for example, Iago extends the range of our psychological knowledge by showing how behaviour which might at first seem very improbable - mere "motiveless malignity", in Coleridge's phrase - is made to seem very probable (if not necessary) by Shakespeare's artistry. Thus we may conclude that the characters in drama do indeed "project images of personhood", persons who, though fictional and far from ordinary, are felt by the spectators to be even more real and faithful to the quality of life as lived than the people they meet in everyday life.

\*

Now this has important consequences for our understanding of man in general. It is not that one wishes to resemble any literary character or role in its content, for every person is essentially unique. It is rather that the finished, formal quality of a role, the way in which each word and action is expressive of the role's essence without any distractions or irrelevancies, may serve as a

---

<sup>81</sup> Rohden, in Langer, *op. cit.*

model or ideal of personality development, and, to a certain degree, the goal of psychotherapy.

Let us examine this idea of the "essence" of a role more closely. When we talk about the "essence" of a role, and of its words and actions being relevant or irrelevant to it, we seem to be implying that the essence exists in some sense independently of the words and actions, which might be called its "accidents". The image that springs to mind is one of a painter painting a portrait from a model. The model exists independently of the portrait, and the painter tries to capture the essence of the model on canvas. All the colours and brushstrokes must be directly expressive of this essence without any distractions or irrelevancies. A photograph differs from a portrait in that many of the details on the photograph are inevitably irrelevant and to some degree distracting. The portrait is superior because it can eliminate these irrelevancies and highlight the significant features - the shape of the mouth, the expression of the eyes, the strength of the hands - which "give away" the interior essence.

Drama differs from portraiture in that there exists no independently existing model whose essence the dramatist is trying to portray. And even if memories of real people (including, of course, himself) enter into the dramatist's creative processes, the person that emerges in the finished role will be different from any living person. Moreover, the dramatist does not first imagine the essence of a person and then try to express this essence in words and actions. He probably has some vague idea of what the person is like, of the plot and some of the words. But it is only in the process of giving precision to these vague ideas that the dramatist understands who in fact he is portraying. In a real sense Shakespeare did not know who Hamlet was until he had created him. The essence of the role and the words and actions that express this essence emerged at the same time and in a process of inextricably mutual interaction or influence.

In real life, there is also a sense in which we make ourselves up as we go along. John Shotter put it as follows: "Man is a self-defining animal".<sup>82</sup> He is self-defining, Shotter argues, because he is a free agent who reveals his character not only in space, but also through time. When we act we make a choice out of several alternative futures. At the moment of choice the future is truly indeterminate - it exists only as an imagined possibility of action, or scenario. But when we have acted the future is determined - we ourselves have determined it. And that action then becomes a definite part of our selves and our self-images. "In an indeterminate world," writes Shotter, "man's central task becomes that of giving form to the act of living itself; it is up to him to imagine new possibilities for being human, new ways of how to live, and to attempt to realize them in practice - and this is essentially a moral (and a political) task, not just an intellectual one. It is as we pass from aspiration to

---

<sup>82</sup> Shotter, J., *Images of Man in Psychological Research*, London: Methuen, 1975, p. 132.

achievement, from possibility to actuality, that we express ourselves; time is thus the essential psychological medium."<sup>83</sup>

Thus we both express our already existing selves, and, at least in part, create ourselves anew, through our freely willed actions. Our actions proceed from our characters, not as an effect from a cause, but as the form of a work of art from the content it expresses. For a content does not cause a form; as we saw in the third lecture, it is revealed and shaped and changed by the form - or, more precisely, by the creative ego that gives form to, or informs the content.

The revelatory aspect of action - the fact that action is not only informed by knowledge but also produces knowledge - is described by Shotter as follows: "Through taking action we acquire knowledge of both what is 'inside' and 'outside' us; the one being reciprocally determined in relation to the other." Moreover, since "a man acts in relation to others, [and] is a person in a community of persons,... it is only in the personal relation of persons that personal existence comes into being... Their personae as individual personalities, the knowledge of the 'positions' that they may assume in their community, their knowledge of their selves, is something they acquire after birth, in the course of communicative exchanges with others."<sup>84</sup>

In action, therefore, we gain an experiential - we might almost say: experimental - knowledge of ourselves and our environment, of what we can do and what we cannot do, of who others are and who we are in relation to them. We come to action with an already formed representation of the world and our place in it, together with a set of plans of action that fit in with this picture - what Chein calls "a developing and continuing set of unending, interlocking, interdependent, and mutually modifying long range enterprises."<sup>85</sup> As a result of our actions, however, this picture of the world and ourselves is somewhat modified, together with our set of short- and long-term plans and scenarios - what E. Moss calls "the anticipating self".<sup>86</sup> Hence our sense of who we are and who we might become is constantly changing as a result of the interaction between the actions that do depend on us and the reactions (of other people and the environment) which do not depend on us. By orienting ourselves in anticipation and freedom of choice towards an unknown future, we change the present and modify our understanding of the past - it is in this respect that human action is truly constructive of the self.<sup>87</sup>

Now drama greatly heightens our sense of the constructive capacities of the self - in other words, our moral responsibility - by concentrating on the

---

<sup>83</sup> Shotter, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>84</sup> Shotter, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>85</sup> Chein, I., *The Image of Man and the Science of Behaviour*, London: Tavistock, 1972, p. 289.

<sup>86</sup> Moss, E.H.St.G., *Seeing Man Whole*, Lewes: The Book Guild, 1989.

<sup>87</sup> Shotter, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

depiction of events and actions that result in great changes in self and self-perception. Most of the actions that we undertake in everyday life, while certainly free and the result of freely willed choices, are essentially routine - putting on our clothes in the morning, for example, or going shopping. Drama, on the other hand, does not portray these routine actions unless they have a particular significance in showing a change in self. Thus when Richard II asks for a mirror it does not have the same significance as it might do when dressing himself on an ordinary morning, but rather points to the fact that the face he sees, while externally the same, hides a quite different interior - it is the face, not of a king, but a deposed king. The major events of drama are ones that have a shattering impact on their heroes - the appearance of a ghost, for example, or the announcement of a defeat in battle. When we say that such events are dramatic, we mean, not simply that they are exciting, but that they form the stuff of drama as an artistic form. They are the events which set off the action, which in turn stimulates self-knowledge and growth.

We are now in a better position to understand the importance that Aristotle attaches to the plot of tragic drama - that is, the major events of drama taken as a single whole - as opposed to other elements such as character. Thus he writes in the *Poetics*: "The most important is the plot, the ordering of the incidents; for tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life, of happiness and unhappiness - and happiness and unhappiness are bound up with action. The purpose of living is an end which is a kind of activity, not a quality; it is their characters, indeed, that make men what they are, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Tragedies are not performed, therefore, in order to represent character, although character is involved for the sake of action."

By saying that action, not character, is the subject of tragedy, Aristotle is pointing out: first, that human nature is a dynamic process, not a static trait or collection of traits; secondly, that human nature cannot be known unless it is expressed in action - "a man cannot be shown without acting", as the Greek Father St. John Chrysostom put it<sup>88</sup>; and thirdly, that man moulds and changes his own nature in and through his actions. Thus by the end of a tragic drama both we and the dramatist know much more about the hero than we did at the beginning; the events that have happened to him, and his reactions to them, have revealed him to us. But he himself has also changed; he has grown either closer to, or further away from, his deepest self...

\*

What is this "deepest self"? By introducing this concept of the deepest self at this stage we seem to be contradicting ourselves; for we have said that the essence of a role does not exist independently of the words and actions that express it, and that there is an important sense in which action creates

---

<sup>88</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily XIII on Ephesians*.

character, both in the theatre and in real life. However, while action always reveals character, in great tragic drama, and in rare moments in real life, action also reveals a level deeper than character, something that underlies character and is more constant and unchanging than it - in my terms, the person, as opposed to the personality or persona.

In order to explicate this deeper level that underlies both action and character, let us return to Aristotle and his definition of a plot.

Now the plot, according to Aristotle, must be "complete in itself"; that is, it must have a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning is usually an unhealthy condition of a state or individual, which stimulates the search for self-knowledge. Thus Sophocles' Oedipus says:

*Born as I am, I shall be none other than  
I am, and I shall know me who I am.*

Oedipus the King.

The middle is a "reversal" or "recognition", in which the reason for the unhealthy condition - and the hero's blindness - is made clear. Sometimes the hero actually blinds himself, like Oedipus or Gloucester in Shakespeare's *King Lear*:

*I have no way, and therefore want no eyes:  
I stumbled when I saw.*

King Lear, IV, 1.

And the end is death, which sets the seal on the hero's process of self-knowledge. For, as the Russian writer and critic Andrei Sinyavsky says, "death becomes the goal and stimulus of the action through which the hero's personality [in our terms, personhood] is wholly revealed and, in obtaining its fulfilment, plays out its preordained role... Death communicates to life the direction in which its plot unfolds and gives it unity and definition. Death is a logical conclusion to which we are brought by the evidence of life. It is not a sudden break but a chord which has been long led up to, prepared for from the moment of birth. Compared with the dead (especially with historical figures and with characters in fiction) we look underdeveloped, unfinished. It's as though our head and shoulders were lost in the mists of the problematical. That is why we are so uncertain of our own worth, why we know so little of our role, our destiny, our place."<sup>89</sup>

"Its preordained role" - preordained by whom, if not by God or some godlike figure such as Fate or Destiny? Hence the religious nature of great tragedy, from Sophocles and Shakespeare to Dostoyevsky and Solzhenitsyn. And hence its psychological nature in the deepest sense - that is, its

---

<sup>89</sup> Sinyavsky, A., *Unguarded Thoughts*, London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1965, p. 80.

preoccupation with the person, the true self. For the action of tragic drama is an unravelling in time of the quasi-spatial levels of the man, "unaccommodating", in Lear's words, first the personae, then the traits of personality, until "the thing itself", the person, is revealed.

We, the audience, partake, through the mysterious process of dramatic empathy which is halfway, as it were, to a personal relationship, in the process of the hero's seeking perfection, until we stand, with him, before the judgement seat of the final chorus, awaiting the final verdict.

The verdict must be one or the other: either salvation or damnation. As a result of the reversal in fortune, which, as Aristotle says, is the central fulchrum of tragedy, the hero either changes his perception of his actual self and brings it closer to his true self, or the opposite. It is death that reveals all: both who the hero really is, and whether he has become what he really is.

Some of Shakespeare's tragedies, such as *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Macbeth* portray the divergence and alienation, in the hero, of his actual self from his true self. Others, such as *Richard II*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, portray a double movement: first a divergence to a state of extreme divergence and alienation, and then a convergence (which is also a conversion) to a state of inner integrity and peace, that state which Hamlet so longed for but failed to achieve:

*Give me that man  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart.*

Hamlet, III, 2.

For the saved hero his life, however full of suffering, makes sense; he sees in it the working of Divine Providence bringing him to himself; and death ends it both chronologically and teleologically. For the damned, on the other hand, his life, and the whole action of the drama, has been no more than a senseless succession of seconds ending in meaningless extinction. For to think that there might be a meaning to his life - that is, an end to the action in a teleological, and not merely a chronological sense - is to admit that there might be a judgement on his deeds there, in that other life on the other side of this life's stage. And that, as Macbeth discovered, does not bear thinking about:

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,*

*And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing...*

Macbeth, V, 5.

And yet this attempt to deny meaning to life is shown by the dramatist to be a form of psychological repression. Macbeth does meet his end, which is a just retribution of his deeds, and gives his own life and the whole action of the drama a perfect aesthetic shape that satisfies both heart and mind. Thus even in the failure of the tragic hero to find fulfilment, the audience learns that such fulfilment is possible, that there is an action that leads to fulfilment because it is in accordance with what Schiller calls "the archetype of a human being [which] every human being... carries within him, potentially and prescriptively".<sup>90</sup>

\*

The dramatic image of man, therefore, is of a creature who has an unchanging essence or deepest self which is revealed in the great crises of life and which he, in his reactions to these crises, may come closer towards, or, alternatively, diverge further from.

Now this idea of an unchanging, deepest self is a familiar theme in religious, and especially Orthodox Christian thought, where it is known as the image of God in man. In secular psychological thought it is much rarer. However, there is one psychological school - that of Jung - in which it does play an important part; and we conclude this lecture with a brief reference to its use in the work of the Jungian psychiatrist Anthony Storr.

Storr writes that there is "a pre-formed organization independent of consciousness which in the child is struggling to emerge, and which in the adult will ultimately manifest itself as the mature personality... If such phrases as 'personal integrity', 'fidelity to the law of one's being', being 'true to oneself' are anything more than catchwords, one is bound to postulate some totality of the personality which is greater than that ego with which we habitually identify ourselves; for, if a man can be either true or untrue to himself, the self to which he is either true or untrue cannot be identified with that executive part of him to which these epithets apply. Readers of Jung will recognize his concept of a self, superior to the ego, which represents the individual in his totality, not simply that aspect of himself of which he happens to be conscious.

"Those to whom such a concept is strange, or initially uncongenial, may perhaps be more prepared to entertain it when they recall that we often use such ideas in another context. A work of art such as a novel or a symphony is,

---

<sup>90</sup> Schiller, in Trilling, L., *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Oxford University Press, 1972.



if of high calibre, often referred to as possessing the qualities of inner coherence and inevitability. We feel that only this phrase could have followed that; that this incident, and no other, could appear at a particular point, that only thus could the work be ended. There is, it appears, an organization or inner structural pattern which somehow embraces the work as a whole and is superior to its individual phrases; and it is partly this sense of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts which excites our admiration. The numerous descriptions of the creative process afforded us by artists of all kinds, and indeed by scientists also, amply attest the fact that the artist himself is often unaware of how his creation will finally manifest itself, and may be surprised to find how surely its end is foreshadowed in its beginning."<sup>91</sup>

Now while we cannot agree with the Jungians that the true self is the totality of the individual, there is a very important idea implicit in the above passage towards which our own argument has been proceeding and which I shall develop further in a later lecture: the idea, namely, that the self is a work of art. In the next lecture, however, I propose to remain with the art of drama. For, having discussed the dramatist and the process of personification, and the role and the dramatic concept of the person, it is time that we now turned our attention to the actor and the process of impersonation.

---

<sup>91</sup> Storr, A., *The Integrity of the Personality*, Oxford University Press, 1960, pp. 171-172.

## 7. IMPERSONATION, EMPATHY AND CATHARSIS

*What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba,  
That he should weep for her?*  
Hamlet.

In previous lectures we concentrated on the psychology of man the dramatist, and the psychology of man seen as the essence of a dramatic role. In this lecture I turn to the psychology of man the actor-spectator. In this connection I shall be paying special attention to the processes of impersonation, empathy and catharsis that acting and observing involve.

Now it is a well-known but still little-appreciated and understood fact that as spectators in the theatre we are doing two apparently contradictory things: even while responding to the vivid, lifelike quality of Hamlet in the theatre, and responding to him as if he were a real person, we remain aware that what we are really watching is an actor's performance, an impersonation rather than a real person. We become especially aware of this duality in our perception when the performance is so wooden that the mask slips off, as it were, revealing the person behind the persona (the Latin word for "mask" is persona). However, this very fact - that people can put on acts, and other people can mistake the act for the person, or, on the contrary, see the person behind the act - is an important capacity of human nature which drama can illuminate with greater subtlety and power than any other art or science.

Let us begin by asking the question: is there "an ideal way of performing a role that is identical with the role itself and contained essentially within it; the preceding stage being the lengthy, precise and profound study of the pages of a text of *Hamlet* [for example] to develop the complete theatrical presentation so that eventually each role would have one single 'correct' style of stage performance to which the actual performer would more or less approximate?"<sup>92</sup>

If we pursue the analogy between a dramatic character and a real person in the way we have been doing in previous lectures, the answer would appear to be: yes. For if the role represents the reality of the person, and that person is single and unique, then, we may argue, there can be only one true reflection of that reality in performance. However, this answer becomes more open to dispute when we consider that all acting is based on an interpretation of a script, and that the relationship between interpretation and that which it interprets is not at all like that between a sign and that which it signifies. Rather, it is like that between a symbol and that which it symbolizes.

---

<sup>92</sup> Simmel, G., "On Acting", c. 1898, in Burns, E. & Burns, T. (eds.), *The Sociology of Literature and Drama*, London: Penguin Books.

In other words, acting is not a science, but an art. And just as there are any number of possible artistic portrayals of a single landscape, so there are any number of possible actor's interpretations of a single role. For, as Simmel says, "three great actors could give three completely different readings of the role, each as good as the other, and none 'more correct' than the other."<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, Freeman has shown that a person's interpretation of his own life is far from being a single or unitary thing.<sup>94</sup> We are constantly reconstruing our past lives and future scenarios; and our "acting" of this role which we have been given by life's Dramatist changes accordingly. If there is such variety and complexity in our performances of our own selves, how much more varied and complex must be the performances of one role by different actors, who bring to their interpretations their own very varied experience and personalities!

However, the fact that the relationship between an actor and his role is not one of straight correspondence need not lead us to the conclusion that there is not one objective role which the actor is trying to interpret, any more than the variety of people's perception of each other leads us to doubt in the objective reality of the people behind the perceptions. Thus let us consider Hamlet's theory of acting:

*Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.*

Hamlet, III, 2.

This imitation theory of acting seems simple, but it is in fact complex; for no mirror can be held up to nature from every possible angle, and more is seen from one perspective than from another.

We can agree, therefore, that every performance is the product of an interaction between the actor's personality and the role he is attempting to perform. But a performance is appraised in terms of its intention, which is to imitate an objective and independent reality. Indeed, the very concept of acting is incomprehensible in any other context.

\*

---

<sup>93</sup> Simmel, *op. cit.*

<sup>94</sup> Freeman, M. *Rewriting the Self*, London: Routledge, 1993.

Man's ability to put on acts, to hide his real personality behind an elaborately constructed persona, is at the core of many psychopathological phenomena. Consider, for example, Goffman's treatment of the phenomena of repression and dissociation: "A performer may be taken in by his own act, convinced at the moment that the impression of reality that he fosters is the one and only reality. In such cases the performer comes to be his own audience; he comes to be performer and observer of the same show. Presumably he intrcepts or incorporates the standards he attempts to maintain in the presence of others so that his conscience requires him to act in a socially proper way. It will have been necessary for the individual in his performing capacity to conceal from himself in his audience capacity the discreditable facts that he has had to learn about his performance; in everyday terms, there will be things he knows, or has known, that he will not be able to tell himself. This intricate manoeuvre of self-delusion constantly occurs; psychoanalysts have provided us with beautiful field data of this kind, under the headings of repression and dissociation."<sup>95</sup> Nietzsche described the same thing in a way directly applicable to some paranoid modern dictators such as Hitler: "In all great deceivers a remarkable process is at work to which they owe their power. In the very act of deception with all its preparations, the dreadful voice, expression and gestures, they are overcome by their belief in themselves; it is this belief which then speaks, so persuasively, so miracle-like, to the audience."<sup>96</sup>

Szasz has made a similar analysis of the concepts of hysteria and malingering. Both are defined as forms of impersonation - "inconsistent or dishonest role-playing". In both, the role of the bodily sick person is impersonated in order to gain the attention which society accords to those it labels as "sick". The difference between them is that, in hysteria, the individual (in his performing capacity) is having to conceal from himself (in his audience capacity) the truth about his impersonation; whereas in malingering the impersonation is conscious and deliberate. "Malingering has, as I noted, been usually conceptualized as deliberate cheating. My aim here is to describe both as impersonation. Whether the impersonation is deliberate or otherwise can be ascertained by communicating with the person, and by making inferences from his behaviour... In hysteria, the patient impersonates the role of a sick person, in part by identifying with and displaying his symptoms. Allegedly, however, he does not know that he is doing so. When it is said that the hysteric cannot afford to be aware of what he is doing - for, if he were, he could no longer do it - what is asserted in effect is that he cannot afford to tell himself the truth. By the same token, he also cannot afford to know that he is lying. He must lie both to himself and to others."<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Goffman, E., *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, London: Penguin Books, 1959, p. 86.

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche, F., *Human, all too Human*, 1878, in Bullock, A., *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives*, London: Harper Collins, 1991, p. 398.

<sup>97</sup> Szasz, T.S., *The Myth of Mental Illness*, St. Albans: Paladin Peregrine, 1972, p. 227.

Szasz goes on to apply a similar analysis to psychotic illnesses: "Hypochondriasis and schizophrenic bodily delusions are additional examples of consciously unrecognized impersonations of bodily illness. Thus, a person's claim that he is dying, or that he is dead, is best regarded as an impersonation of the dead role. Of course, the less public support there is for an impersonation, the more unreflective the impersonator must be to maintain it. Indeed, the label of psychosis is often used to identify individuals who stubbornly cling to, and loudly proclaim, publicly unsupported role-definitions."<sup>98</sup>

Theatrical impersonation is a special type of impersonation, says Szasz, "in that all of the participants are explicitly aware that it is impersonation".

But this leads us to the question: how can we become aware of a real-life impersonation? That is, how do we come to know the difference between the true and the false on the stage of everyday life? For, as Heine says, "the least important aspect of true and false performances is what they share merely as performances".<sup>99</sup>

One way to do this, paradoxically, is to go to the theatre. For the illusion of acting can reveal the truth about life, as Shakespeare demonstrated in the "play within the play" from *Hamlet*. Thus in the performance of the Player, King Claudius sees himself more clearly than when he relied on his own powers of self-observation:

Ophelia. *The King rises.*  
Hamlet. *What, frightened with false fire!*  
Queen. *How fares my lord?*  
Polonius. *Give o'er the play.*  
King. *Give me some light. Away!*  
Polonius. *Lights, lights, lights!*

Hamlet, III, 2.

The theatrical production, which Hamlet calls "false fire", lights up the false king's murky soul; the truth of the mask strips off the mask from the truth. Thus Hamlet has succeeded in the plan that he devised when he said,

*The play's the thing,  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.*

Hamlet, II, 2.

But if Hamlet had been able to see himself in *Hamlet* as Claudius saw himself in the play within the play, he, too, might have had a shock. For although he thought he knew, better than others, when he was acting -

---

<sup>98</sup> Szasz, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>99</sup> Heine, P.J., *Personality and Social Theory*, London: Allen Lane, 1972.

*For they are actions that a man might play;  
But I have that within that passes show.*

Hamlet, I, 2.

- his own deepest nature was hidden from him. And if he had been able to see himself objectively, he would have seen how his censure of Claudius' "seeming" was a means of his own self-deception, and how his failure to kill Claudius, and violent abuse of Ophelia, were the result of his seeing in both of them a projection of his mother.<sup>100</sup>

Another way of penetrating to the truth behind our impersonations is to have psychotherapy. Indeed, the popular image of psychoanalysis is that of a technique for the stripping away of impersonations and illusions so as to reach the real person behind the "show". The patient is encouraged to probe deep into his subconscious by the warm, unconditionally supportive attitude of the therapist - or at any rate, the Rogerian therapist - which is directly comparable to the love that dramatists and novelists have for their characters. He is encouraged to relive the critical scenes of his childhood that have caused his neurosis, and then to reconnect the previously hermetically sealed sections of his life - his repressed childhood and his consciously lived adulthood - into "an intelligible, consistent, and unbroken case history", in Freud's words<sup>101</sup>. The intelligibility of the history is the result of the fact that the unconscious impersonations creating the barriers between childhood and adulthood and causing the mysterious amnesias, dissociations, hysterias and general irrationality of the patient's previous behaviour, have now been removed. Its consistency and unbrokenness are the result of the artistry that he and his therapist between them have been able to put into the reconstruction of his life's role.

\*

Having briefly considered the psychology of the actor, let us now turn to the psychology of the spectator.

A similar complexity to that which we noted in the actor's art is inherent also in that of the critic or spectator, in the appraisals that different members of a single audience have of a single performance. Critic A will describe an actor's performance in quite different terms from critic B. And critic A will be of the opinion that actor C has done more justice to the role than actor D, while critic B will have the opposite opinion.

---

<sup>100</sup> Moss, A.E.St.G., "Hamlet and Role-Construct Theory", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1974, vol. 47, pp. 253-264.

<sup>101</sup> Freud, S., "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria", *Standard Edition*, vol. VII, 1901, London: Hogarth.

Now at the heart of the psychology both of the actor, and of the critic-spectator, is the mysterious process known as empathy (Einführung).

From the point of view of empirical psychology, empathy has that same paradoxical property that we noted in an earlier lecture in relation to emotions, that is, of being subjective and objective at the same time. Just as it is impossible to isolate the emotion of love, either causally or logically, from the person of the beloved, or the emotion felt on hearing a piece of music from the notes on the sheet of music, so is it impossible to locate empathy exclusively within the person who empathizes. As the seventeenth-century English poet Traherne writes in his poem *My Spirit*<sup>102</sup>:

*It acts not from a centre to  
Its object as remote,  
But present is when it doth view,  
Being with the Being it doth note  
Whatever it doth do.*

The Romanian psychologist Marcus has defined empathy as identification with the other, whether affective, or contingent, or on the plane of social behaviour. And he sees in the actor's art the most suitable model for the study of empathy. However, as the Russian psychologist Basin points out, this concentration on empathy in acting should not lead us to suppose that "the other" must be another human being. Even in the training of actors according to Stanislavsky's method, actors are encouraged to identify with non-human objects such as trees, birds and teacups. And Vygotsky, following Lipps, believed that we can identify even with geometrical forms. Physicists have witnessed that in their creative work they often empathize with their inanimate objects of study, posing themselves such questions as: "What would I do if I were this particle?" Therefore, as Basin says, empathy is "a necessary and most important... condition of creativity in any sphere of human activity".<sup>103</sup>

In empathy the real ego as it were "doubles" into its own ego and an alter-ego. It involves a "flight" from the real ego, a going out beyond the bounds of the real ego. "The sphere of the true existence of man as a person," writes Antsiferova, "is the sphere of his going out beyond the bounds of himself."<sup>104</sup>

We can go even further and say that the manifestation of personhood in the life of a child would be inconceivable except in terms of empathy. For almost all theories of child development postulate a critical moment in development at which the child ceases to be a self-contained entity reacting to

---

<sup>102</sup> Traherne, in Moss, E.H.St.G., *Seeing Man Whole*, Lewes: The Book Guild, 1989, p. 366.

<sup>103</sup> Basin, E.Y., "Tvorchestvo i Empatia" ("Creativity and Empathy"), *Voprosy Filosofii (Questions of Philosophy)*, 1987, vol. 2, p. 54 (in Russian).

<sup>104</sup> Antsiferova, in Basin, *op.cit.*, p. 59.

external stimuli as a non-personal organism might, and reacts to his mother as a person having an independent inner life - which is only possible if he empathizes with her as a person. Vygotsky calls this critical transition "the general genetic law of cultural development", and defines it as follows: "any function in the child's cultural development appears on the stage twice, on two planes, first on the social plane and then on the psychological, first among people as an inter-mental category and then within the child as an intra-mental category."<sup>105</sup>

On the social plane, a child may indulge in spontaneous action in the company of, or in imitation of, adults - his mother, for example. But this spontaneous action cannot become deliberate, that is intra-mental action on the psychological plane until he has learned to govern his action by the same motives and reasons that govern his mother's action. And this requires that he see her as an independent person having inner motives and reasons for her action by a process of empathic intuition.

Shotter gives an illuminating example of how a mother can instruct her child (of, say, ten to twelve months old) to make this vital step of empathic intuition. The child is presented with the task of putting shapes into a form-board. However, in order to perform this task consistently the child must understand the rationale behind the task - that is, he must empathize with his mother's thought processes when she carries out the task. And he does not grasp this immediately. Thus "on first encountering the board, the infant may do all sorts of things with the pieces: chew them, throw them about, bang them or scrub them on the board, and so on. Occasionally, he may be observed to fit a piece into a hole on the board spontaneously. This, however, is not good enough for his mother. She will not be satisfied until it seems to her that he can do it deliberately"<sup>106</sup> - that is, by the deliberate application of the rationale his mother used and which he has empathically borrowed from her.

Thus personhood presupposes empathy and vice-versa. We have to be persons in order to empathize, and we must be able to empathize in order to see the personhood of ourselves and others. We may note in this context that the spectator of a drama does not empathize with the actor (except when he begins to fluff his lines), but penetrates through to the role and even, sometimes, to the dramatist himself. Empathy is therefore person, not persona perception. And here again, despite the fact that "persona" is a concept derived from the theatre and has connotations of theatrical artificiality, person perception in the theatre can be more truly personal, as opposed to "persona-al", as it were, than in real life.

---

<sup>105</sup> Vygotsky, quoted in Shotter, J., *Images of Man in Psychological Research*, London: Methuen, 1975, p. 101.

<sup>106</sup> Shotter, *op. cit.*, p. 99.



For personal relations and person perception in real life are often on a very superficial level, engaging only the "outer" levels of our nature, while the whole point of the theatrical presentation is to dig deeper. Thus relationships between employers and employees, or teachers and pupils, are often conducted almost exclusively on the level of their respective social roles, and if empathy is required it is only in order to discern what role the other considers himself to be playing. Insofar as the communication of thoughts or feelings takes place, then the interaction does indeed go deeper than the persona, and becomes a relationship of personalities. But the deepest level, the truly personal level, may never be engaged. In the theatre, on the other hand, while the situation, formally speaking, is one of extreme insincerity, in which the actor plays a role that is more foreign to him than any social role he may play in real life, it opens the way - if the play is good - to an experience joining dramatist, role, actors and spectators in a relationship of profound authenticity, in which the spectators -

*You that look pale and tremble at this chance,  
That are but mutes or audience to this act,*

Hamlet, V, 2

- actually become part of the act psychologically speaking.

\*

This brings us to the last and culminating psychological aspect of drama - or at least, of great tragic drama - the emotion of catharsis felt by actors and spectators alike. If empathy is a paradoxical phenomenon in that it appears to be a subjective experience located in the objective world outside us, catharsis is still more paradoxical. For it appears to transform the empathic experience of another's extreme pain into our own experience of pleasure - a pleasure, moreover, that has no trace of sensuality but which is, as the Greek word katharsis implies, cleansing, cleansing in a deep psychological and moral sense.

The nature of this feeling has been the subject of lively debate since Aristotle's *Poetics*. Koestler has cast some light onto the problem by emphasizing the kinship between catharsis and the self-transcending emotions. "Self-assertive behaviour is focussed on the Here and Now; the transfer of interest and emotion to a different time and location is in itself an act of self-transcendence in the literal sense. It is achieved through the lure of heroes and villains on the stage who attract the spectator's sympathy, with whom he partially identifies himself, and for whose sake he temporarily renounces his preoccupations with his own worries and desires. Thus the act of participating in an illusion has an inhibiting effect on the self-assertive

tendencies, and facilitates the unfolding of the self-transcending tendencies."<sup>107</sup>

There is certainly some truth in this theory; but it is misleading insofar as it implies that self-transcending emotions are in some sense "better" than self-assertive ones. I would suggest, following Storr,<sup>108</sup> that it is rather in the just balance between the self-transcending and self-assertive emotions that catharsis is achieved. In watching great drama, the spectator certainly transcends himself; in an emotion akin to love he actually enters into the personality of the hero. But he also comes to acquire objective knowledge of him. In real life such a balance between objectivity and subjectivity, identification and detachment, is rarely achieved. Our love is defiled by sensuality or emotional voracity, our knowledge limited by the obsessional pursuit of our personal interests. But in drama we briefly achieve that ideal relationship to the other that we can only dream about in real life...

However, it is, of course, an ideal relationship, not a real one, which is why we can watch a man having his eyes torn out in *King Lear*, for example, and remain calmly in our seats. For we know we do not have to do anything about it - it is makeup after all, not real blood. Thus drama, even while giving us knowledge of a person, does not put us into direct relationship with that person; it is a one-way relationship from the drama to the spectators, and not vice-versa.

This is both the strength of drama, and of art in general, and its weakness. It is its strength because, as we have noted, in the theatrical situation our fallen emotions and self-interest are not involved in the action, so we can look at the characters more objectively. And it is its weakness because the spectator, while gaining knowledge of the other, gains little knowledge of himself - he does not learn how he would, or should act if this person's eyes were really being torn out in front of him.

From the artist's point of view, too, this is not a fully personal relationship. For, as Macmurray puts it: "The artist wants to give, not to receive; so that mutuality is lost, and his experience, though it remains intensely personal, is one-sided, has lost part of the fullness of personal experience. Knowledge there is, and the pouring out of knowledge, which is self-expression, but not mutuality; and therefore the second person is generalised to a listener, negative and receptive, and tends to fade out of the picture and become hypothetical and imaginary. The artist can write his description for anyone to read, or paint his picture for anyone to see. He gives himself, not to anyone in particular but to the world at large. That is not a fuller but a narrower

---

<sup>107</sup> Koestler, A., *The Act of Creation*, London: Hutchinson, 1964, p. 303.

<sup>108</sup> Storr, A., *The Integrity of the Personality*, Oxford University Press, 1960.

experience; because personally, to give yourself to everyone, is to give yourself to none. The mutuality of the personal belongs to its essence."<sup>109</sup>

We come here to the limits of art in the representation and knowledge of persons. This is that impasse which not only science, but even art, and even the greatest tragic drama, is unable to overcome: the impasse of our inability to know the truly personal in full mutuality. In a later lecture I shall attempt to point to the one form of knowledge that can overcome this impasse and lead to a full knowledge of the personal.

---

<sup>109</sup> Macmurray, J., *Reason and Emotion*, London: Faber, 1935, p. 154.

## 8. THE SELF AS ART

*Gather my soul  
Into the artifice of eternity.*  
W.B. Yeats. "Sailing to Byzantium".

In this lecture I propose to gather together the scattered conclusions of the previous lectures on art and drama and give them some systematic structure. Before doing that, however, we must consider one last element, which, while obviously an essential element of art, is no less obviously critical to our understanding of personality. That is *style*.

Now it is a truism to say that every artist has his own unique style. To the practised eye the style of an artist is immediately recognizable. Indeed, it is the style of a work rather than its content that marks it out most surely as belonging to such-and-such an author. Thus whatever an artist's work is "about" - the sacred or the secular, the fleeting or the eternal, the objective or the subjective - this content will always be mediated by a single style which is common to all the works of the artist. And this style expresses, in a sense, the artist himself; for, as the French say, *le style, c'est l'homme*.

It follows that we should not expect an artist's style to change much during his life, but to be recognizably his at the end as at the beginning. And where we see an abrupt change of style - as, for example, in the play *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which Shakespeare is thought to have co-authored with Fletcher - then we are entitled to suspect that more than one artist is involved. For "style," writes E. Moss, "involves certain constancies of elements and of relativities between elements."<sup>110</sup>

The Shakespearean critic G. Wilson Knight is referring to these commonalities of style when he writes: "The more we attend to such elements [of style], the more often we shall find ourselves directed instinctively to form groups of themes, poetical colourings, throughout the plays. The dramatic persons and their names change from play to play: but the life they live, the poetic air they breathe, the fate that strikes or the joy that crowns them, the symbols and symphonies of dramatic poetry, these are not so variable. They are Shakespearean. More, they are Shakespeare."<sup>111</sup> As the poet Coleridge noted, in all Shakespeare's characters, "we still find ourselves communing with the same human nature, which is everywhere present as the vegetable sap in the branches, sprays, leaves, buds, blossoms, and fruits, their shapes, tastes and odours".<sup>112</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup> Moss, E.H.St.G., *Seeing Man Whole*, Lewes: The Book Guild, 1989, p. 317.

<sup>111</sup> Knight, G. Wilson, *The Imperial Theme*, London: Methuen, 1951, p. 22.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Coleridge on the interpenetration of the universal and the personal in Shakespeare: "Shakspeare shaped his characters out of the nature within; but we cannot so safely say, out of

Thus style, in the words of the novelist Marcel Proust, "is the revelation, which would be impossible by direct and conscious means, of the qualitative difference that exists in the way the world appears to us, a difference which, if there were not art, would remain the eternal secret of life."<sup>113</sup>

Now of course, ordinary people, and not only artists, have distinctive styles. We all have a distinctive style, and this style expresses itself in everything we do: in walking and talking, as well as writing and painting. Style is therefore a basic category of human life and action; it is, as it were, the aesthetic dimension of life.

This idea has been developed by Hudson, who extends the concept of art "from art as an object-on-the-wall... some entity 'out there', to the individual's life as the object of his own aesthetic ambitions and skills."<sup>114</sup> As Price (1968) has pointed out, "there is considerable artistry inherent in our normal behaviour", and that "the intensification and direction it gains in a work of art does not obliterate the continuity of art and life".<sup>115</sup> For, as Swartz writes, "Art invents forms through which Life may express itself"<sup>116</sup> Or, as Stegner puts it: "Art is one way to spell man".<sup>117</sup>

Sometimes we shape ourselves artistically - create a specific life-style, as we say - for non-artistic motives. Thus "a woman may dress to excite," writes Hudson, "a man to pass muster. But for many people, the creation of a lifestyle - the car, the spouse, the house, the clothes - springs from an impulse that exists in its own right, and cannot helpfully be explained away in terms of other impulses: greed, snobbery, concupiscence."<sup>118</sup>

For man is an artistic animal; the impulse to create artistic forms, whether out of external objects or out of himself, is innate in him and ineradicable.

---

his own nature as an individual person. No! This latter is itself but a natura naturata, - an effect, a product, not a power. It was Shakspeare's prerogative to have the universal, which is potential in each particular, opened out to him, the homo generalis, not as an abstraction from observations of a variety of men, but as the substance capable of endless modifications, of which his own personal existence was but one, and to use this one as the eye that beheld the other, and as the tongue that could convey the discovery." (pp. 347-48, London Nonesuch edition).

In another passage he wrote that the excellence of the method of Shakespeare's works consisted in "that just proportion, that union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular, which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science." (p. 488).

<sup>113</sup> Proust, M., *A la recherche du temps perdu*, Paris: Gallimard, 1954, vol. III, p. 895 (in French).

<sup>114</sup> Hudson, I., "Life as Art", *New Society*, February 12, 1976, pp. 319-321.

<sup>115</sup> Price, M., "The Other Self: Thoughts about Character in the Novel", in Mack, M. & Gregor, I. (eds.), *Imagined Worlds: Essays on Some English Novels in Honour of John Butt*, London: Methuen, 1968.

<sup>116</sup> Swartz, P., "On the Relevance of Literature for Psychology", *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 1979, no. 48, p. 1035.

<sup>117</sup> Stegner, W., "One Way to Spell Man", *Saturday Review*, May 24, 1958, vol. 41.

<sup>118</sup> Hudson, op. cit., p. 319.

That is why his psychic failures or failures as a person can also be called artistic failures. Thus Otto Rank called neurosis "a failed work of art", and the neurotic - "a failed artist".<sup>119</sup>

However, even in his failed works of art the characteristic style of the artist remains; for, as Oliver Sacks points out, when the novelist Henry James fell mentally ill he still retained his unique literary style.<sup>120</sup>

\*

Now it is a short step from the idea that every man has a unique style that betrays his essential nature to the idea that man is an artist and/or work of art.

This idea has a very long and distinguished history. Its earliest expression is to be found in chapter one of Genesis, where God says: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (v. 26). In other words, man is a work of art created by God in order to mirror Himself.

I want to return to this idea in more detail in a later lecture. At this point, however, I wish only to indicate its main features. Thus the above words from Genesis are expounded by the Greek Father St. Gregory of Nyssa as follows: "Just as painters transfer human forms to their pictures by means of certain colours, laying on their copy the proper and corresponding tints, so that the beauty of the original may be accurately transferred to the likeness, so... also our Maker also, painting the portrait to resemble His own beauty, by the addition of virtues, as it were with colours shows in us His own sovereignty."<sup>121</sup>

The image of God, according to Christian thought, is man's rationality and freewill, which is made in the image of God's absolute rationality and freewill. The likeness of God is the virtuous life, which makes us like God in His perfect goodness. We all have the image of God - that is, we are all free and rational; but sin has destroyed the likeness of God in us.

The aim of the Christian life, therefore, is to restore the original likeness. This process of restoring the likeness is compared to a painter's restoration of an old portrait whose original features have become overlaid by dirt. Or to the Christian art of iconography (of which I shall say more in my last lecture).

The idea of the self as an artist and/or work of art reappears in Western humanism of the Renaissance period - though stripped now of its religious content. Thus Mazzeo writes concerning Castiglione's *The Courtier*: "The aim

---

<sup>119</sup> Rank, quoted in Hudson, *op. cit.*

<sup>120</sup> Sacks, *Awakenings*, London: Pelican Books, 1976.

<sup>121</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, 5.

of education (according to Castiglione) is to develop our consciousness, to make us aware of a wide range of different kinds of human possibilities and activities, and to unify thought and action, learning and feeling, by imposing on them, as it were, a common style. This remains a unique human possibility because only in man are contradictory impulses and disparate, fragmented experiences brought together in a single consciousness, only man can impose those relations, rhythms, accents, and symmetries on experience that are the essence of style itself. As men may turn the contents of consciousness into works of art, so may they manipulate and form themselves into works of art."<sup>122</sup>

Style, therefore, is the product of an integrating consciousness that imposes order and consistency on life. This integrating power is manifested in art: but it is also manifest in life. That is why an artist's life-style so often seems to be reflected in his art-style - the boorish violence and tender raptures of Beethoven's life, for example, in the alternately violent and lyrical passion of his music, or the fastidious sensuality and egoism of Wagner's life in the death-tinged eroticism of his music. It follows that the absence of a distinctive style in a person's life or art is not indicative of the lack of any particular content, but rather of immaturity, of the fact that he has not yet fully integrated himself in life, or his experience in art. Conversely, the possession of a unique style does not by itself qualify one for greatness in life or art.

Now if the self can be said to have a style and therefore be a work of art, it must, like every work of art, have a content and a form. And if it can also be said to be an artist, then it must have yet a third, creative (or, as Levi-Strauss would say, diachronic) dimension of selfhood. We may therefore define the self as having three aspects or dimensions: first, the self as a subconscious, unexpressed content (we may call this the "It"); secondly, the self as a dynamic, free knower and creator (this is the "I"); and thirdly, the self as a finished, expressive object or form (this is the "Me"). In answer, then, to the question: "Who am I?" we may give, as a first approximation, the following answer: I am the content of a work of art ("It") trying ("I") to achieve its ideal form ("Me"). Or, as a second and more precise approximation: I am an artist ("I") striving to know myself ("It") through the creation of forms of life ("Me") that are both beautiful and true to myself as a whole ("It", "I" and "Me").

Although my use of the terms "It", "I" and "Me" may recall Freud's "Id" and "Ego", or Mead's "I" and "Me", the correspondence is not exact. Thus while my conception of the self as subconscious content or "It" undoubtedly overlaps with Freud's "Id", I have, in accordance with my analysis of Shakespearean man, included in it certain archetypal contents which are not purely biological in nature. For Freud's "Id" contains only sex and aggression, whereas the "It" as I have defined it also contains the impulse to create and the feeling of having been created. Thus by saying that the archetype of the creator is

---

<sup>122</sup> Mazzeo, J., *Renaissance and Revolution*, London: Methuen, 1965, p. 150.

contained in the "It", I am saying that the impulse to create, to know and to objectify, which we have called the "I", has its roots in the subconscious. Again, by saying that the archetype of the creature is contained in the "It", I am saying that the image of God in man extends even into the subconscious.

Indeed, if this were not so, the unity of the self would be destroyed. For the "I", in attempting to express the "It", would feel that he was expressing, not himself, but some other content; just as the "Me", as the finished object or form of the self, would be felt to be the expression, not of this "It" and "I", but of some other. Perhaps we may see in the disjunction between the "It" and the "I" the roots of psychosis, and in the disjunction between the "I" and the "Me" - the roots of neurosis...

\*

This model of man requires, of course, to be clarified and developed; and I shall attempt to do just that by mapping onto it, as it were, a model of the self, derived not from art in general, but from the art of drama in particular, which is perfectly symmetrical with the former.

According, to this dramaturgical model, man exists on three levels of depth or "interiority". The first, and deepest, is that of the dramatist or person, who is the source of the whole of the rest of the drama of life. The second is that of the role or script or personality. And the third is that of the actors or personae. It will be noted that, contrary to the better known sociological role model, this model reverses the levels of role and actor, making the role interior to, and deeper than, the actor.

The relations between the three levels are as follows. The relation between the person and the personality is created by the process of personification; personification is as it were the expression of the person in the personality, of the dramatist in the role - or rather: set of roles. And the relation between the personality and the persona is created by the process of impersonation; impersonation incarnates personality, the word of the role becoming flesh in the actions of the actors.

Now it will be immediately obvious that what I have called the dramatist or the person in the dramaturgical model corresponds to what I have called the "It" in the artistic model we were discussing a little earlier. It is appropriate to call the dramatist "It" because we do not see him directly; we enter into relationship with him only through his script and his actors. In the same way, we do not usually see the person in real life except through the filter of his personality and personae.

Again, the script or the personality in the dramaturgical model corresponds to the "I" of the artistic model. It is the bond between the



dramatist or person and his revelation in action. For, on the one hand, it interprets the mind of the dramatist, and on the other, gives instructions to the actors, directing them how they should execute the dramatist's idea.

Finally, the actors or personae in the dramaturgical model correspond to the "Me" of the artistic model. This is the self as it is presented to the external world and other people. Only it must be remembered that "other people" here includes the self. For just as the dramatist can be a spectator at a performance of his own play, from which he draws ideas about how to change his script and thereby improve his expression of himself, so in real life we are spectators at the drama which we ourselves create, direct and act in. This is the origin of the self-image and self-esteem.<sup>123</sup>

A play can fail in either of two ways. Either the dramatic script fails to express fully and accurately the idea of the dramatist, or the actors fail to embody the full potential of the script. In other words, the person may be inadequately expressed in the personality, or the personality may be inadequately expressed in the personae.

*Hamlet* is sometimes considered to be a failure of the first kind. Thus the poet T.S. Eliot believed that Shakespeare had failed to find an "objective correlative" of his own subjective emotions.<sup>124</sup> In our terms, the idea of the dramatist was not fully expressed in the script of the play.

---

<sup>123</sup> It is not my purpose to go into all the complexities of the self-image here. Suffice it to say, on the one hand, that the history of a man's behaviour is constantly accumulating, so that the image of it is constantly changing, and on the other, that society is composed of many different people (one of whom is the man himself), so that the images of him are as various as the number of those who know him.

Another relevant distinction here is that made by Sir Geoffrey Vickers between "those role-expectations which are attached by society and those which derive from the behaviour of the role-player himself. Those who rely on him as doctor, employer, father, can appeal to a standard socially set of what is expected of any player of that role. But within these expectations, they can appeal to others generated by the past performance of the role-player himself. The greater the discretion which the role allows, the greater is the range over which those affected might complain - 'Though what you have done is within the range of what our society expects of any of that role, it is outside the range of what you have led us to expect of you.' At the extreme, what we expect of A, simply as A, is based solely on what A himself, by his past behaviour, has invited us to expect of him - a completely individualized role, but none the less a role. For A himself the distinction is even slighter. For he conceives of 'being himself' as making a coherent personality, the self-expectations which he derives from accepting his social and functional roles are no different in character from the self-expectations imposed by his idea of himself" (*Freedom in a Rocking Boat*, London: Penguin Books, 1970, p. 93, footnote).

<sup>124</sup> Eliot, "On Hamlet", 1919, in *Selected Essays*, London: Penguin Books. The novelist Lev Tolstoy was even more blunt. Hamlet, he wrote, "had no character whatsoever". "Shakespeare did not succeed and did not even wish to give any character to Hamlet." ("Shakespeare and the Drama", 1906, in LeWinter (ed.), *Shakespeare in Europe*, London: Penguin Books

And yet, if the play is a failure, the prince still lives; if the personality is shrouded in darkness, the man himself is lit up in the most vivid of colours. And the obscurity felt by many may be the result of the fact that *Hamlet* is a play about a man trying, but failing, to know himself.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps Shakespeare did fail to express himself here. But another, more likely hypothesis is that he succeeded in expressing the idea of a man failing to express himself, a man who was a mystery both to himself and to others. *Hamlet* is therefore the psychological play par excellence, a play about psychology.

Hamlet himself was preoccupied by failures of the second kind, that is, of acting. He was himself a dramatist and an actor, and used the "play within the play" to expose Claudius' play-acting. But he was amazed how the evident artificiality and insincerity of the actor's performance could rip the mask off someone like Claudius, while for his own passion, so much more "real" than the actor's, he could find no adequate expression:

*What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba,  
That he should weep for her? What would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have?*

Hamlet, II, 2.

Now Trilling has drawn a useful distinction between sincerity and authenticity.<sup>126</sup> A man is sincere if his words and deeds correspond to his thoughts and feelings - in our terms, if his personae express his personality. He is authentic if his thoughts and feelings correspond to his true self - in our terms, if his personality expresses his person.

It is possible to be sincere without being authentic; for the actions of a psychopath may be the perfect expression of his murderous feelings! But authenticity necessarily implies sincerity. For, as Polonius says,

*To thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.*

Hamlet, I, 3.

Modern society tends to share Hamlet's obsession with the truth of performances and personae. And this tendency has, paradoxically, increased in strength in proportion to the popularity of those currents of thought which see man as a mere plaything of his genes or society, as no more than the sum of his personae or, as Goffman puts it, "a kind of holding company for a set of

---

<sup>125</sup> Moss, A.E.St.G., "Hamlet and Role-Construct Theory", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1974, vol. 47, pp. 253-264; "Shakespeare and Role-Construct Therapy", *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, 1974, vol. 47, pp. 235-252.

<sup>126</sup> Trilling, L., *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Oxford University Press, 1972.

not very relevantly connected roles".<sup>127</sup> We are obsessed with sincerity; surrounded by so much acting, we want to find "the real me" at all costs.

E. Moss has provided a useful corrective to this point of view. He points out there are no alternatives to many of our personal plans and social roles, so that the possibility of their being inauthentic or insincere does not arise. Thus "if I am an Englishman brought up in England and speaking only English as my mother tongue, there will be various things about me that are inescapably conditioned by these circumstances and which, being inescapable, are in a simple way authentic".<sup>128</sup>

The potential for inauthenticity and insincerity rises exponentially with the increase in the complexity, sophistication and variety of choices in a civilization - which both explains our modern obsession with these things, and our nostalgia for the simpler, more sincere, but also more hidebound life.

And yet the search for "truth in the inner parts" is not an invention of restless and self-conscious urban dwellers, but a central and eternal element in the human condition.

Thus Hamlet, as we have seen, is tormented by his own, as well as others', insincerity; he seems to be unable to "suit the action to the word, the word to the action". But it is not simply a matter of some of his roles being deliberately "put on" - that is, insincere. Even when he is being most sincere - for example, when he rebukes his mother, or attempts to avenge his father - he suffers from a hesitancy that points to an inner conflict and "schism in the soul".<sup>129</sup> He is insincere when he puts "an antic disposition on" - he is not as mad as he pretends to be. But he is inauthentic when he says to his mother, "it is not madness that I have utter'd" - he is less sane than he thinks he is:

*This is mere madness,  
And thus awhile the fit will work on him.*

Hamlet, V, 1.

As another would-be assassin, Brutus, says:

*Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,  
I have not slept.  
Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.  
The Genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council; and the state of man,*

---

<sup>127</sup> Goffman, E., "Role Distance", in *Encounters*, London: Penguin Books, 1971.

<sup>128</sup> E. Moss, *Seeing Man Whole*, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

<sup>129</sup> Toynbee, A., *A Study in History*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1947.

*Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.*

Julius Caesar, II, 1.

For Hamlet, as for Brutus, the insurrection in the soul is a rebellion by the "genius", that is, the dramatist or person or "It", against the plan, put forward by the director or personality or "I", of carrying out a political revolution. In other words, the persona or "Me" of avenger or revolutionary, while quite sincere (Hamlet really does want to kill Claudius), and therefore posing no problems of a more than technical kind for the actor, is inauthentic insofar as it does not correspond to who Hamlet really is. The tragedy of Hamlet is that he does not fully understand this conflict between his deepest self and his planning and acting selves. He attempts to explain it as weakness of will caused by too much thinking or *consciousness* - that is, as a personality disorder - while ignoring the many clues to its deeper origin in the person or *conscience*. Hence the atmosphere of "phantasma" and "hideous dream" that pervades the play.

\*

Finally, we may ask whether it is possible, in terms of the model of the self that I have just outlined, to say what the true self is.

Now if we mean by "the true self" that part of the self which is true, while the other parts are less true or false, then the answer to this question is: no. For it makes little sense to say that the "It", for example, is the true self, while the "I" and the "Me" are false. For both the "It" and the "I" and the "Me" are inalienable parts or aspects of the whole self, and are never to be found in isolation from each other - except, perhaps, to some degree in mental illness. It is like saying that the real Shakespeare is someone different from the man who created Hamlet or the man who acted on the stage of the Globe theatre. I would prefer to say that the true self is rather a relationship of correspondence - or, better, transparency - between the three aspects of the self that we have analyzed. Thus a man can be said to be being true to himself if his "Me" is the perfect reflection of his "I", and his "I" is the perfect incarnation of his "It". Thus, to borrow a distinction from Gabriel Marcel<sup>130</sup>, a man does not have a true self, but rather is a true self - that is, is a self in which "I", "Me" and "It" are in perfect harmony with each other.

At the same time, while we cannot say that one aspect of the self is more true than another, we can say that one aspect of the self is more profound than the others, in the sense that it is the origin of the whole of the rest of the drama. And in this sense, it is clear that the most profound aspect of the soul is the person, or dramatist, or "It". For it is obvious to everyone that it is not the "Me" that the world sees - the words and deeds that I perform publicly, -

---

<sup>130</sup> Marcel, G., *Being and Having*, London: Fontana, 1949.

however sincere they may be, that constitutes the origin and power-house of my being. For it is perhaps the most primitive and important of all psychological insights that the inner is prior to the outer, and the outer the expression of the inner, not the other way round.<sup>131</sup> Less obvious, but still clear to most people at some time in their lives, is the fact that neither is it the creative "I" with its associated plans and drives and perceptions and thoughts that constitutes my deepest self, but something underlying it...

Another, equally important insight is that this deepest aspect of my self is also its most unchanging. For it is obvious that my "Me" can change radically in my lifetime, both from my own point of view and from that of others, and that my "I" can also change, though not (often) so radically; for I can become less shy, or more angry, or less intelligent, or more religious with time. However, this process of change can be deliberately undertaken by us; we can attempt to change our personality, as Shakespeare tried to change his through his art. And if we attempt to change ourselves, then it is in accordance with an ideal of what we could and should be. But what motivating power could such an ideal have if there was not something in us which was already akin to it, which already strove for it and longed for it, albeit in a semi-conscious way? This aspect of the self which is akin to the ideal does not change, just as style, that constant index of the individual person, does not change. I have called it the "It" because for so much of the time we are hardly conscious of its existence and know so little about it. But it should in reality be called the "I" that is deeper than the "I", the person that is deeper than the personality and every manifestation of the personality in word or deed. Thus it is the purpose of the drama of life to express this deepest, most unchanging aspect of the self and to come ever closer to it until life is crowned by death in a cathartic union with the truth. For as Oedipus said:

*Born as I am, I shall be none other than  
I am, and I shall know me who I am...*

Oedipus the King.

---

<sup>131</sup> Shotter, J., *Images of Man in Psychological Research*, London: Methuen, 1975.

## **9. THREE CATEGORIES OF THE PERSON**

*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three;  
But the greatest of these is love.  
I Corinthians 13.13.*

In the last lecture we summarized the concept of the self as an artist and/or work of art, and as composed of three parts or aspects: the dramatist or person, the director/script/role or personality, and the actor or persona. In this lecture I wish to give more flesh, as it were, to this skeletal schema by indicating three characteristic modes or categories of the existence of the self. The first mode or category, which is especially characteristic of the self in its aspect as dramatist-person, is that of faith. The second mode or category, which is especially characteristic of the self in its aspects as dramatist-person and dramatist-personality, is that of hope. And the third mode or category, which employs the self in all three of its aspects, is that of love.

\*

Now when I speak about modes or “categories”, I am, of course, inviting comparison with Kant’s use of the term “category” in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. And indeed, there is an instructive analogy here. Kant identified three synthetic a priori categories which underlie, organize and make possible our empirical knowledge of the world: substance, causality and reciprocity. The three modes or categories of the self which I have identified also underlie, organize and make possible our knowledge of the world. Only this is not the world of objects only, understood as the objects of empirical knowledge, but also the world of organisms, and the world of other persons – which are not objects of empirical knowledge.

The category or mode of faith is like Kant’s category of substance in that it identifies what is in the world; it is the self as perceiver and thinker. Only, as I have said, it is the self perceiving and thinking about not only external objects, but also internal objects – the contents of the self, and other selves, and God Himself. The category or mode of hope is like Kant’s category of causality, in that it concerns dynamic relationships between things, organisms and people. Only it does more than perceive these relationships in the present; it imagines and projects them into the future; it is the self as planner. Finally, the category or mode of love is like Kant’s category of reciprocity in that it concern reciprocal relationships; it is the self as lover.

Let us consider each of these modes or categories in more detail, and the different ways in which each of them relates to reality.

The first mode, that of faith, puts us in relation to reality by identifying what it is. This is most passive mode, in that its content comes from outside. However, one of the achievements of cognitive psychology has been to show that even in the simplest perceptions our minds act on, manipulate and organize sense-data to some degree. This active element increases immeasurably, of course, as we think about what we perceive, until in the most abstract forms of thought an element of givenness would seem to be almost completely lacking. But, as Penrose has demonstrated, even the most abstract forms of mathematical thought have a spatial, and therefore sensory, element: and mathematical truths, too, he argues, are truths about an objective world independent of the mind which present themselves to the mind.<sup>132</sup> It is the perceiving, thinking spirit that makes possible this quasi-spatial organization of experience and its reference to an objective world outside the mind (or, on the other hand, its rejection as mind-generated fantasy). One of the marks of mental disorder is the breakdown of this ability to organize and objectify experience.

The second mode, that of hope, puts in relation to reality by trying to change it. By definition, this is a more active mode; it comes from within and acts upon that objective reality which the first mode has identified. One of the major achievements of analytical psychology has been to show that very often when man in his hoping mode – that is, man as a planning, deciding agent – thinks he is pushing in front, as it were, he is at the same time being pushed from behind by multifarious desires, aversions and complexes. He is less active, and more reactive, than he thinks – less of a subject and more of an object. However, just as the “distance” between perceptions and thoughts, on the one hand, and the perceiving, thinking spirit who has them, on the other, creates the possibility of a truly objective and abstracted (*abstractus*, literally: “drawn away”) intellect, so the “pause” between the promptings of desire or aversion, on the one hand, and the decision to act, on the other, creates the possibility of a truly free and unconstrained will. It is the planning, deciding agent who, “looking before and after”, in Hamlet’s words, makes it possible for him to be neither pushed by the before nor pulled by the after. Another mark of mental disorder is the breakdown of this ability to control desire and freely change reality (including the reality of one’s own nature) rather than being involuntarily swept away by it.

The third mode, that of love, puts us in relation to reality by identifying with it. In a sense love is the primary mode without which the application of the other two modes is impossible. For we cannot identify what reality is, still less hope to change it, if we have not first identified *with* it, knowing nothing more about it than that it is something (as yet identified) that is worthy of our attention.

---

<sup>132</sup> Penrose, R., *The Emperor’s New Mind*, London: Vintage, 1989.

For love in its primitive form is simply *attention*; it is the pre-analytic response which says: "This is worth attending to; this is *quality*". As such, love precedes all divisions into subject and object, or doer and thing done. For, as Pirsig writes, "When one isn't dominated by feelings of separateness from what he's working on, then one can be said to 'care' about what he's doing. That is what caring is, a feeling of identification with what one's doing. When one has this feeling he also sees the inverse side of caring. Quality itself."<sup>133</sup>

\*

Let us attempt to analyze the "moment" of this third mode, the mode of love, as it relates to other *persons*.

The person first identifies another person as such. However, this identification, even if mediated by the senses, is not the same as sense-perception, nor is it an intellectual inference from the senses; for a person can be "seen" by the eyes neither of the flesh nor of the intellect. That is why, when speaking of how we "see" a person, as opposed to the characteristics of an individual, I have preferred the word "intuition" with its connotation of seeing *in* or *through* (e.g. a window), as opposed to looking *at* (e.g. a wall). The intuiting person sees through the physical and psychological characteristics of the other and into his spiritual core – at least to a certain depth.

The second moment of this mode is the will to act for the sake of the other person. This willing is inseparably linked with the intuiting moment because the latter is a function, not of the intellect, but of the heart. It is a seeing which contains within itself a willing, because it is fact a form of loving.

The third moment of this mode is full union with the other person. Since love involves a total absorption of all faculties in the beloved, this moment includes the other moments of intuiting and willing within itself. For true love both sharpens the mind and strengthens the will.

This full union with the other person is the same as the communion which discussed in the second lecture. It involves a union-in-diversity which destroys the boundaries between subjective and objective, self and other, without thereby destroying the individuality of self and other. A poetic description of this is provided by Shakespeare's Portia as follows:

*Beshrew your eyes,  
They have o'erlook'd me and divided me,  
One half of me is yours, the other half yours –  
Mine own I would say: but if mine then yours,  
And so all yours.*

The Merchant of Venice, III, 2.

---

<sup>133</sup> Pirsig, R.M., *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, London: Corgi Books, 1974, p. 290.



\*

It is significant that the Apostle Paul's famous trinity of virtues – faith, hope and love – corresponds very closely to these three modes of the person that we have discussed.

Faith is defined as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11.1). Although this definition applies in the first place to such lofty objects of contemplation as God and the life of the age to come, I believe that it can also be applied to more lowly objects of perception and thought. For faith of a primitive kind is involved even in the lowest forms of spiritual activity.

Thus the idea that a thing can remain identical to itself in both the presence and the absence of an observer and even under various distortions in space is, in a sense, an article of faith, in that we can never be absolutely certain that the object continues to exist even when we are not looking at it. The famous child psychologist Jean Piaget suggested that this ability to see permanent objects “behind” the flux of sense-data, which he called the idea of invariance of quantity under spatial transformation, was absent in younger children. But Moss and Russell demonstrated its existence in children as young as three, which suggests that this “faith” in the objectivity of the external is innate.<sup>134</sup>

That there is indeed some kinship between this primitive kind of faith and the loftier kind is indicated by St. Augustine: “I began to realize that I believed countless things which I had never seen or which had taken place when I was not there to see them – so many events in the history of the world, so many facts about places and towns which I had never seen, and so much that I believed on the word of friends or doctors or various other people. Unless we took some of these things on trust, we should accomplish absolutely nothing in this life. Most of all it came home to me how firm and unshakeable was the faith which told me who my parents were, because I could never have known this unless I believed what I was told. In this way You made me understand that I ought not to find fault with those who believed Your Bible...”<sup>135</sup>

It is the same with “things hoped for” – they are constructs of the perceiving and thinking spirit, though now in the service of the planning and deciding agent. When we imagine ourselves attaining a longed-for goal we construct an image of something that has never actually been seen and may never be seen. But our faith that this potentiality will become actual translates into action that makes it actual. Thus, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says, “By faith

---

<sup>134</sup> Moss, A.E.St.G. & Russell, C.C., “Invariance of Quantity under Spatial Transformation”, undergraduate thesis, Psychology Department, Oxford University, 1970.

<sup>135</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VI, chapter 5.

sea-faring men, trusting to the thinnest plank, exchange that most solid element, the land, for the relentless motion of the waves, committing themselves to uncertain hopes, and carrying with them a faith more sure than any anchor. By faith, therefore, most of men's affairs are held together..."<sup>136</sup>

Hope stands in relation to action as faith to perception: it organizes and objectifies – or rather, “projects” – it. Just as faith takes the chaotic flux of sense-data and makes out of it an ordered and stable world of objects, so hope takes the chaotic surge of desire and makes out of it an ordered and stable scenario or set of scenarios ordered in relations of priority to each other. This involves subordinating or even rejecting altogether certain desires as not being compatible with the overall scenario, or first priority; which is analogous to the way in which some sense-data are downgraded or ignored as not being compatible with our picture of the world. The summation of faith is the totality of our knowledge of the world, visible and invisible. The consummation of hope is the last act in the life-transcending scenario, which takes us into eternity...

But both faith and hope presuppose an identification with reality, which is love. If we did not first identify with reality, we could neither withdraw from it in order to create an ordered and stable world of objects, nor imagine it in the form of an ordered and stable set of scenarios. In this sense both faith and hope “work by love” (Gal. 5.6); in Pirsig's terms, their beginning and end is a caring for Quality.

\*

Now the psychologist Neil Bolton has presented a “programme of phenomenology”, which bears a certain resemblance to the above discussion. He argues that there are three principal components of the structure of experience: “imagination which enables us to enjoy the world as ‘lived experience’ and which defines the boundary between self and world; abstraction, by which we distance ourselves both from objects and from our actions in order to gain insight into their structures; and faith, which is ‘ultimate concern’..., and which seeks the concordance of what is most meaningfully lived with what can be ultimately known. The difference between conventional empiricism and phenomenological empiricism is, therefore, that the former defines its methodology exclusively in terms of what can be known through abstraction, whereas the latter extends the idea of what can be known to include the other ways in which man exists in the world, chiefly, I believe, through imagination and faith.”<sup>137</sup>

---

<sup>136</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, V, 3.

<sup>137</sup> Bolton, N., “The Programme of Phenomenology”, in Costall, A. & Still, W. (eds.), *Cognitive Psychology in Question*, London: Harvester Press, 1987, p. 243.

Bolton contrasts the programme of phenomenological psychology which embraces abstraction, imagination and faith, with that of empirical psychology, preoccupied as it is exclusively with abstraction: "Empirical psychology sees itself as a natural science and it has become, in a variety of ways, the study of the mind's contingency, abstraction showing how the mind can be construed as subordinate to this or that class of events. There is no doubt that human beings are constrained by any number of such events, which can be traced ultimately to biological or social structures; and that useful information can be gathered. For the phenomenologist, on the other hand, abstraction is only one form of thought, and it is preceded by imagination with its metaphors and transcended by concepts which place us being in the world. If empirical psychology is the study of the mind's contingency, phenomenology is the study of its freedom, phenomenological reflection showing how abstraction articulates with the 'plunging forward' of the metaphorical imagination and discovers its only possible repose within concepts which return thought to life."<sup>138</sup>

There is much here that we can agree with, although what Bolton calls "faith" is closer to what I have defined as "love". We can agree that empirical psychology starts from a false, Cartesian premise – the premise, namely, that the only true form of knowing is abstract knowing, and that the only important mode of being is the being of a subject over against an object: "I think, therefore I am". The first and primary mode of being is the identification of the subject with the object, not through an obliteration of the difference between subject and object, but through a defining of that difference through love: "I love, therefore I am".

For we define ourselves, first of all, by what we love, which is a pre-conceptual and pre-imaginative identification with the other as "quality" worthy of our attention and striving. But this definition is not an abstract, conceptual kind of definition; for, as Pirsig says, "to take that which has caused us to create the world [in symbols and concepts], and include it within the [symbolic, conceptual] world we have created, is clearly impossible. That is why Quality cannot be defined. If we do define it [conceptually] we are defining something less than Quality itself."<sup>139</sup>

It is on the basis of, and in the service of, this primary mode of being that the other modes – those of abstraction and imagination, or faith and hope – come into play. It is the primary mode, love, that gives life to the other modes, and determines their direction; to "return thought to life" is to place these secondary modes in the context of the primary one. For what we love defines what we hope for, the content of our imaginings and the structure of our goals. And this in turn defines what we perceive and how we think.

---

<sup>138</sup> Bolton, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

<sup>139</sup> Pirsig, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

Love is not an inner state of the subject caused by an external object in the environment; for then it would be describable in purely mechanistic, stimulus-response terms. Nor is it a blind striving for satisfaction; for then it would be describable in vitalistic, instinctual terms. Love identifies something akin to itself, something worthy of itself, through a process of what we may call *resonance or reflection*. That is why we cannot separate the lover's identification of the beloved from his self-identification: "Tell me whom you love, and I will tell you who you are".

\*

So far in these lectures I have tried to transcend the limitations of empirical psychology by adopting the perspective provided by art. From such a perspective, scientific empiricism, the division of the world into perceiving subjects and perceived objects, is a specialized function of the much broader activity of artistic expression – that is, the symbolic representation, not only of perceptions in objects, but also of desires and other subconscious contents, and also of persons and lives, in works of art. For, as we have seen, the only way to understand the self-determination of a free agent is to enter into his life empathically and enact it as a project or drama. It is their common employment of this method that unites drama, biography and psychotherapy, and distinguishes them from all forms of empirical psychology.

Macmurray writes: "Any objective or impersonal knowledge of the human, any science of man, whether psychological or sociological, involves a negation of the personal relations of the 'I' and 'You', and so of the relation which constitutes them as persons. Formally, such knowledge is knowledge of the 'You', that is, of the other person; but not of the other person in relation to the knower, but as an object in the world. I can know another person as a person only by entering into personal relation with him. Without this I can know him only by observation and inference; only objectively. The knowledge which I can obtain in this way is valid knowledge; my conclusions from observations can be true or false, they can be verified or falsified by further observation or by experiment. But it is abstract knowledge, since it constructs its object by limitation of attention to what can be known about other persons without entering into personal relations with them."<sup>140</sup>

"This concentration on the object," writes Macmurray in another place, "this indifference to the persons concerned, which is characteristic of the 'information' attitude, is often called objectivity. It is really only impersonality. For the strange thing is that when we concentrate on the 'object' – the third person, what we talk about – to the exclusion of the persons who know it and talk about it, we lose the reality of the object."<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> Macmurray, J., *Persons in Relation*, London: Faber, pp. 28-29.

<sup>141</sup> Macmurray, J., *Reason and Emotion*, London: Faber, 1935, pp. 151-152.

Art is more personal than science because “by retaining the object in full relation to the artist – the first person – art secures knowledge of the object by maintaining its reality, and also it secures, for the same reason, the free creativeness of the person.”

However, artists do not engage in fully mutual relationships in their art. Or, if we can call these personal relationships, they are solipsistic, intra-personal ones. For the artist expresses himself in his art; but his art does not speak back to him, even if it influences and to some extent changes him. Thus the dramatist communicates to his audience, but does not – except in the critical reviews after the performance – receive a similarly profound communication in return.

As Macmurray puts it: “The artist wants to give, not to receive; so that mutuality is lost, and his experience, though it remains intensely personal, is one-sided, has lost part of the fullness of personal experience. Knowledge there is, and the pouring out of knowledge, which is self-expression, but not mutuality; and therefore the second person is generalised to a listener, negative and receptive, and tends to fade out of the picture and become imaginary. The artist can write his description for anyone to read, or paint his picture for anyone to see. He gives himself, not to anyone in particular but to the world at large. That is not a fuller but a narrower experience; because personally, to give yourself to everyone, is to give yourself to none. The mutuality of the personal belongs to its essence.”<sup>142</sup>

The psychotherapist is in a more direct relationship with his subject, of course; but even here – and this is very indicative of the real nature of psychotherapy – the relationship is very deliberately one-sided, with the patient lying on a couch and recalling his experiences while the therapist may not face him at all. The patient makes the revelations, the therapist – only the atmosphere in which revelation can come more freely, and sometimes, but by no means always, an interpretation.

If, when doing art or psychotherapy, we limit our love and interaction with the other person to a one-way, or at least not fully mutual relationship, this presupposes the possibility of a fully mutual relationship. Hence the modes of faith and hope, when applied to persons, presuppose the mode of love. But progress in love reveals that true love between two persons “opens up”, as it were, into a communion with a higher Being Who is both personal and super-personal.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Macmurray, J., *Reason and Emotion*, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>143</sup> Frank, S.L., *Reality and Man*, London: Faber, 1965; Zenkovsky, V., “Printsipy Pravoslavnoj Antropologii” (“Principles of Orthodox Anthropology”), *Vestnik Russkogo Khristianskogo Dvizhenia* (*Herald of the Russian Christian Movement*), 1988, II-III.

This being so, in the last lectures in this course I shall turn from the real but limited knowledge of man that science and art give us to the fuller and deeper knowledge provided by religion.

## **10. MAN AS THE IMAGE OF GOD**

*We all, with unveiled face, beholding  
As in a mirror the glory of the Lord,  
Are being transformed into the same image  
From glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.*  
II Corinthians 3.18.

So far in this course of lectures we have examined the scientific and artistic approaches to psychology. We have seen the limitations of scientific psychology and the ways in which artistic psychology goes deeper into both the subconscious and conscious aspects of man's life. However, there are limitations to the artistic approach, too.

We have noted one of these in the last lecture: the lack of full mutuality in art, the fact that the artist communicates with his audience, but not vice-versa, so that the relationship is not fully personal and so not fully capable of representing the personal. A partial exception to this limitation is the art of iconography, in which the person depicted in the icon is not only contemplated by the worshipper, but enters into a relationship with him, so that the worshipper looks, not *at* the icon, as one would look at a painting in an art gallery, but *through* it to the person represented in it.<sup>144</sup> But in iconography, of course, we have passed from the realm of "pure" art to religious art, from the created realm to the realm of grace.

A second limitation of the artistic approach to psychology is that we should expect, if art truly represented the whole truth about man, that great art would produce great men, or at any rate great improvements in men, whether in the artist alone or in his audience. However, there is no firm evidence that the great artists are better men because of their art; some of the greatest artists, such as Wagner, were very bad men, which would tend to suggest that the accurate expression of oneself in art does not necessarily lead to self-improvement.

Now from Socrates onwards, it has been generally believed that the key to self-improvement is self-knowledge. Christ said: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8.32); and this truth must include the truth about one's inner self. Perhaps, then, the failure of self-knowledge through art to lead to self-improvement would suggest that the artist qua artist misses something that is essential to a full understanding of himself and others.

---

<sup>144</sup> Ouspensky, L., *The Theology of the Icon*, Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992.

Thirdly, it is impossible from a purely artistic or therapeutic, and still less purely empirical viewpoint, to define the norm of humanity, what a man should and can be, as opposed to what he is. As we have seen, great tragic drama is a partial exception to this rule. However, attempts to define this ideal in the language of psychology have simply reflected the self-indulgence of the surrounding culture.<sup>145</sup>

In order to transcend the limitations of the artistic image of man, we need to go back to the theme of my eighth lecture – the self as art, and in particular to the definition of man that was discussed there – man as an artist and/or work of art who has been created by God to express His own nature, and examine it more deeply in the light of Divine Revelation.

\*

God reveals Himself first of all as the Creator – in the words of the Symbol of faith, the “Maker” or “Poet” (Ποιητης) of all things visible and invisible. In a sense, therefore, man, as being in the image of God, is also a poet, a creator – not as an incidental or minor aspect of his being, not as a mere “talent”, but essentially, by virtue of the image of God that is in him. And he makes things both visible and invisible. The visible things are the works of his own hands, and his own visible actions. The invisible things are his inner thoughts and feelings. His aim is to bring all that is his, visible and invisible, into one harmonious whole which will be a beautiful likeness of his Creator.

Man is creative in the image of God’s creativity; he shapes himself out of his inherited and learned features as God shaped him from the earth and the water of the original creation, mixing it with His own Creator Spirit; he names and symbolizes creation as God brought all things into being out of nothing by His Word. In this dynamic, creative, artistic and scientific aspect of his nature, which I have called the “I” (as opposed to the “It” and “Me”), man may be said to mirror and reflect God’s dynamism and creativity, and in particular that Person in God Who appears as the Divine Actor and Creator in human history, and Who even assumed a human body and soul – Jesus Christ.

The Russian religious philosopher Semyon Ludwigovich Frank has expressed the idea that man is God’s “self-expression” in the created world: “Man is in one respect a creature in exactly the same sense as the rest of the world: as a purely natural being, he is part of the cosmos, a part of organic nature; in man’s inner life this fact finds expression in the domain of involuntary mental processes, strivings and appetites, and in the blind interplay of elemental forces. But as a personality, as a spiritual being and ‘an image of God’ man differs from all other creatures. While all other creatures are expressions and embodiments of God’s particular creative ideas, man is a

---

<sup>145</sup> Vitz, Paul C., *Psychology as Religion: The Cult of Self-Worship*, Tring: Lion Publishing, 1979.



creature in and through which God seeks to express His own nature as spirit, personality and holiness. An analogy with human artistic creativeness will make the point clearer.

“In poetry (and to some extent, by analogy with it, in other arts) we distinguish between epic and lyric works, between the artist’s intention to embody some idea referring to the objective content of being, and his intention to express his own self, to tell of his own inner world, and as it were to make his confession. The difference, of course, is merely relative. The poet’s creative personality involuntarily makes itself felt in the style of an ‘objective’ epic; on the other hand, a lyric outpouring is not simply a revelation of the poet’s inner life as it actually is, but an artistic transfiguration of it, and therefore inevitably contains an element of ‘objectivisation’. With this proviso, however, the difference between the two kinds of poetry holds good.

“Using this analogy we may say that man is, as it were, God’s ‘lyric’ creation in which He wants ‘to express’ Himself, while the rest of creation, though involuntarily bearing the impress of its Creator, is the expression of God’s special ‘objective’ ideas, of His creative will to produce entities other than Himself. The fundamental point of difference is the presence or absence of the personal principle with all that it involves, i.e. self-consciousness, autonomy, and the power of controlling and directing one’s actions in accordance with the supreme principle of the Good or Holiness...”<sup>146</sup>

Man in his present state is like an unfinished symphony. All the essential elements or content are there, implanted by God at conception; but the development and elucidation of that content into a perfect form remains incomplete – and God calls on us to complete it. Without that development and completion man is a still-born embryo. But he works like an artist on this unfinished material and brings it to perfection, to a true likeness of God, “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4.13). Thus man as artist works on himself as work of art in order to reveal the harmony latent in God’s original design.

Man as the unfinished material which needs to be brought to artistic perfection may be called his “It”. Man as the artist who works on this material may be called his “I”. And man as the finished work, which was always there as God’s original conception may be called his “Me”. When the “I” has done its creative work on the “It”, the real “Me” is revealed.

The distinction made by many of the Holy Fathers between the image and likeness of man may be interpreted in the context of this schema as follows. The image of God, as the rationality and freewill of man, represents the creative “I”. The likeness of God, being “the new man, created according to God in righteousness and holiness of truth” (Ephesians 4.24), represents the

---

<sup>146</sup> Frank, *Reality and Man*, London: Faber & Faber, 1965, pp. 219-220.

real “Me”, the fruit of the correct use of man’s rationality and freewill in the acquisition of the Holy Spirit and His gifts: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, mercy, faith, meekness and abstinence” (Galatians 5.22-23). This is the man as God intended him to be, the product of intense ascetic effort to purify “the old man, corrupted in deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4.22). The relationship between image and likeness may be compared to that between potentiality and actuality, or between the creative potential of man and that potential in its full actualisation, the creature as God intended him to be.

The “It”, therefore, is the raw material on which the “I” must work in order to make manifest the “Me”, the true likeness of God. In man’s present, fallen state, it includes many originally good faculties that have been corrupted and rendered evil by the fall. The task of the creator “I” is not to destroy these faculties, but, with the help of God, to purify and redirect them to their original, unfallen state.

These faculties are essentially three: the mind or thinking faculty (nous), the irascible faculty (thymos) and the appetitive or desiring faculty (eros). That the mind is an originally good faculty which can be restored from evil to good, from falsehood to truth, is generally accepted. But that the irascible and desiring faculties are also good in essence is less generally accepted.

And yet they are not only innocent in essence, according to the Holy Fathers: they are necessary for the fulfilling of the commandments. Thus St. Isaiah the Solitary writes on the natural passion of anger: “There is among the passions an anger of the intellect, and this anger is in accordance with nature. Without anger a man cannot attain purity: he has to feel angry with all that is sown in him by the enemy.”<sup>147</sup> Again, St. Gregory Palamas paraphrases a phrase from the Psalms to show the original goodness of eros: “Not only hast Thou made the passionate part of my soul entirely Thine, but if there is a spark of desire in my body, it has returned to its source, and has thereby become elevated and united to Thee.”<sup>148</sup> And in another place he writes: “Impassibility does not consist in mortifying the passionate part of the soul, but in removing it from evil to good, and directing its energies towards divine things.”<sup>149</sup>

\*

We can gain more insight into this question by looking more closely at the Orthodox Christian art of iconography. But first we need to examine the theological foundations of this sacred art.

---

<sup>147</sup> St. Isaiah, *On Guarding the Intellect*, 1.

<sup>148</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, I, ii, 1.

<sup>149</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II, ii, 5.

Iconography is based on, and is in turn a demonstration of, the ability of Spirit to interpenetrate with matter and to be expressed in matter. Just as light passing through a stained glass window is not prevented from passing through by the materiality of the window (so long as it is clean), but rather illumines it and brings out its colours, so spiritual light is not prevented from passing through the materiality of the iconographer or his icon, but rather illumines them and brings out their innate potentialities (again: so long as it is clean). Moreover, just as the properties of white light become visible only when refracted through a prism into the colours of the rainbow, so the spiritual light of God becomes visible to us only when refracted through human beings and their creations.

There is an interesting parallel here with the laws of the physical universe. The boundaries of the physical universe, the very shape of space and time, according to relativity theory, are defined by the ultimate limit of the speed of light; while the content of that universe, matter, is capable of being transformed into energy, that is, light. In a similar way, the boundaries of the spiritual universe are defined by the unattainable nature of the uncreated Light of God; while the created contents of that universe, angels and men, are capable of being spiritualized, transfigured, even *deified* in that Light – not the essence of that Light, but its energy, as St. Gregory Palamas makes clear – in accordance with the laws of the spiritual life.

Even the lowest element of the created universe, inanimate matter, is capable of being spiritualized and transfigured in this way. But the possibility of matter being transfigured by the Spirit depends on a certain potential conformity between Spirit and matter. For matter can either return to the formless chaos it was originally formed out of, or it can be submitted to re-formation by men in the light of their own spiritual nature.

Men, however, being fallen and on the way to formlessness through the sin that is in them, can carry out this task only if they themselves have submitted to re-formation in accordance with St. Paul's words: "Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 10.2); and: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; that ye may put on the new man, which is created in accordance with God in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4.23-24). However, the possibility of men being re-formed and transformed in this way depends on a certain natural conformity between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God – or rather, between the whole of man's nature, spirit, soul and body, and the nature of God. If this conformity exists, and can be renewed by cleansing, then the Uncreated Light coming from God can stream through the whole universe of spirits and flesh and inanimate matter, illumining their hitherto unseen properties and potentialities, while being Itself expressed in them by a kind of infinitely diverse refraction of colours, which St. Paul called "the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3.10).

We are therefore presented with a model of reality consisting of three interconnected planes: the plane of the Divine Nature, the plane of the rational (angelic and human) natures, and the plane of the animal, vegetable and mineral natures. Taken in themselves, the planes are incommensurable; an apparently unbridgeable gulf separates the plane of rational natures, for example, from that of irrational nature, and an even greater gulf separates the plane of Uncreated Nature from the whole of creation, both rational and irrational. However, there is a potential and actual conformity between the three planes that is created by, and revealed in, the Uncreated Light of God, which streams out of the plane of the Divine Nature, illumines the plane of the human and angelic natures, and then passes through to the lowest plane in the form of the sacraments and liturgical art, especially iconography.

Thus in iconography the iconographer must first make himself transparent to the Light of God in his own life, becoming, as it were a living icon of God, before he can make an icon that also reflects the Light of God. This idea is expressed in a hymn to St. Alypius the Iconographer: "Thou didst portray the Saints' faces on panels of wood, O all-praised Alypius. As a skilled craftsman thou didst inscribe their good works on the tablets of thy heart. Like an icon adorned in a God-like manner thou was gilded with the grace of holiness by Christ the Saviour of our souls."<sup>150</sup> That is why prayer, the Christian's main path to Godlikeness, is called "the science of sciences and art of arts". For, as Colliander writes, "the artist works in clay or colours, in words or tones; according to his ability he gives them pregnancy and beauty. The working material of the praying person is living humanity. By his prayer he shapes it, gives it pregnancy and beauty: first himself and thereby many others."<sup>151</sup>

Now if the planes are *natures*, then points of contact between them, the points through which the Light of God streams through them, are *persons* – the Uncreated Persons of the Holy Trinity, the created persons of men and angels, and the personifications of liturgical art. That is why icons are said to depict persons, not nature. And that is why the icon of God which is man can reflect Him in no other way than by attaining full personhood as the crown of a purified and transfigured nature.

The "theology of the image" (Ouspensky) adumbrated here unites three planes of being through the concept of the image. At the highest level, Christ the Son of God is "the brightness of the glory and express image of the Person" of the Father (Hebrews 1.3). At the intermediate level, the saint who purifies himself of sin similarly becomes an image of Christ. And at the lowest level, the icon, at the hands of a truly saintly iconographer, itself becomes an image of the saint. And all this is accomplished through the Light that streams

---

<sup>150</sup> *Menaion*, August 17.

<sup>151</sup> Colliander, T., *The Way of the Ascetics*, London: Harvill, 1961, p. 73.

from God “the Father of lights” (James 1.17) down throughout the created universe, down to the smallest particle of created matter...

\*

Let me now summarize the concept of man worked out in the preceding lectures, and bring it into relation to the theology of the image.

I said in my eighth lecture that “man as artist works on himself as work of art in order to reveal the harmony latent in God’s original design”. Alternatively, we could say that man *is the content of a work of art striving, as artist, to achieve his ideal artistic form*, to turn the potential for beauty inherent in his original nature into actual beauty. Or, a third way of putting it: man is a free *project* striving to turn himself as a given *subject* into an ideal *object*.

Let us elaborate on this. Man can be viewed under three aspects. As a *given subject*, as a product of nature and nurture, genes and environment, man may said to be an *It* – it is under this aspect, and this aspect alone, that science studies man. However, unprejudiced observation of oneself reveals man to be not only a determined content, a given subject, or *It*, but also an *ongoing project*, an *I*, who can freely and creatively work on the subject given him and transform it into something else that could not have been predicted scientifically from the original content. And yet neither science nor art, but only true religion, is able to perceive the *ideal object*, or end, of this creative striving. That end is “the real *Me*”, the beautiful harmony latent in the original, apparently formless and chaotic subject, but requiring the creative project to bring it into objective existence and life.

Now man is made in the image and likeness of God; “the real *Me*” is a true likeness to God. And we know that “when He shall appear,” if we have truly striven towards this end, “we shall be like Him” (I John 3.2). However, in the beginning, before we have set out on this path, what is visible in us is only an apparently formless and chaotic subject that is closer to the image of the beast than the image of God. It is only as a result of man’s creative work on himself that the ideal object, the real *Me*, the image of God, is revealed. And yet man cannot attain this end on his own, through the exercise only of his natural abilities in science and art: the Spirit of God must work with and in the spirit of man in order to reveal both the end, the ideal object of his striving, and the means to attain it.

The Holy Fathers draw a distinction between the image and the likeness of man. Thus St. Diadochus of Photice writes: “Man is created in the image of God. This image is given to him in his spirit and his freewill. But the image must be revealed in likeness, and this is accomplished in freedom and in the

gift of the self in love.”<sup>152</sup> Again he writes: “In portraiture, when the full range of colours is added for the outline, the painter captures the likeness of the subject, even down to the smile. Something similar happens to those who are being repainted by God’s grace in the divine likeness: when the luminosity of love is added, then it is evident that the image has been fully transformed into the beauty of the likeness.”<sup>153</sup>

We can draw an analogous distinction in terms of this model: the difference between the image and the likeness is the difference between the project and the object, between the striving for the likeness and the actual attainment of the likeness. Thus the image is the *spirit* and *freewill* of man, which, when joined to the grace of God, the “luminosity” of Divine love, produces in us the fruit of love and holiness, man as he is supposed to be. However, just as the artist can use his gift, his creativity, to paint a demonic caricature of his subject, so man can use his freewill to turn himself into the opposite of what he is supposed to be, so that he lives, in St. Augustine’s phrase, “in a place of dissimilitude”.<sup>154</sup> And so man as he comes into this world reflects God to a certain degree: to the degree that he is rational and free in the image of God’s Reason and Freedom. But depending on how he uses this image of God in himself, his rationality and freedom, he may emerge in the life of the age to come either as a true likeness of God, transfigured by the luminosity of love and graced by all the divine virtues, or as a demonic parody and perversion of that likeness, full of darkness and hatred.

Now it will be evident that there is a parallel between the three attributes of spirituality (or rationality), freewill and love indicated here and the three axioms of psychology discussed in the first two lectures. These were that man is one, and cannot be compartmentalized, that he is free and cannot be reduced to deterministic processes, and that he is personal. Man is *one*, because the great variety of his physical and psychological functions are united by one *spirit*. He is *free*, because in deciding what he is to be and to do, he has, whatever the pressures coming from soul and body, a *will* that can say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to them. And he is *personal*, because by giving himself completely in *love* he demonstrates his freedom from the egoistic desire to fulfil the demands of his individual nature.

Such a man is indeed *godlike*; for he demonstrates in his own nature the absolute unity, freedom and love of God Himself. More, he is a god: not god by nature, as the Hindus and New-Ageists believe, but god by grace, by the free gift of God; for, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”, he has become “a partaker of the Divine nature” (II Peter 1.4). For he has received again that grace which was infused into man’s nature at

---

<sup>152</sup> St. Diadochus, quoted in Leonid Ouspensky, *The Theology of the Icon*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978, p. 185.

<sup>153</sup> St. Diadochus, *On Spiritual Knowledge*, 89; in *The Philokalia*, volume 1, p. 288.

<sup>154</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*.

his creation by the Creator, and which is so closely linked with his soul and his body as to form one nature with Him, so that "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (I Corinthians 6.17).

"The image, then," writes Vladimir Lossky, "cannot be objectified, 'naturalized', we might say, by being attributed to some part or other of the human being. To be in the image of God, the Fathers affirm, in the last analysis is to be a personal being, that is to say, a free responsible being. Why, one might ask, did God make man free and responsible? Precisely because He wanted to call him to a supreme vocation: deification; that is, to say, to become by grace, in a movement as boundless as God, that which God is by His nature. And this call demands a free response; God wishes that this movement be a movement of love..."

"A personal being is capable of loving someone more than his own nature, more than his own life. The person, that is to say, the image of God in man, is then man's *freedom* with regard to his nature, 'the fact of being freed from necessity and not being subject to the dominion of nature, but able to determine oneself freely' (St. Gregory of Nyssa). Man acts most often under natural impulses. He is conditioned by his temperament, his character, his heredity, cosmic or psycho-social ambiance, indeed, his very historicity. But the truth of man is beyond all conditioning; and his dignity consists in being able to liberate himself from his nature, not by consuming it or abandoning it to itself, like the ancient or oriental sage, but by transfiguring it in God."<sup>155</sup>

This attribute of the image is implicit in the scriptural words: "Let us create...", which precede the creation of man, as opposed to the words: "And God said...", which precede the creation of the irrational creatures. For it was fitting that when it came to the creation of the only personal creature in the visible creation, the scripture should show God's personal - or rather, multi-personal - involvement. Thus just as God is Three Persons in One Nature, so His image, man, is many persons in one nature.

The major difference between man and the animals is that man, unlike the animals, can in a mysterious way first transcend his own nature, and then orient it towards God and his neighbour. This ability is what we call "being a person". Personhood, like the image of God, is not something added to nature as an extra part of it, but rather the capacity of the whole of nature to transcend itself, to give and empty itself, for the other. God is personal because His nature is love; His nature is love because He is supremely personal; for His nature is to give Himself for other persons - both the uncreated Persons of the Holy Trinity and the created persons of men and angels. And man made in the image of God is similarly personal; giving himself freely in love, he transcends nature and becomes one spirit with His Maker and his fellow-men (I Corinthians 6.17, 12.13).

---

<sup>155</sup> V. Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, pp. 71-72.

The created nature which is transcended and oriented *ad extra* is no longer closed in on itself and cut off, as it were, from its Creator, as is the case throughout the animal kingdom, but becomes, through the person, a likeness of the Creator's own nature. Thus the likeness of God is the whole nature of man oriented in freedom and love, and under the guidance of the Spirit of God, towards its Divine Archetype. This God-directedness and Godlikeness is the nature of man as it was originally created.

The denial of this norm of human nature is what we, paradoxically, call *humanism*, which, far from ennobling man, degrades him. For, as Fr. Seraphim Rose wrote, humanism is actually *subhumanism*. For it is "a rebellion against the true nature of man and the world, a flight from God the center of man's being, a denial of all the realities of man's existence, clothed in the language of the opposite of all these. Subhumanism, therefore, is not a disturbing obstacle to the realization of humanism; it is its culmination and goal... Subhumanism teaches us that Enlightenment 'humanism', which denies man's true nature as the image of God, is no true humanism at all."<sup>156</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of this World: The Life and Teachings of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Foundation, 1993, p. 133.



## **11. CREATED SOUL OR EVOLVING BODY?**

*Man being in honour did not understand;  
Being compared to the dumb beasts, he is become like unto them.*  
Psalm 49.20.

The concept of the image of God in man that was outlined in the last lecture depends critically on the assumption that man was created by God, and that his creation was the conscious self-expression of his Creator. According to this theology, the likeness of God was originally lost by one historical man, Adam, and was restored by another historical man, "the last Adam", Jesus Christ (Romans 5.12; I Corinthians 15.45). However, these teachings are denied by the dominant contemporary theory of man, Darwinism or evolutionism, according to which man came into being by chance from the combination of lower elements. The purpose of this lecture, therefore, is to demonstrate that evolutionism is false, and that Adam and Eve are historical created persons.

\*

Now for a Christian it can, or should, be sufficient to know that the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church, following Christ Himself, all believed in the historicity of Adam (cf. Matthew 19.4-6). St. Luke's Gospel contains a genealogy tracing the descent of Christ from Adam, which would make no sense if Adam were some mythical or allegorical figure (Luke 3). Again, St. Paul says that "God made every nation of man from one", that is, Adam (Acts 17.26), and St. John speaks of the sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, as of real historical people (I John 3.12).

St. Paul said that if Christ is not risen, our faith is in vain (I Corinthians 15.14). Similarly, we may say that if Adam is not a historical, created being, then the Christian faith makes no sense. Thus the Christian dogma of redemption is based on the idea that Christ by His good deeds reversed the evil deeds of Adam: "As by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5. 18-19). Man's final destiny is also conceived in terms of the relationship between two historical men: "The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven... As we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly" (I Corinthians 15.47, 49). These passages would make no sense if Adam were not understood to be a unique historical person in exactly the same sense as Christ.

Darwinism challenges this understanding by arguing that: (a) there was no single first-created man, but several more-or-less human or humanoid ancestors; (b) these creatures came into being, not by the creative command of God or the intervention of any intelligent being, but by mutation and natural selection – that is, the selection of the fittest from a series of chance modifications in the genes of apes; and (c) these apes themselves evolved by the same processes of mutation and natural selection from more primitive species, and so on back to the most primitive organism, which evolved from inorganic matter.

After reigning almost unchallenged for decades, Darwinism is coming under increasing attack from many quarters. The extreme paucity and fragmentary state of the anthropological evidence, the notorious gaps in the fossil evidence, the lack of evidence for any ongoing evolution, the almost invariably destructive effects of mutation, the failure to create even the simplest forms of life in the laboratory, the extreme interconnectedness of the elements of the most primitive cell, which precludes their having been put together one-by-one – these are just a few of the enormous problems faced by evolutionism. Many scientists from various disciplines are now coming to the firm conclusion that Darwinism is simply false.<sup>157</sup>

Now it is beyond my purpose and abilities to go into the evidence against the theory from the physical, chemical and biological sciences. In any case, even if the scientific evidence for Darwinism were stronger than it is, the Christians would be justified in rejecting it in view of the “many infallible proofs” (Acts 1.3) we have of the truth of Divine Revelation. It is not a question of religion being proved right and science wrong: true religion and true science are always found to be in accord.<sup>158</sup> The point is that even when science makes progress, it does so by the rejection of false hypotheses; today’s scientific orthodoxy is tomorrow’s obvious fallacy. Religious truth, on the other hand, “was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3), so that progress in religion comes from deepened knowledge of the same truth which in essence cannot change. Therefore as long as we can be confident that we are in possession of the correct understanding of Divine Revelation – which confidence comes from being partakers in the Holy Tradition of the Orthodox

---

<sup>157</sup> For the best single-volume refutation of Darwinism from a purely scientific point of view, see Vance Ferrell, *Science vs. Evolution*, Altamont, TN: Evolution Facts, Inc., 2001. See also [evolution-facts.org](http://evolution-facts.org).

<sup>158</sup> Thus Professor I.M. Andreyev writes: “Only with a superficial knowledge do there arise *false* contradictions between faith and knowledge, between religion and science. With a deeper knowledge these false contradictions disappear without a trace... A broad, scientific and philosophical education not only does not hinder faith in God, but makes it easier, because the whole arsenal of scientific-philosophical thought is natural apologetic material for religious faith. Moreover, honest knowledge often has a methodical opportunity to uncover corruptions of faith and exposing superstitions, whether religious or scientific-philosophical.” (“Christian Truth and Scientific Knowledge”, *The Orthodox Word*, March-April, 1977)

Church – we will never be tempted to exchange the gold of the Unchanging Word of God for the dross of fallible and constantly changing human opinion. For, as St. Basil the Great writes: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel. Those who have written about the nature of the universe have discussed at length the shape of the earth...; all these conjectures have been suggested by cosmographers, each one upsetting that of its predecessor. It will not lead me to give less importance to the creation of the universe than the servant of God Moses is silent about shapes... He has passed over in silence, as useless, all that is unimportant to us. Shall I then prefer foolish wisdom to the oracles of the Holy Spirit?”<sup>159</sup>

Just as St. Basil would not compromise the teaching of the Gospel in order to be in conformity with the latest “foolish wisdom” of the scientists of his time, so modern contestants for the truth of Orthodoxy have not feared to enter into battle with Darwinism. Thus already in the nineteenth century Russian Orthodox theologians such as St. Theophan the Recluse were attacking the theory.<sup>160</sup> And in Greece St. Nectarios of Aegina wrote: “The followers of pithecogeny [the derivation of man from the apes] are ignorant of man and of his lofty destiny, because they have denied him his soul and Divine Revelation. They have rejected the Spirit, and the Spirit has abandoned them. They withdrew from God, and God withdrew from them; for, thinking they were wise, they became fools... If they had acted with knowledge, they would not have lowered themselves to much, nor would they have taken pride in tracing the origin of the human race to the most shameless of animals. Rightly did the Prophet say of them: ‘Man, being in honour, did not understand; he is compared to the mindless cattle, and is become like unto them’ (Psalm 48.21).”<sup>161</sup>

More recently, Fr. Seraphim Rose has placed the debate in a firmly patristic context: “The state of Adam and the first-created world has been placed forever beyond the knowledge of science by the barrier of Adam’s transgression, which changed the very nature of Adam and the creation, and indeed the very nature of knowledge itself. Modern science knows only what it observes and what can be reasonably inferred from observation... The true knowledge of Adam and the first-created world – as much as is useful for us to know – is accessible only in God’s revelation and in the Divine vision of the saints.”<sup>162</sup>

\*

---

<sup>159</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Homily Nine on the Hexaemeron*.

<sup>160</sup> See T. Spidlik, *La Doctrine Spirituelle de Theophane le Reclus*, Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 1965.

<sup>161</sup> St. Nectarios, *Sketch Concerning Man*, Athens, 1885, pp. 216-217.

<sup>162</sup> Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of this World: The Life and Teachings of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Foundation, 1993, p. 519.

Apart from denying the historicity of Adam, Darwinism violates several other dogmas of the Orthodox Faith. These include: (i) the purposiveness of creation; (ii) the causality of the fall; and (iii) the nature and immortality of the soul. Let us look briefly at these in turn.

- (i) Holy Scripture teaches that the creation of the world was an act of the Divine Will (Revelation 4.110, and had nothing to do with chance. However, all the major evolutionist scientists have attributed the origin of life to chance processes – namely, mutation and natural selection. Those few who have very tentatively postulated some force such as “directiveness” to fill in some of the huge gaps left by evolutionism are in a very small minority. Many Christians have adopted the compromise solution of “theistic evolutionism”, which attempts to combine belief in a purposive Creator with the chance processes of mutation and natural selection, as if God somehow “works through chance”. However, the idea that “God plays with dice” has proved no more appealing to the biologists than it did to Einstein...
- (ii) Death in man, according to St. Paul, came about as the result of the sin of the first man, Adam (Romans 5.12). And the death and corruption that we see all around us is also the result of Adam’s sin; for “the creation was made subject to vanity” (Romans 8.20) because of his sin. And yet Darwinism destroys this causal relationship by claiming that man only emerged on the scene when animals had been dying for millions of years! In fact, insofar as mutation and natural selection are essentially destructive processes, death and destruction are, for the Darwinists, the very engine of creation. And yet Holy Scripture states categorically that “God made not death” (Wisdom 1.13), that creation took place at His word out of nothing, and that it was “very good” from the beginning and therefore not in need of any major modification, let alone such massive and apparently senseless destruction of billions and billions of animals...
- (iii) The idea that there is such a thing as an incorporeal soul which survives the death of the body is anathema to evolutionist scientists. However, what is rejected by evolutionist scientists is often accepted by “theistic evolutionists”, who attempt to combine two incompatible philosophies. Some argue that while the soul of Adam was given to him directly by God, his body came into existence through evolution.<sup>163</sup> This position is untenable. For if the language of Genesis 2 is accepted as describing, albeit in metaphorical terms, God’s inspiration of a soul into Adam, then it must also be accepted as describing His direct creation of his body.

---

<sup>163</sup> This was the position of Pope John-Paul II.

However, let us assume the correctness of this position for the sake of argument. The question then arises: what, precisely, did God breathe the soul of Adam into? The foetus of an ape? Then Adam would have had the soul of a man and the body of an ape – and perhaps also the soul of an ape. The first foetus to be born after the last mutation in the hominid line? But then Adam must have had a mother, whether we call her ape, hominid or human. However, Holy Scripture quite clearly states that Adam, unlike all other humans, had no human (or animal) ancestors, but was “the son of God” (Luke 3.38).

Similar difficulties arise with regard to the creation of Eve. Did Adam as the first fully human male mate with a female hominid who was one step behind him in the ladder of evolution? Or, by an astonishing coincidence, did another – but different, simultaneous and precisely complementary – mutation in another female hominid produce the first fully human female? (It should be pointed out in passing that sexual differentiation represents one of the greatest difficulties for the theory of evolution, because the jump from asexual reproduction to sexual reproduction entails multiple and simultaneous mutations going in different, but precisely complementary directions in neighbouring individuals of the same species, the one mutation producing a male of the new species and the other – a female.) Either way, there is a contradiction with Holy Scripture, which says that God made Eve out of Adam’s side, so that she was “flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones”.

Of course, we can allegorize this episode until it, too, is reduced to whatever we want to make of it. But then we become like those who, in St. Basil’s words, “giving themselves up to the distorted meaning of allegory, have undertaken to give a majesty of their own invention to Scripture. In this way they believe themselves wiser than the Holy Spirit, and bring forth their own ideas under a pretext of exegesis.”<sup>164</sup> Of course, the fact that Holy Scripture clearly teaches that the soul has a different origin and nature from the body does not mean that we can adequately describe this difference, which remains one of the great mysteries of the created world. But the fact that there are limitations to our knowledge should not prevent us from recognizing what we do know – and we know that we are more than our bodies. Many contemporary Christians grant that we are more than our bodies, but would still try to derive the soul from the body, as if all the higher functions which we call psychical or spiritual derived – through evolution, or in some other way – from the lower functions that we call physical or physiological. In spite of the fact that nobody has offered even a remotely plausible theory of how this derivation is possible, the theory remains popular. It is even combined in some with the idea of reincarnation – the idea, namely, that souls can “evolve” into higher kinds of being or “devolve” into the “souls” of animals or plants.

---

<sup>164</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Homily Nine on the Hexaemeron*.

All of these ideas are essentially Hindu in origin. They are based on the idea that all things are modifications of an essentially impersonal essence whose final end is impersonal nothingness. This is directly contrary to the Orthodox Christian teaching, which affirms that the origin of all things in the Tri -Personal God, and their end – the eternal union with (or alienation from) God of unique, unchanging and immortal souls.

In the western philosophical tradition, the immortality of the soul was affirmed by Plato but implicitly denied by his disciple Aristotle, who defined the soul as an “entelechy” or “emergent function” of the body. Aristotle’s definition was adopted in the Middle Ages by Thomas Aquinas, who called the soul the “subsistent form” of the body. The question that arose then and is no less pertinent today is: is this view of the soul compatible with the doctrine of its immortality, which is so vital to Christian ideas of truth, morality and judgement?

If the soul is the “entelechy” or “emergent function” of “subsistent form” of the body, then it must die with the body – there is no escaping this conclusion. And yet the whole dogmatic preaching of the Lord, including such parables as that of Lazarus and the rich man, are incomprehensible without the assumption of the survival of the soul after the death of the body. This divergent destiny of the soul and the body reflects the difference in their origin - at death the body returns to the earth from which it was made while the soul returns to God Who made it (Ecclesiastes 5.12).

According to St. Gregory Palamas, God created the soul “from supercelestial things, even from God Himself, by means of an ineffable inbreathing. The soul is great and wondrous, surpassing the entire physical world which surrounds him and which he was ordained to govern. The soul knows God and receives Him and manifests Him... and by grace the soul is able to unite hypostatically with Him after a struggle to achieve that privilege.”<sup>165</sup>

Therefore, as St. John of Damascus writes, the soul “is a living essence, simple, incorporeal, invisible in its proper nature to bodily eyes, immortal, reasoning and intelligent, formless, making use of an organized body, and being the source of its powers of life and growth and sensation and generation.”<sup>166</sup>

Moreover, as St. John further writes, “body and soul were formed at one and the same time, not first the one and then the other, as Origen so senselessly supposed.”<sup>167</sup> For, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes: “Neither

---

<sup>165</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters*, 24; P.G. 150:1137A.

<sup>166</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 12.

<sup>167</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 12.

exists in separation from the other before their joining together which is destined to create one form. They are, in effect, simultaneously created and joined together, as is the realization of the form created by their joining together."<sup>168</sup>

Some heretics in ancient and modern times have asserted that the soul after being parted from the body enters a kind of sleep or hibernation condition. This is contradicted by a vast amount of evidence from Holy Tradition, Holy Scripture and the lives of the saints, including the experiences of heart patients who have been resuscitated after a period of clinical death.<sup>169</sup> As St. John Cassian writes: "Souls after separation from this body are not idle, do not remain without consciousness; this is proved by the Gospel parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16.22-28)... The souls of the dead not only do not lose their consciousness, they do not even lose their dispositions – that is, hope and fear, joy and grief, and something of that which they expect for themselves at the Universal Judgement they begin already to foretaste... They become yet more alive and more zealously cling to the glorification of God. And truly, if we were to reason on the basis of the testimony of Sacred Scripture concerning the nature of the soul, in the measure of our understanding, would it not be, I will not say extreme stupidity, but at least folly, to suspect even in the least that the most precious part of man (that is, the soul), in which according to the blessed Apostle, the image and likeness of God is contained (I Corinthians 11.7; Colossians 3.10), after putting off this fleshly coarseness in which it finds itself in the present life, should become unconscious – that part which, containing in itself the whole power of reason, makes sensitive by its presence even the dumb and unconscious matter of the flesh? Therefore it follows, and the nature of reason itself demands, that the spirit after casting off this fleshly coarseness by which it is now weakened, should bring its mental powers into a better condition, should restore them as purer and more refined, but should not be deprived of them."<sup>170</sup>

Of course, establishing the separate creation of soul and body, and the survival of the soul after the death of the body, does not remove the mystery of their relationship, which is known only to God and which can be approached only by means of similes. One of the most illuminating such similes compares the relationship between soul and body to that between the

---

<sup>168</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 15*; P.G. 91:552D, 6-13. I am not here presuming to resolve the unresolved theological problem of whether each soul is created separately by God or is a part of offshoot of Adam's soul received by inheritance from one's parents. There is patristic support for both positions (Fr. Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1984). However, if Saints Maximus and John are right about the simultaneous creation and putting together of soul and body, this would certainly seem to argue in favour of the separate creation of each (M.-H. Congourdeau, "L'animation de l'embryon humain chez Maxime le Confesseur", *Nouvelle Revue de Théologie*, 693-709).

<sup>169</sup> Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Soul after Death*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Press, 1980.

<sup>170</sup> St. John Cassian, *Conferences*, 14.

Divine and human natures of Christ. Thus just as the two natures of Christ are distinct but indivisible, so, in their original, unfallen condition, the soul and the body in man are distinct but indivisible.

Again, just as the Divinity of Christ is no “emergent property” of His Humanity, so the soul of man is no emergent property of his body. For soul and body are two different natures which can be united but not mixed to form one new nature, still less derived the one from the other. Indeed, there would seem to be no objection to applying the formula of the Council of Chalcedon, which defines the relationship of the two natures of Christ, to the relationship of the soul and body in man: “without mixture, without change, without division, without separation, in such a way that the union does not destroy the difference of the two natures”.

Moreover, the conformity of the two great mysteries of the Incarnation of the word and the creation of man would seem to follow from their both being aspects of the theology of the image. For when we read that man was made in the image of God, we must understand this to mean, in the first place: in the image of the Incarnate God, Christ. For it is the unity of His Divino-Human existence that is the archetype of the unity of the psycho-physical existence of man.

Both theology and science therefore compel us to reject Darwinism as an account of man’s origins and nature. Adam, like Christ, is an historical person, and the soul of man is not an emergent function of the body, or in any way dependent on the body, but an independent power which survives the death of the body – and will be reunited with it at the general resurrection from the dead. “At all events,” then, as St. Basil says, “let us prefer the simplicity of faith to the demonstrations of [unenlightened] reason.”<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>171</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Homily One on the Hexaemeron*.



## **12. GOD-MAN OR MAN-GOD?**

*The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.*

*As is the earth, such are they also that are earthy:  
and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.*

*And as we have borne the image of the earthy,  
we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

I Corinthians 15.47-49.

This course of lectures has demonstrated that a basic dilemma confronts all those materialists and atheists who attempt to theorize about the nature of man. On the one hand, they wish to see in man something very great and godlike, and destined for even greater glories (inhabiting Mars, reshaping his genome, defeating old age and death). And on the other hand, their belief in evolution compels them to deny the heavenly origin of man, repress the promptings of conscience that witness to that heavenly origin and reduce man entirely to dust. This is the cause of that anguished contradictoriness in modern man's representation of himself that we noted at the beginning of the first lecture. Man glories in himself but loathes himself at the same time, and with a loathing that is the more vehement in that he expects so much of himself.

With the collapse of Marxism-Leninism and its purely atheist concept of man, the most popular attempt to escape out of this dilemma has been the Hindu-Masonic-Theosophist-New Age doctrine that man is a god by nature. The main intellectual foundation of this doctrine, as of all materialist anthropologies, remains the theory of evolution. But the raw material or dust from which evolution springs is now endowed with a supra-material principle, or natural divinity, which emerges ever more clearly as inorganic matter evolves in organic matter, vegetable into animal, animal into human, and human – into divine status. Thus J.S. Buck writes: "First a mollusc, then a fish, then a bird, then a mammal, then a man, then a Master, then a God... The theologians who have made such a caricature or fetish of Jesus were ignorant of this normal, progressive, higher evolution of man."<sup>172</sup> Again, Marilyn Ferguson writes: "The myth of the Saviour 'out there' is being replaced with the myth of the hero 'in here'. Its ultimate expression is the discovery of the divinity within us... In a very real sense, we are each other." And psychiatrist Scott Peck writes: "Our unconscious is God... The goal of spiritual growth is... the attainment of godhead by the conscious self. It is for the individual to become totally, wholly God." And John Dunphy preaches "a new faith: a religion of humanity that recognizes and respects the spark of what theologians call divinity in every human being."<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> Buck, in L. De Poncins, *Freemasonry and the Vatican*, London: Britons Publishing Company, 1968, pp. 43, 29.

<sup>173</sup> R. Chandler, *Understanding the New Age*, Milton Keynes: Word Books, 1989.

However, man is *not* a god by nature, although he can become one by grace. True, his soul was created by an act of Divine inbreathing. But, as St. Macarius the Great points out, this does not mean that his soul is part of the uncreated Godhead, but rather that it is “a creature noetical, beautiful, great and wondrous, a fair likeness to and image of God”.<sup>174</sup>

If man were a god by nature, as Vladimir Lossky points out, then, “without mentioning other outrageous consequences, the problem of evil would be inconceivable... Either Adam could not sin, since by reason of his soul, a part of divinity, he was God, or else original sin would involve the Divine nature – God Himself would sin in Adam.”<sup>175</sup>

It should be clear now that the Orthodox Christian doctrine of man as a bicomposite creature made in the image of the God-Man is the only final safeguard against the opposite and antichristian doctrine of man as the man-god made in the image of the beast, to which the whole of modern culture and scientism, both theist and antitheist, tends. For if the godlike in man is denied, he is assimilated to the animals and becomes like them. If, on the other hand, the godlike in him is recognized, but is ascribed, in common with the theistic evolutionists and New Agers, to some emergent properties of matter, then the position is no better, and even decidedly worse. For then man is seen as the summit of being, whose godlikeness comes from within creation, and within his own nature, but not from without. And then he becomes like Satan or the prince of Tyre in his pride, of whom the only true God says: “Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou has said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas, yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God” (Ezekiel 28.2).

The Christian vision of man is both far greater, and far humbler, than the New Agers'. On the one hand, the origin of man is to be found, not in the dust of an original “big bang”, but in the Council of the Holy Trinity, and the Divine image is to be identified, not with the fallen passions of the unconscious, but with those attributes of reason, freedom and self-sacrificial love which raise him far above the animals. And on the other hand, his glorious destiny is not the result of his own efforts or the reward for his own merits, but the work of God Himself. Man is called to be a partaker of the Divine nature (II Peter 1.4); in St. Basil's striking phrase, he is a creature who has received the command to become a god. But he carries out this command, not in pride, but in humility, not by inflating himself, but by magnifying God his Saviour, not by nourishing his own supposed divinity, or “divine spark”, but by purifying the image of God in himself so as to reflect the Uncreated Light.

---

<sup>174</sup> St. Macarius the Great, *Spiritual Homilies*, I, 7.

<sup>175</sup> Lossky, *The Mystical Nature of the Eastern Church*, London: James Clarke, 1957, p. 117.

We return, then, to the idea of the image of God in man, but this time in order to show that it has no meaning except in reference to Christ. For, as Panagiotis Nellas writes: "That which joins the beginning to the end... is Christ, Who constitutes the Image of the Father and the final realization of man as image."<sup>176</sup> For He it is Who, as God, created man in His own image, and then, when that image had been obscured and made almost unrecognizable by sin, became man in order to recreate it in all its original, supernaturally brilliant colours. It is therefore in the mystery of Christ that we penetrate to the mystery of the image and of human nature. Only through knowing Him can we truly come to know ourselves.

There is a great hierarchy of being extending from God the Father to the depths of the created universe; and each level is linked with the level above and below it through the relationship between archetype and image.

At the summit of the hierarchy is God the Father, Who, being "greater than all" (John 10.29), is the Archetype of the Son, "the brightness of His glory and the express Image of His Person" (Hebrews 1.3). Since the Son is the Image of the Father, "he that hath seen Me," says the Son, "hath seen the Father" (John 14.9). This relationship between Archetype and Image is based on identity of nature (homoousios). As Blessed Theophylact puts it: "I am of one essence with the Father. Therefore, 'he that hath seen Me' - meaning, he that knows Me - knows the Father. Since the Father and I are of one essence and one divine nature, to know one of Us is to know the other."<sup>177</sup>

However, while being "the Image of the invisible God" through His Divinity, Christ is also "the first-born of all creation" in His Humanity (Colossians 1.15); and in this capacity He is the Archetype of man, His image. However, the relationship between Archetype and image here is not based on identity of substance, but on similarity of substance (homoiousios). Thus man is the image of God in a different sense from that in which the Son is the Image of the Father; the difference between Archetype and image is much greater.

However, St. Paul compares the relationship between God and man to another iconic-hierarchical relationship - that between man and woman. For by calling Christ "the Head of the Body, the Church" (Colossians 1.18), he is saying that the relationship between God and man in Christ and the Church is like that between man and woman in marriage. And yet the paradox is that the woman is like the man, not as man is like God, but as the Son is like the Father; for she is of *the same*, not merely similar substance. For "so God

---

<sup>176</sup> Nellas, *Deification in Christ*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir' Seminary Press, 1987, p. 76.

<sup>177</sup> Blessed Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to John*, House Springs, Mo.: Chrysostom Press, 2007, pp. 226-227.

created man; according to the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Genesis 1.27). In other words, as St. John Chrysostom writes, He "made them *one*, even before her creation".<sup>178</sup> Not only was she a "helper *like* unto him": she was "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bones", of *one substance* with him (Genesis 2.20, 23). So by comparing the mystery of the Incarnation to the mystery of marriage, St. Paul is asserting that the relationship between God and man that was previously one of *likeness* only now became one of identity of substance.

But how? After all, even when God became man, His Divine nature still remained immeasurably above His human nature, in spite of the likeness between them. The answer is: in the "interchange of substances". Just as, at the Incarnation, God acquires a second substance, the human, so through the sacraments, and especially the sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, man acquires a second substance, the Divine. He becomes deified, a god by grace if not by nature. And so there is a true identity of substance between the God who became man and the men who become gods by grace.

Thus the restoration of the relationship between Archetype and Image is at the same time the restoration of the relationship between Head and Body – first between the new Adam, Christ, and the new Eve, Mary, and then between Christ and the whole of redeemed humanity, the Church, which stands in relationship to Christ as a wife to her husband (Ephesians 5). Indeed, the two kinds of relationship are in fact identical, as St. Paul makes clear in another important but less well-known passage: "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God... The man is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11.3, 7-9).

Thus the whole universe, from God the Father to the depths of created nature, is, in its redeemed state, a kind of hall of mirrors, in which the lower levels reflect and glorify the level immediately above them, with the lowest level of all being *the painted icon*.

And so "the theology of the image" embraces the whole hierarchy of being from inanimate matter to God the Father, with each level or plane of being representing a different kind of nature: Divine, human, or material. Out of the Divine nature there streams Light, the grace or energies of God, which, if it does not encounter the dirty opaqueness of sin, renders the lower levels transparent and light-bearing. The point of contact between each plane – the point at which Light streams through from the plane above – is *the person*: Uncreated (God), created (man) or represented (in the painted icon).

---

<sup>178</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 31 on I Corinthians*, 5.

Thus if we start from the lowest plane, the icon, though of a radically different nature from the Divine nature, nevertheless partakes of the Divine energies insofar as it represents, through the grace-filled art of iconography, a grace-filled person on a higher plane. That is why icons are called “windows to heaven” by St. Stephen the Younger.<sup>179</sup> And that is why, in venerating an icon, our veneration ascends to the person represented in it. For in icons we transcend the lack of mutual communication which, as we have seen, limits secular art. For we do not look at the physical or psychological characteristics of the person represented, but *through them*, into his spiritual essence and enter into a living relationship with him.

All these themes are summarized in the icon of the Transfiguration of Christ. Here we see Christ the Image of God, reflecting the uncreated Glory of the Father in His own Divine Person. And here we see Christ the Archetype of man, representing in Himself man as He originally created him. Here we see, moreover, the members of the Church in heaven and on earth reflecting the glory of Christ in their own redeemed souls and bodies. For, as the liturgical texts of the Feast of the Transfiguration say: “Today Christ on Mount Tabor has changed the darkened nature of Adam, and filling it with brightness He has made it godlike... He showed them the nature of man, arrayed in the original beauty of the Image... Thou, O Christ, with invisible hands hast fashioned man in Thine image; and Thou hast now displayed the original beauty in this same body formed by Thee.”

Moreover, just as the Word made flesh is a visible demonstration or definition or Icon of the invisible God (for “he who has seen Me has seen the Father”), so the painted icon of the Word Incarnate (or icon of the Icon) is a demonstration of the reality of that Incarnation. For if wood and pigments can reflect not only the human soul and body of Christ, but even the Uncreated Light of His Divinity, how can we not believe that the Word was truly made flesh, inasmuch as “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-Begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1.14). And so, as the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council declare, the icon, being also “full of grace and truth”, “confirms the real and not merely the imaginary incarnation of God the Word”.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten that there is a major difference between the levels of incarnation and representation. On the one hand, the body and soul of Christ, having been “enhypostasized” in His Divine Person through the Incarnation, are fully part of Him and therefore worthy of the worship (Greek: latreia) that is ascribed to God alone. And on the other hand, since the icon of Christ is penetrated by the energies of God, but is not God Himself, it is worthy only of the honourable veneration (Greek: proskynesis), but not worship, that is ascribed to that other image of God, man.

---

<sup>179</sup> Ware, K., “The Theology of the Icon: a short anthology”, *Eastern Churches Review*, VIII, 3-10.

The difference is well captured in the feast of the first icon, the Holy Napkin or Image-not-made-by-hands (identified by some writers with the image on the Turin Shroud). Thus in the liturgical texts for the feast we read: "O uncircumscribable Word of the Father, knowing the victorious image, uninscribed and divinely wrought, of Thine ineffable and divine dispensation towards man, of Thy true Incarnation, we honour it with veneration... Persuading men of the dread mystery of His Incarnation, the Lord Himself imprinteth the image of His Divine manhood upon the napkin and, taking up the Archetype from the Mount of Olives, He seateth it on the throne of the Father to be worshipped by the bodiless angels; and embracing it with heart and soul, we honour it with veneration."<sup>180</sup>

\*

The final fruit of God's work in restoring His image in man will be the resurrection of the body. For, as St. Macarius the Great says, "the glory which presently enriches the souls of holy men, this same glory will cover and clothe their bare bodies in the resurrection and make them to be caught up to heaven. And then as a natural consequence body and soul together will be forever rested in the Kingdom of God."<sup>181</sup>

Already now, before the resurrection, we can see the grace of the resurrection in the incorrupt and wonderworking bodies of the saints. Icons often work wonders, and their colours are sometimes miraculously renewed. So it is logical that the transfigured bodies of the saints whom they represent should also shine with the same transfiguring Light. Thus it is written of the Desert Father Pambo: "God so glorified him that no one could look at his face, because of the glory which his face had... Just as Moses received the image of the glory of Adam, when his face was glorified, so the face of Abbo Pambo shone like lightning, and he was as a king seated on his throne."<sup>182</sup> Such accounts of Light coming from the faces and bodies of the saints are common in accounts from many ages and countries. The bodies and vestments of some saints have remained incorrupt even to the present day – for example, those of the fourth-century Cypriot Saint Spirydon of Trimithun and the fourteenth-century Russian Saint Sergius of Radonezh.

The bodies of the saints are transfigured because they partake of the transfigured Body of Christ. So it is to Christ's Transfiguration that we must return for a theological explanation of the doctrine. For here we see the Uncreated Light of God shining through the soul and body of Christ and transfiguring even His clothes, which became "white as the light" (Matthew 17.2).

---

<sup>180</sup> *Menaion* for August 16, Mattins, kontakion and ikos.

<sup>181</sup> St. Macarius, *Homilies*, 5.17.

<sup>182</sup> *Apophthegmata*, in K. Ware, "The Transfiguration of the Body", in A.M. Allchin (ed.), *Sacrament and Image*, London: Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, 1967, p. 19.

Thus at the Transfiguration, as K. Ware writes, “we see the human body as God originally made it. The glory of Christ on Thabor is not only an eschatological event, but also looks back to the condition of man in the beginning, before his nature was distorted by the Fall. Pambo, according to the *Apophthegmata*, received ‘the image of the glory of Adam’. What does this phrase imply? It means, surely, that Pambo has regained the status ante peccatum, the state of Adam in Paradise; and so his body is transfigured, becoming – like Adam’s before the Fall – radiant and glorious. The same teaching is found in the liturgical texts for 6 August... Christ’s glorified body on Thabor reveals ‘the archetypal beauty of the image’. It shows us what our human nature would now be, but for the sin of Adam; it shows us what our human nature can again become.”<sup>183</sup>

Now we can see why, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes, “the body is deified at the same time as the soul”.<sup>184</sup> For “by nature man remains entirely man in his soul and in his body, but by grace he becomes entirely God in his soul and body”.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, as St. Gregory Palamas writes, the body actually contributes an extra potentiality and dynamism to human nature that makes it, in its final, transfigured state, not lower but higher than the angels.<sup>186</sup>

It is therefore fitting that the final dogma of the Christian Faith, and the final demonstration of the real nature and end of man, should be the resurrection of the body. Man cannot be fully himself until the resurrection; for only then will he be revealed for what he really is *in full*, in the image of the Transfigured and Resurrected Christ. For “in this [corruptible body] we groan,” says St. Paul, “earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (II Corinthians 5.2) – the transfigured body of the resurrection.

\*

---

<sup>183</sup> Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>184</sup> St. Maximus, *Gnostic Centuries*, II, 88; P.G. 90:1168A.

<sup>185</sup> St. Maximus, *Ambigua*; P.G. 91:1088C.

<sup>186</sup> Ware, *op. cit.*, p. 25. Thus he writes: “Our intellect, because created in God’s image, possesses likewise the image of this sublime Eros or intense longing – an image expressed in the love experienced by the intellect for the spiritual knowledge that originates from it and continually abides in it... The noetic and intelligent nature of angels also possesses intellect, and the thought-form (*logos*) that proceeds from the intellect and the intense longing (*eros*) for its thought-form. This longing is likewise from the intellect and coexists eternally with the thought-form and the intellect, and can be called spirit since by nature it accompanies the thought-form. But this spirit in the case of angels is not life-generating, for it has not received from God an earthly body conjoined with it, and so it has not received the power to generate and sustain life. On the other hand the noetic and intelligent nature of the human soul has received a life-generating spirit from God since the soul is created together with an earthly body, and so by means of the spirit it sustains and quickens the body conjoined to it...” (*150 Chapters*, 37, 38; *The Philokalia*, vol. IV, pp. 362-363).

This vision of the deification and resurrection of man is no mere adjunct to psychology, but rather its essential premise. For while the final condition, no less than the original creation, of man is beyond our imagination and intellectual understanding, it nevertheless represents *the norm of human nature*, of which our present condition is but a tragic deformation. And just as we cannot hope to mend a broken-down machine if we do not know how it is meant to function in its undamaged condition, so we cannot hope to effect an improvement in the human condition – ours or anybody else’s – if we do not have a correct understanding of the norm from which it has fallen and to which it can return through “the two hands of God”, in St. Irenaeus’ phrase – Christ and the Holy Spirit. This norm is Godlikeness, deification, the mutual reflection and interpenetration of the Divine and human natures.

The denial of that norm is what is usually called *humanism*. However, as Fr. Seraphim Rose pointed out, it is more appropriately called *subhumanism*. For it is “a rebellion against the true nature of man and the world, a flight from God the center of man’s being, a denial of all the realities of man’s existence, clothed in the language of the opposite of all these. Subhumanism, therefore, is not a disturbing obstacle to the realization of humanism; it is its culmination and goal... Subhumanism teaches us that Enlightenment ‘humanism’, which denies man’s true nature as the image of god, is no true humanism at all...”<sup>187</sup>

“The intellectual tragedy of contemporary humanity,” writes Archbishop Vitaly (Ustinov), “is that it has begun to consider man condemned, sick, and mortal as a normal being and to draw from the study of his behaviour philosophical, political and scientific systems, often presented as absolute and exhaustive. There is here a terrible illusion and even more than an illusion; one could speak of a deviation of thought of universal extent, almost cosmic. It is a little as if one would take from prison a deranged, sick, condemned criminal in chains, that one would study him as if he were a normal person, and that one would deduce from his behaviour and from the psychological laws that govern him, conclusions relative to the origin of man and to the ideal form of personal, familial and political life...”

“The Resurrection of the ‘First-born from among the dead’, the Saviour Christ, the God-man, and the general resurrection of all the dead, alone permit one to arrive at an exact comprehension of the universe, of the earth, and of humanity. Apart from this truth one can comprehend nothing, and all studies of man, his nature, and his actions will remain devoid of sense and spirit if they do not take account of the doctrine of the resurrection... which constitutes the alpha and omega of all that exists.

---

<sup>187</sup> Rose, in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of this World: The Life and Teachings of Fr. Seraphim Rose*, Forestville, Ca.: Fr. Seraphim Foundation, 1993, p. 133.



“Only the Orthodox Church envisages man, as from a Divine point of view, in the totality of his development from his creation by God through his fall into sin, his death, his resurrection, and his immortality, and not only from the point of view limited to his insignificant sojourn on earth in his fallen condition of condemnation and sin. On the contrary, people like Freud, Hegel, and all the atheistic materialists who follow in the wake of Darwin do nothing but cast a glance at man and regard the world through a narrow slit, through the miniscule hole of their narrow point of view.”<sup>188</sup>

The modern view regards all those phenomena of mental life which the Orthodox considers to be fallen and abnormal as normal and good, provided they do not interfere with anyone else’s indulgence of their passions. Thus as the Orthodox Christian psychologist Michael Nedelsky writes: “Psychologists commonly seek to free people up to be able to gratify their passions in a free, spontaneous, and pleasure-filled manner. This is basically because they know nothing higher in life... There is, I think, more to this than may be immediately apparent. Dealing as they do with patients who have no spiritual life, the psychologists see human life as having only two possibilities: to be wooden, dead, unfeeling, inhibited, stony; or to be passionate, emotional, spontaneous, uninhibited. Between these two possibilities it is easy to see why one would choose the latter: it is choosing life over death. What they cannot understand, however, is that there is a third possibility: death to the carnal man, mortification of the passions, asceticism, sobriety, watchfulness, but leading to a rich and full spiritual life of love, faith and hope. Psychologists are familiar with patients who, having lost touch with their own desire, drift through life with no purpose, no energy, no vital spark. They do not know of those who, having struggled against self-gratification, now live for the service of God. It is also the case that many patients are anxious and fearful about gratifying their desires, but the anxiety and fear are not of offending God, but are irrational fears of others, sometimes largely unconscious, originating in a troubled childhood. Thus, just as we can experience our own unworthiness without falling into despair, we can inhibit ourselves, struggle against our passions, renounce gratification of our desires, without becoming wooden, unfeeling and inwardly dead.”<sup>189</sup>

Thus there is a third way besides the unconscious repression of the passions which leads to the crippling of the soul, and the shameless indulgence which leads to its final death. This third way is the *redirection* of the passions to a new and purified life through the grace of the Holy Spirit. For, as St. Gregory Palamas says, “We have not been taught, O philosopher, that dispassion is the mortification of the passionate faculty, but a change in its direction from the worse to the better.”<sup>190</sup>

---

<sup>188</sup> Archbishop Vitaly, in M. Nedelsky, “Contemporary Clinical Psychology: An Orthodox Perspective”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 35, 1985, no. 4, 34-48; no. 5, 20-28.

<sup>189</sup> Nedelsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>190</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Defense of the Hesychasts* 2.2.19.

Only when this process has been completed in every one of God's elect at the general resurrection from the dead will the full likeness of God in man be revealed - that is, all the members of the Body of Christ in that perfect unity and glory of love which alone can mirror the perfect love of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Nor will that state be a static revelation and achievement, like the finale of a merely human drama; for as God is infinite, so will the perfection of the saints be infinite and never-ending, as St. Gregory of Nyssa has explained, extending far beyond the curtain call for this fallen world and "unto the ages of ages". For "we all," says St. Paul, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord..." (II Corinthians 3.18).

Man is the living icon of God. When cleansed of the opaque darkness of sin, he is transfigured in soul and body by the Divine Light, which reveals in him colours and qualities and capabilities that are invisible to the naked, grace-deprived eye. Scientific and artistic psychology, by seeing in man only the one-dimensional plane of his fallen existence, and by taking the grimy darkness of sin for his natural state, blind themselves to man's real nature, to his light and his colour, his grace and his truth. Only that psychology which is informed by a truly religious depth, by the laser beam of intuitive, yet completely objective, spiritual vision, can be adequate to its transcendent subject-matter. Only such a psychology can serve towards the liberation of man from his self-imposed bondage, from the pseudo-science and fallen art that dehumanizes man to that "science of sciences and art of arts" which raises him in glory to the right Hand of the Father.

## APPENDIX I: ORTHODOXY, FREUDIANISM AND ORIGINAL SIN

If Darwin defined the modern, twentieth-century attitude to the physical and biological world, and Marx did the same in relation to the social and political world, Sigmund Freud defined it in relation to the inner world of the psyche, including religion. His theory, like theirs, is a doctrine of *will* understood in the broadest sense; he takes the will to survive, to conquer and to reproduce that we find in the physical, biological and social worlds, and internalizes it within the individual psyche and in particular within the unconscious, the “id”. The purpose of this article is to examine to what extent Freudianism is compatible with Orthodoxy, and in particular whether the Freudian “id” has any relation to the Christian concept of original sin.

### *The Theory of Psychoanalysis*

Great sea-changes in human thought are often accompanied by changes in the honour accorded to particular human faculties. The Renaissance, for example, exalted *reason*; hence the heretical mind-set that exaggerates the power of reason that we know as *rationalism*. The Romantic era, on the other hand, tended to downgrade reason in favour of the irrational faculties of *will*, *imagination* and *emotion*, which in artistic geniuses were considered capable of attaining higher truths than those attained by philosophers and scientists.<sup>191</sup> Another human faculty that came into prominence during the Romantic era was *memory*, both collective and individual. The nineteenth century marks the heyday of *historiography* and *historicism* and the belief that the truth about a man, a nation or an epoch is to be discovered above all in his or its *history*: “In my beginning is my end”.

Freud inherited all three trends: rationalist, romantic-irrationalist and historicist. Thus he considered himself first and foremost a rationalist and a scientist. And if he had been able to read later assessments of his work, he would probably have been upset most by the fact that (in Anglo-Saxon countries, at any rate) we do not consider him to have been a scientist at all insofar as his methods were not objectively empirical and quantitative.<sup>192</sup>

But even if Freud personally valued reason above all, he reveals his romantic heritage in his discovery (if it is truly that) of the enormous extent to which our apparently rational thinking is dominated by the *irrational*, by that

---

<sup>191</sup> Pascal’s famous dictum: “The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of” expressed the essence of the Romantic faith over a century before Romanticism.

<sup>192</sup> The present writer studied for two degrees in psychology in British universities, but in neither of them was Freud taught even at an introductory level. He was not considered a scientist, and therefore not part of the science of psychology.

huge, dark reservoir of repressed feelings, desires and memories which he called the unconscious and which is revealed especially in dreams.

His *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), which A.N. Wilson calls “one of the most extraordinary and revolutionary texts ever to come from a human brain”, is sometimes seen as heralding the beginning of a truly modern consciousness. It “expounded the theory on which all subsequent psychoanalysis was based, even or especially those psychoanalytical theories which reacted most violently against it: namely, that the human mind consists of what might be described as two layers. With the outer layer, of our conscious mind, we reason and form judgements. In reasonable, well-balanced individuals, the pains and sorrows of childhood have been worked through, put behind them. With the unhealthy, however, neurotic or hysterical individuals, there is beneath the surface of life a swirling cauldron of suppressed memories in which lurk the traumas (the Greek word for wounds) of early experiences. Under hypnosis, or in dreams, we re-enter the world of the subconscious and with the care of a helpful analyst we can sometimes revisit the scenes of our early miseries and locate the origins of our psychological difficulties...”<sup>193</sup>

Systematizing this fundamental insight, Freud called the conscious layer of the mind the “ego”, and the unconscious layer – the “id”. Later he added a third layer, that of the “super-ego”, a kind of internalized social conscience which forces the memories of childhood sexual experiences and conflicts into the “id”. The process whereby these memories are forced by the “super-ego” into the “id” is called *repression*.

For Freud, the “super-ego”, is no less irrational in origin than the “id”. The task of psychoanalysis is to strengthen the “ego”, the sole outpost of rationality in the soul, against the irrational pressure of *both* the “id” *and* the “super-ego”. This was not to say that the “super-ego” was rejected completely – as Freud argued in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), submission to it, at least most of the time, is the price we pay for our deliverance from primitive savagery and our enjoyment of civilization. But it was recognized as being deprived of any higher or other-worldly origin. It was a faculty owing its origins to childhood conflicts and traumas and no more rational in itself than the “id” which it censored and repressed.

Another way in which Freud showed his romantic heritage was the significance he attached to art. Thus already in his early obituary on Charcot, written in 1893, he clearly saw the relationship between “the poet's eye” and the gift of clinical diagnosis.<sup>194</sup> He acknowledged his debt to the Greek tragedians, Goethe and Shakespeare; in his *Leonardo* he felt the need to

---

<sup>193</sup> Wilson, *After the Victorians*, London: Hutchinson, 2005, pp. 3-4.

<sup>194</sup> Freud, S., “Charcot”, *Standard Edition*, London: Hogarth, vol. III, pp. 11-23.

forestall the criticism that he had merely written "a psycho-analytic novel"<sup>195</sup>; and he included literary history and literary criticism among the disciplines to be studied in the ideal Faculty of Psychoanalysis.

According to Philip Rieff, the fact that "Freud owed most to Sophocles and Shakespeare (cf. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, SE IV, Part I, 264) and least to the scientific psychology of his era shows us how dangerous scientific training can be to the mental life of the scientist when poetry is excluded from what is conceived as significant in his training. William James said this best, in the conclusion to his Gifford Lectures, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*: 'Humbug is humbug, even though it bear the scientific name, and the total expression of human experience, as I view it objectively, invincibly urges me beyond the narrow "scientific" bounds' (London, rev. ed., 1902, p. 519)."<sup>196</sup>

Norman Holland writes: "What Freud admires in the writer are his powers as a seer, his ability to grasp intuitively truths the psychologist gets at only by hard work. As early as 1895, he wrote, 'Local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight'. 'Creative writers,' he wrote in *Delusions and Dreams*, 'are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream'. Writers could see, for example, the 'necessary conditions for loving' before psychologists could. Shakespeare had understood the meaning of slips of the tongue long before Freud, and not only that, he had assumed that his audiences would understand, too, The writer, however, knows these things 'through intuition - really from a delicate self-observation', while Freud himself had to 'uncover' them through 'laborious work'."<sup>197</sup>

Freud defined the difference between conscious and unconscious contents in terms of the element of *naming* or verbalization which belongs to the conscious content alone: "What we have permissibly called the conscious presentation of the object can now be split up into the presentation of the word and the presentation of the thing... We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the representation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone..."

---

<sup>195</sup> Freud, S., *Leonardo*, London: Penguin Books, 1957.

<sup>196</sup> Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralizer*, University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 385, footnote.

<sup>197</sup> Holland, N., "Freud and the Poet's Eye", in Mannheim, L. & Mannheim, E., *Hidden Patterns: Studies in Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*, New York: Macmillan, 1966, p. 153.

"Now, too, we are in a position to state precisely what it is that repression denies to the rejected presentation in the transference neuroses: what it denies to the presentation is *translation into words* which shall remain attached to the object. A presentation which is not put into words, or a psychical act which is not hyper-catheted, remains thereafter in the Ucs in a state of repression."<sup>198</sup>

Dreams, according to Freud, are a kind of language for repressed presentations; we are to read them as we read a poem, treating the techniques of "dream work" - displacement, condensation, symbolization, dramatization, etc. - as a critic might treat the devices of poetry, such as metaphor and allegory. According to the literary critic Lionel Trilling, Freud's greatest achievement was his discovery that "poetry is indigenous to the very constitution of the mind", which is "in the greater part of its tendency exactly a poetry-making organ". Thus psychoanalysis is, in effect, "a science of tropes, of metaphor and its variants, synecdoche and metonymy."<sup>199</sup>

Dreams are like the first draft of a poem, the expression of an unconscious content in a semi-conscious form. More work needs to be done on them in order to bring them into the full light of consciousness, work which the patient must carry out with help from the psychotherapist. In this way psychotherapy is a kind of artistic collaboration, with the therapist encouraging his patient to do as Shakespeare exhorted in his *Sonnet 77*:

*Look what thy memory cannot contain  
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find  
Those children nurs'd, deliver'd from thy brain,  
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.*

The importance of memory in Freudianism brings us to its third major characteristic: historicism. For the psychoanalyst's work in unearthing the unconscious can be compared to that of the historian or archaeologist. Just as the latter labours to discover and interpret old documents that cast light on the present, so the psychoanalyst labours to unearth significant events and strata in the patient's life, especially his early sexual history, that have been repressed from his conscious memory but continue to colour and distort his present behaviour.

In his theory of the collective archetypes, Freud's most famous disciple, Karl Jung, extended the importance of memory in psychoanalysis still further into the past, not only of the individual, but also of the race. And Freud himself, in his later works such as *Moses and Monotheism*, pointed to certain

---

<sup>198</sup> Freud, S., "The Unconscious", 1915, *Standard Edition*, vol. XIV, pp. 201-202. My italics (V.M.).

<sup>199</sup> Trilling, L., "Freud and Literature", in *The Liberal Imagination*, New York: Doubleday, 1947.

hypothetical events in the history of the race or tribe, such as the killing of the tribal leader, that supposedly continue to influence all succeeding generations.

### Freudianism and Orthodoxy

In order to understand the relationship between Freudianism and Orthodox Christianity, we need to distinguish between Freud's purely psychological ideas and his philosophical presuppositions.

Most of Freud's most purely psychological ideas, such as the Oedipus Complex, have not been confirmed by empirical research. "Every particular idea [of Freud] is wrong," says psychiatrist Peter D. Kramer: "the universality of the Oedipus complex, penis envy, infantile sexuality..."<sup>200</sup> This is not to say that these phenomena are *never* found, only that they do not play that vast role in the life of the soul that Freud attributed to them.<sup>201</sup>

However, according to C.S. Lewis, the Freudian concept of *repression* is important and valid. But repression, says Lewis, must not be confused with *suppression*. "Psychology teaches us that 'repressed' sex is dangerous. But 'repressed' is here a technical term: it does not mean 'suppressed' in the sense of 'denied' or 'resisted'. A repressed desire or thought is one which has been thrust into the subconscious (usually at a very early age) and can now come before the mind only in a disguised and unrecognisable form. Repressed sexuality does not appear to the patient to be sexuality at all. When an adolescent or an adult is engaged in resisting a conscious desire, he is not dealing with a repression nor is he in the least danger of creating a repression. On the contrary, those who are seriously attempting chastity are more conscious, and soon know a great deal more about their own sexuality than anyone else..."<sup>202</sup>

Christians would therefore agree with Freud that repression is bad for the soul, just as any refusal to face up to the facts about oneself is bad. In this respect psychoanalysis has something in common with the Christian practice of the confession of sins. Insofar, then, as psychoanalysis helps one to unearth hidden traumas and shine the light of reason on the irrational depths of the soul, it should not be considered harmful.

However, Christianity cannot agree with the Freudian presupposition that the contents of the "id" are *morally neutral*, nor with the idea – which belongs less to Freud than to the Freudians and popular interpretations of his ideas – that the suppression (as opposed to the repression) of the "id" is harmful.

---

<sup>200</sup> Kramer, in Jerry Adler, "Freud in our Midst", *Newsweek*, March 27, 2006, p. 37.

<sup>201</sup> Jessie Chambers recounts how D.H. Lawrence once told her: "You know, Jessie, I've always loved mother." "I know you have," I replied. "I don't mean that," he answered, "I've loved her – like a lover – that's why I could never love you." (in Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 73).

<sup>202</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, London: Fount Paperbacks, 1977, pp. 91-92.

Again, “conscience” for the Christian is by no means to be identified with the “super-ego” of the Freudians (which is not to say that something like the “super-ego” does not exist). In the true sense it is not the internalization of the social conscience of contemporary society, with all its pride and prejudice, but “the eye of God in the soul of man”; it is not another form of irrationality, but the super-rational revelation of God’s will. As such its judgements cannot be ignored or rejected by reason, but must be accepted as having objective validity.

Freud has been unjustly accused of opening the floodgates to all kinds of immorality. He never preached free love in the manner of his contemporaries H.G. Wells and D.H. Lawrence. Nevertheless, insofar as his theory encourages the view that the contents of the unconscious should be *revealed* without being *judged* from a higher, moral point of view, it is undoubtedly contrary to Christianity.

Psychoanalysis, according to Lewis, says nothing very useful about normal feelings, but does help to remove abnormal or perverted feelings. “Thus fear of things that are really dangerous would be an example of the first kind [of feelings]: an irrational fear of cats or spiders would be an example of the second kind. The desire of a man for a woman would be of the first kind: the perverted desire of a man for a man would be of the second... What psychoanalysis undertakes to do is to remove the abnormal feelings, that is, give the man better raw material for his acts of choice; morality is concerned with the acts of choice themselves.”<sup>203</sup>

However, this optimistic view of the potential of psychoanalysis is unwarranted. On the one hand, as we have seen, many of its theoretical constructs have been rejected, and so the occasional (and very expensive) successes of psychoanalytic therapy may be attributable, not to the truth of the theory itself, but rather to other factors having nothing to do with psychoanalysis as such – for example, the love of the therapist for his patient. On the other hand, and still more fundamentally, there exists no criterion within Freudianism for distinguishing the normal from the abnormal. Homosexuality, for example, may have been judged abnormal by Freud and his contemporaries, as it has always been judged abnormal by Christians.

Whereas Christianity possesses a detailed model of the normal man – that is, the saint, and believes in a God-given conscience, Freudianism possesses no such model, and does not believe in conscience (which, as we have seen, is not the same as the “super-ego”).<sup>204</sup> It can have no reason for declaring a

---

<sup>203</sup> Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>204</sup> Occasionally, however, we do find in Freud something approaching the concept of a truly independent rational faculty like the God-given conscience. Thus in *The Future of an Illusion* he writes: “We may insist as much as we like that the human intellect is weak in comparison



certain feeling or desire good or evil, normal or abnormal, so long as its presence does not create conflicts with other psychical processes. And this is another reason for concluding that while Freudianism may not actively encourage immorality, its attitude to life is essentially *amoral*.

Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) makes this point well: "The criterion of the norm for every person in psychoanalysis is the person himself with all his sins and inadequacies, in a condition of calm after the overcoming of all conflicts arising within his consciousness. In psychoanalysis they try to overcome and remove conflicts by putting the conscience to sleep and reconciling the person with the sin that lives in him. Therefore the very profound critic of psychoanalysis, Arved Runestam, in his book *Psychoanalysis and Christianity* (Augustiana Press, 1958) notes with reason that psychoanalysis in theory and practice is in general a powerful proclaimer of the right to a life directly ruled by instinct. 'One cannot say,' he writes, 'that this signifies the recognition of morality as an evil in itself. But morality is represented rather as an inescapable evil than a positive good' (p. 37)..."<sup>205</sup>

When we turn from the strictly psychological theory of psychoanalysis to its philosophical presuppositions, then its incompatibility with Christianity becomes still more obvious. Thus Freud believed that human psychology is completely reflected in the activity of the brain, so that neuroscience and psychology should eventually merge.<sup>206</sup> This is simply *materialism*, the denial of the existence of the rational soul and its survival after the death of the body.

As Bishop Gregory writes: "Although psychoanalysis contains within its name the word 'soul', it concentrates its investigations on the functions of the brain. But we, of course, know that with the latter is mysteriously linked our invisible soul, which constitutes a part of our personality. We must suppose that much that the psychiatrists refer to as the workings of the subconscious sphere of the brain in fact belong not only, or not so much, to the brain, as to the soul."<sup>207</sup>

Again, Freud believed that the roots, not only of man's abnormal actions, but even of his higher activities, the things which are most characteristic of his humanity - politics, art and religion - are to be found in childhood traumas and conflicts. Of course, the phenomena of totalitarian politics, pornographic art and sectarian religion do manifest abnormal psychological traits, and as

---

with human instincts, and be right in doing so. But nevertheless there is something peculiar about this weakness. The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest until it has gained a hearing. Ultimately, after endlessly repeated rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points in which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind."

<sup>205</sup> Grabbe, "Pravoslavnoe vospitanoe detej v nashi dni", <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site.print.php?act=lib&id=846> (in Russian)

<sup>206</sup> The idea was first put forward in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) (Claudia Kalb, "The Therapist as Scientist", *Newsweek*, March 27, 2006, p. 42).

<sup>207</sup> Grabbe, *op. cit.*

such may be illumined to some extent by psychoanalytic ideas. However, the higher we ascend in our study of these spheres, the more inadequate, crude and distorting of a true understanding will the theory of psychoanalysis appear.

Thus if politics is reduced by psychoanalysis to narcissism, or to the libidinal relations between the leader and his followers<sup>208</sup>, then there can be no higher politics of the kind that we find in the lives of the holy kings and princes of Orthodox Christian history. Again, if the psychoanalysts' study of art consists in "the pursuit of the personal, the neurotic and the infantile in the work of artists"<sup>209</sup>, then we may justly wonder whether they understand art at all. And if religion is reduced to hatred and love for a repressed father-figure, then it is not difficult to see why psychoanalysis should be seen as one of the roots of contemporary atheism. So to Freud and the Freudians we must say, in the words of Hamlet: "There are more things in heaven and on earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy..."

### *Freudianism and Original Sin*

However, some Orthodox writers have purported to find in Freud's concept of the "id" a useful analogy, if not more, to the Orthodox doctrine of original sin.

For example, Mikhail Dronov writes: "Man's consciousness represents one of his natural energies, but when it is cut off, there remains only the experience accumulated by the personality, which constitutes as it were the content of the personality. This is what is called 'the unconscious'. The essence of original sin consists in the fact that, even without becoming conscious of it (that it, acting beyond the control of the consciousness), man makes an egoistical sinful choice. He thereby breaks the first-created bond between his personality and his common human nature, destroying its unity and as it were walling off from it his own small individual part.

"If man sins for the most part unconsciously, then repentance – the overcoming of sin – can only be in consciousness!"<sup>210</sup>

Now we have already noted that there is a certain analogy between the psychotherapeutic technique of psychoanalysis and the Christian practice of confession. In both cases, an attempt is made to speak openly about certain acts, feelings and desires which up to now the patient/sinner has been too ashamed to discuss/confess, or which he has altogether forgotten or repressed. In both cases, moreover, it is assumed that the act of speaking

---

<sup>208</sup> Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp. 103, 94.

<sup>209</sup> Anthony Storr, *The Dynamics of Creation*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1972, p. 236.

<sup>210</sup> Dronov, "Otets PsikhAnaliza protiv Svyatykh Otsov", *Pravoslavnaia Beseda*, N 4, 1998; [http://www.psylib.ukrweb.net/books/\\_dronm01.htm](http://www.psylib.ukrweb.net/books/_dronm01.htm), p. 4 (in Russian).

openly about this material is beneficial for the patient/sinner; the shining of the light of consciousness and reason on the repressed or forgotten material drives away the darkness from it and destroys its harmful influence on the rest of the psyche.

However, it should be immediately obvious that the analogy does not go very far. First, the Christian penitent confesses what he and his confessor consider to be *sins*, while, as we have seen, psychoanalysis does not use the language of sin at all. True, the patient may express guilt feelings; but psychoanalysis speaks only about (neurotic) *diseases* and eschews all “judgemental” language; the analyst will be much more likely to view the expression of guilt feelings as a symptom of an illness that has to be removed - that is, the symptom as well as the illness - than as an objective statement of fact. Of course, certain guilt feelings are inappropriate because they are the product of an internalized social conscience that is merely conventional, that is, which does not correspond to God’s measure of sin. Nevertheless, there is a “hard core” of guilt feelings which the Christian will recognize as being authentic, that is, corresponding to God’s own measure, but which the analyst, since he believes neither in God nor in sin, will continue to regard as inauthentic and diseased. For, as Dronov writes, “the positivist and Freudian understanding of ‘the unconscious’ in man’s psyche substantially differs from the patristic one. The positivists do not notice the moral quality of that content of the personality which he calls ‘the unconscious’.”<sup>211</sup>

Secondly, while the analyst regards the light of consciousness and rational discussion as the means of destroying the darkness of neurotic suffering, the Christian regards the healing power to be the light of *God* Who alone forgives men their sins and grants them healing. The analyst does not heal so much as help the patient to heal himself by becoming conscious of his inner state. But for the Christian, consciousness of his inner state is not enough: he must also *condemn* that which is sinful in that state, *repent* of it, and ask God to *destroy* it.

Moreover, confession before God and his spiritual father is only part of what the Christian has to do in order to achieve full healing. The grace of God is drawn into the soul through a whole range of ascetic practices, including fasting, abstinence, prayer and active love for one’s neighbour. These practices, as Bishop Gregory writes, “carried out not only consciously but also subconsciously (that is ‘prayer of the heart’), concentrate grace-filled experiences, thoughts and feelings in the subconscious sphere...”

Psychoanalysis, however, “usually looks at abstinence only from” the point of view of “an imposed or external law or implacable rules of decency”. “For it the aim, without going into a moral evaluation of a man’s passions, is to remove the suffering elicited by the struggle inside him, to pacify him, reconcile him with the passion living in him, pointing out to him a path on

---

<sup>211</sup> Dronov, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

which he can peacefully live in society without transgressing its external laws of decency, but at the same time without condemning his passion and without rejecting it.

“The overcoming of passions and sin is recognised as necessary only insofar as the man who gives himself up to them unrestrainedly harms his own health. That is, the passions are not subjected to extirpation. The limitation of their satisfaction is dictated in essence not so much by higher moral principles as by practical considerations.

“Psychoanalysis preaches a life directed by the instincts, the suppression of which in its eyes is an abnormal phenomenon and one that threatens to engender dangerous internal conflicts...”<sup>212</sup>

Orthodoxy agrees with Freudianism in teaching that much of the suffering in the souls of men is caused by a diseased and disordered functioning of the incensive and appetitive passions. However, the two systems differ in their understanding of the causes of this disorder. Freudianism attributes it to childhood traumas, while considering the passions themselves to be “normal” and undiseased. Orthodoxy says little about childhood traumas, attributing all to the original trauma that took place in the childhood of the human race, in the Garden of Eden. *That* was the original sin, which spread like a disease, changing the nature of the passions themselves from innocent to guilty.

Moreover, Orthodoxy considers not only the incensive and appetitive passions to be diseased and infected by original sin, but also the reasoning faculty. In this respect, Orthodoxy differs not only from Freudianism, but also from the whole western rationalist tradition going back as far as Thomas Aquinas, who regarded the rational mind of man as not subject to original sin. It is precisely because our mind, too, is diseased and sinful that we cannot heal ourselves but need the grace of God.

It follows that while a happy childhood in a peaceful environment could conceivably prevent the neuroses that are the main object of the psychoanalyst’s study, this could in no way remove the original sin that is the object of the Christian’s lamentation and which is inherited from Adam at the very moment of conception. For “in sins did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 50.5), says David, and “even from the womb the sinner is estranged” (Psalm 57.3). True healing from original sin comes to the Christian only through the transformation and redirection of the passions themselves to their original condition and holy object; and this is possible only through the granting of God’s grace in Holy Baptism and a life lived completely in accordance with God’s commandments.

*January 27 / February 9, 2009.*

---

<sup>212</sup> Grabbe, op. cit.

## APPENDIX II: ROMANIDES, DEIFICATION AND THE IMAGE OF GOD

Salvation, writes the new calendarist theologian Fr. John Romanides, lies in deification – or theosis, as he prefers to call it, using the Greek word. We have no quarrel with this; it is the teaching of the Holy Fathers. “God became man, in order that man should become god” – and the process of becoming god is what we call deification. However, Romanides links this uncontroversial teaching with another, much more dubious one: that there is no likeness whatsoever between God and His creation, including man. And this is true, he asserts, not only in relation to the absolutely unknowable essence of God, but also in relation to His energies. “No similarity whatsoever exists between the uncreated and the created, or between God and creation. This also means that no analogy, correlation, or comparison can be made between them. This implies that we cannot use created things as a means for knowing the uncreated God or His energy.”<sup>213</sup> But this immediately raises the objection: if there is no similarity whatsoever between God and His creation, why, when He created man, did He create Him in His “*image and likeness*”? And again: is not this likeness between God and man precisely the basis which makes possible the union between God and man, and man’s deification?

In order to answer these questions, we need, first, to examine what the Holy Fathers understood by the image and likeness of God in man:-

**1. The Image as Dominion.** This is the interpretation that follows most directly from Genesis 1: “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (v. 26). As God has dominion over the whole universe, so He has given to man to be master of everything on earth. Thus St. John Chrysostom writes: “God says ‘image’ by way of dominion, not in any other way... Nothing on earth is greater than [man], but all things are subject to his authority.”<sup>214</sup> Blessed Theodoret of Cyr writes: “Some have said that man was made in accordance with God’s image with respect to dominion; and they have made use of a very clear proof, the fact that the Creator added, ‘And let them have dominion...’ For just as He holds absolute sway over the whole universe, so He has given to man to have authority over the irrational animals.”<sup>215</sup> Man, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, is “the impress of the supreme glory, and the image upon earth of Divine power”.<sup>216</sup> God “deigned to ‘crown [us] with honour and glory’ (Psalms 8.6) and made us illustrious; for He appointed [man] to rule over the earth and ‘set him over the works of His

---

<sup>213</sup> Romanides, *Patristic Theology*, Dalles, Oregon: Uncut Mountain Press, 2008, p. 126.

<sup>214</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 8, 3; P.G. 53, 72.

<sup>215</sup> Blessed Theodoret, *Questions on Genesis*, 20; P.G. 80, 105.

<sup>216</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1; P.G. 69.20.

hands' (Psalm 8.7)."<sup>217</sup> Ambrosiaster writes: "This, then, is the image of God in man, that one was made as it were the lord from whom all the rest would derive their origin; he would have God's sovereignty as if His vice-regent."<sup>218</sup>

**2. The Image as Rationality.** St. Basil the Great writes: "The passions have not been included in the image of God, but reason, which is master of the passions".<sup>219</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: "Man alone of all the living creatures on earth is rational, compassionate, with a capacity for all manner of virtue, and a divinely allotted dominion over all the creatures of the earth, according to the image and likeness of God. Therefore man is said to have been made in God's image inasmuch as he is a rational animal, a lover of virtue and earth's sovereign."<sup>220</sup> And the Venerable Bede writes: "Man is undoubtedly made in the image of God especially in that he excels the irrational creatures in being created capable of reasoning, through which he both rightly rules whatever has been created in the world, and can enjoy the knowledge of Him Who created them all."<sup>221</sup> A Christological dimension to this interpretation is given by the fact that Christ is called the Logos ("Word" or "Reason"), so that man created in the image of Christ-God must be rational or logical. Thus Clement of Alexandria writes: "An image of the Word is the true man, that is, the mind in man. It is on this account that he is said to have been made in accordance with God's image and likeness, because by his heart's understanding he is made like the Divine Word (Logos) and therefore rational (logikos)."<sup>222</sup> And since Christ is Himself the Image of the Father, says St. Athanasius the Great, it is through the rationality of the image that we come to know the Father: "When God... made mankind through His own Word, He saw clearly that owing to the limitation of their nature men could not of themselves know their Maker, and could get no concept of God at all; for He is uncreated, while they have passed from non-being to being. He is incorporeal, while men have been moulded with a body... He did not leave them without knowledge of Him, lest their existence be useless; for what profit can there be for creatures if they do not know the Father's Word (Logos), in Whom they have been made? If they had no knowledge of anything except earthly things, they would differ in nothing from the irrational beasts (aloga). And why should God have created them at all if He did not wish to be known by them? That is why... He made them share in His own image, our Lord Jesus Christ, and made them in accordance with His own image and likeness, in order that by such a grace they might perceive the Image, I mean the Word of the Father, and, knowing their Maker, might live the life that is genuinely happy and blessed."<sup>223</sup>

---

<sup>217</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On Hebrews*, 2.7.

<sup>218</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Questions on the Old and the New Testament*, 127, 106, 17.

<sup>219</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On the Six Days of Creation*, X, 8.

<sup>220</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Letter to Calosyrius*.

<sup>221</sup> The Venerable Bede, *On Genesis*, 1.26.

<sup>222</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus*, 10.

<sup>223</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 11; P.G. 25, 113-116.

**3. The Image as Freedom.** Theophilus of Antioch writes: “God made man free, and with a free will”.<sup>224</sup> Dominion and rationality necessarily presuppose freedom.<sup>225</sup> Moreover, freedom is a necessary condition of morality, as St. Irenaeus explains: “If it was by nature that some men are good and others bad, the good would not be praiseworthy for their goodness, which would be their natural equipment, nor would the bad be responsible, having been so created. But in fact everyone has the same nature, with the power of accepting and achieving good, and the power likewise of spurning it and failing to achieve it... Therefore it is just that among men in a well-ordered community the good are praised... and the evil called to account; and this is all the more true in respect of God’s dealing with me... If it were not in our power to do, or refrain from doing, why did the Apostle, and – what is more important – why did the Lord Himself, advise that some things be done and others not be done? But since man has from the first been endowed with free choice, and God, in Whose likeness he was made is also free, man is advised to lay hold of the good, which is achieved in fullness as a result of obedience to God.”<sup>226</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: “That man was made in the image of God... is equivalent to saying... that he is freed from necessity, and not subject to the dominion of nature, but able freely to follow his own judgement. For virtue is independent and her own mistress.”<sup>227</sup> St. Augustine distinguishes between “the first freedom of the will, the ability not to sin” and “the final freedom... the inability to sin”.<sup>228</sup>

**4. The Image as Conscience.** The freedom to make a rational choice between right and wrong entails the possession of an internal criterion distinguishing between right and wrong. This is the conscience, which a Russian saying calls “the eye of God in the soul of man”. St. Dorotheus of Gaza writes: “When God created man, He breathed into him something divine, as it were a hot and bright spark added to reason, which lit up the mind and showed him the difference between right and wrong. This is called the conscience, which is the law of nature.”<sup>229</sup> That this breath is nothing other than the image of God is confirmed by St. Gregory the Theologian: “He placed in it [the body] a breath taken from Himself which the Word knew to be an intelligent soul and the image of God.”<sup>230</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup> Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolytus*, II, 27.

<sup>225</sup> For, as Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky writes, “Man’s reason makes his will conscious and authentically free, because it can choose that which corresponds to man’s highest dignity rather than to that which his lower nature inclines him.” (*Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1984, p. 137).

<sup>226</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, IV, 37.

<sup>227</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, XVI.

<sup>228</sup> St. Augustine, *On Sin and Grace*. According to Vladimir Lossky, a similar distinction is to be found in the works of St. Macarius the Great (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London: James Clarke, 1957, pp. 115-116).

<sup>229</sup> St. Dorotheus of Gaza, *Instructions*, III.

<sup>230</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Sermon 38*, 11; P.G. 36.317.

**5. The Image as Holiness.** St. Paul says: “Renew yourselves in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who was created according to God in righteousness, in true holiness” (Ephesians 4.23-24). Therefore, writes the Venerable Bede, “Adam was created a new man from the earth according to God so that he should be righteous, holy and true, humbly submissive and cleaving to the grace of his Creator, Who has existed just and holy and true eternally and perfectly. But since he by sinning corrupted this beautiful newness of the image of God in himself, there came the second Adam, He Who is the Lord and our Creator, born of the Virgin, created incorruptibly and unchangeably in the image of God, immune from all sin and full of grace and truth, in order that by His example and gift He might restore His image and likeness in us.”<sup>231</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria writes: “The image of the heavenly man, Christ, is conspicuous in cleanness and purity, in total incorruption and life and sanctification... Union with God is impossible for anyone except through participation in the Holy Spirit, instilling in us His own proper sanctification and refashioning to His own life the nature that fell subject to corruption, and thus restoring to God and to God’s likeness what had been deprived of this glory. For the perfect image of the Father is the Son, and the natural likeness of the Son is His Spirit. The Spirit, therefore, refashioning as it were to Himself the souls of men, engraves on them God’s likeness and seals the representation of the supreme essence.”<sup>232</sup>

**6. The Image as Eternity.** Solomon writes: “God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own Eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world” (Wisdom of Solomon 2.23-24). And St. Athanasius the Great writes: “God made man by nature sinless and free in will, imperishable and eternally in His image”.<sup>233</sup> St. Columbanus of Luxeuil writes: “God bestowed upon man the image of His Eternity, and the likeness of His Character.”<sup>234</sup>

**7. The Image as Love.** “We know that when He appears we shall be like Him,” Who is love (I John 3.2, 4.8). St. John of the Ladder writes: “Love, by reason of its nature, is a resemblance to God, as far as that is possible for mortals.”<sup>235</sup> St. Maximus writes: “Love alone, properly speaking, represents true humanity in the image of the Creator.”<sup>236</sup> St. Diadochus writes: “In portraiture, when the full range of colours is added to the outline, the painter captures the likeness of the subject, even down to the smile. Something similar happens to those who are being repainted by God’s grace in the Divine likeness: when the luminosity of love is added, then it is evident that the image has been fully transformed into the beauty of the likeness.”<sup>237</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> The Venerable Bede, *On Genesis*, 1.26.

<sup>232</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on John*, 11.11.

<sup>233</sup> St. Athanasius the Great, *Against Apollinarius*, 1.15.

<sup>234</sup> St. Columbanus, *Instructions*.

<sup>235</sup> St. John of the Ladder, *The Ladder*, 30.7.

<sup>236</sup> St. Maximus, *To Thalassius*, 61; P.G. 90, 628B.

<sup>237</sup> St. Diadochus, *On Spiritual Knowledge*, 89; *The Philokalia*, volume 1, p. 288.



The above quotations are sufficient to make the point that man as he was originally created, and as he is recreated in Christ, *is* like God. In fact, becoming like Him to the supreme degree is the same as being deified. For, as St. Dionysius the Areopagite writes, “the aim of Hierarchy is *the greatest possible assimilation to, and union with, God*, and by taking Him as leader in all holy wisdom, to become like Him, so far as is permitted, by contemplating intently His most Divine Beauty.”<sup>238</sup>

This point receives confirmation from a consideration of the subject of the *Divine Names*. In his treatise with this title, St. Dionysius teaches us that each of the names we ascribe to God are taken from created human experience and then applied to an Uncreated Energy of God which bears a resemblance to that human experience. Thus we call God “love” from our experience of human love and of God’s love towards us. This is not to say that God’s love is not infinitely purer and greater than human love. Nevertheless, if there were absolutely no similarity between our experience of created human love and God’s uncreated love for us, there would be absolutely no reason to call Him “love”.

God reveals Himself to us in many ways, and our names for Him are correspondingly many. Thus “He is many-named,” writes St. Dionysius, “because this is how they represent Him speaking: ‘I am He Who is, I am Life, Light, God, Truth’. And the wise in God praise God Himself, Creator of all, by many names gathered from created things, such as Good, Beautiful, Wise, Beloved...”<sup>239</sup>

These are names gathered from created things, but applied to the Uncreated God. So unless we are to deny that God can meaningfully be called Good, Beautiful or Wise, Life, Light or Love, we must conclude that Romanides is wrong in asserting that there is no similarity whatsoever between God and man. The fact that we can, however approximately, give names to God shows that there *is* some interface between the Creator and His creation. However transcendent and unknowable God is in His essence, He still makes Himself known in His energies; and we can know Him and name Him in His energies because we are made in His image and likeness and because He has become man for us, and revealed Himself in that very human nature that He assumed for our sake. It is on this basis that “we know that, when He is revealed [at the Second Coming], we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3.2).

May 2/15, 2009.  
St. Athanasius the Great.

---

<sup>238</sup> St. Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchies*, III.

<sup>239</sup> St. Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, I, 6.