

The Ecstasy of D.H. Lawrence

By Douglas Lockhart

I absolutely flatly deny that I am a soul, or a body, or a mind, or an intelligence, or a brain, or a nervous system, or a bunch of glands, or any the rest of these bits of me . . . I am man and alive. I am a man alive, and as long as I can, I intend to go on being man alive.

D. H. Lawrence
Phoenix p. 535.

Why, then, is William James's contribution to depth psychology so completely ignored by most psychologists and philosophers? One answer is that our knowledge of James's life and work has been heavily conditioned by a first generation of interpreters [who have] tried to make James over into a humanist in the tradition of Western philosophy.

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Mythical Images and Symbols

The first quote above is from *Why the Novel Matters*, an essay among others by D. H. Lawrence published posthumously in 1936. And what a strange read it is. Every page carries Lawrence's unmistakable imprint, his uncopyable style, his simmering rage, his brilliance of observation and idiosyncrasy of mind. Here we have the other side of Lawrence's mind, a collection of writings that allow us to hear him thinking out his philosophy on the page, an exercise of mind that reveals both his genius, and his madness. There is no doubting Lawrence's genius, and equally no doubting his madness; he was, to twist the word "mad" a little, as mad as all hell about just about everything, and let that madness spill out into the world in a fashion few writers since have had the capacity to emulate. But that is of course to muddy the waters, for such 'madness's' are quite different in type, aren't they? To be mad at something is quite different from being "mad" in the sense of being mentally unbalanced. Well, yes, and no. In Lawrence's case he was simultaneously both; he was mad *at* because precariously balanced between sanity and a form of creative insanity. Which takes us back to Erich Neumann's rather revealing statement in chapter three where he describes the difference between creative and neurotic individuals as "a surcharge of unconscious activity" which creative individuals can withstand, but neurotics can't cope with.¹ Some individuals reflect a synthesis of

conscious and unconscious forces that result in an exultation of mind with mystical overtones.

The difference between a creative and a neurotic individual is one of energy regulation; one channels the natural energies of psyche into tasks which, because the *unbuilding* factor is also in operation, causes astonishingly fresh approaches to old questions to arise. The other, because of a breakdown in conscious controls due to deep stress, causes a further disabling of the conscious mind in relation to the same fundamental energies. Creative individuals move beyond pre-determined, restrictive forms of thought, expression and relationship with relative ease; unbalanced individuals tend to overvalue and overdevelop the same offerings and fall foul of their inbuilt limitations. But as Lawrence quickly found out, there is a price to pay for too strident a creative challenge to society's entrenched code of beliefs and values; it is not wise to challenge the status quo too rigorously. That has to be done with an element of finesse not always readily available to the creative individual. If left unchecked (adjusted so as not to cause too much alarm) the rebuff earned can lead, as in Lawrence's case, to a state of mind resembling that of the neurotic's by default. In this sense, and in this sense alone, was D. H. Lawrence mad; he was, in other words, too near to William Blake's burning paradise of thought and vision, and equally too near to Robert Burn's unvarnished sexual honesty to deliver what society expected. As Aldous Huxley noted, there was, in Lawrence, "a continuously springing fountain of vitality. It went on welling up in him, leaping, now and then, into a great explosion [of] iridescence, long after the time when, by all the rules of medicine, he should have been dead."² There was something going on in Lawrence that defied explanation, and when we delve into his philosophy we find that it had something to do with *symbols*, something to do with *meaning* rather than *meanings*, something to do with Lawrence's *deep emotional self*³

Mythical images are symbols, Lawrence tells us; they "stand for units of human feeling, human experience",⁴ and *do not mean anything*. The whole point and power of symbols "is to arouse the deep emotional self . . . the dynamic self, beyond comprehension."⁵ Human experience "throbs within the symbol", and we "throb in response", but symbols are not *invented*. It may take "centuries to create a really significant symbol",⁶ but only in terms of time taken, not to any particular content within the symbol. In Lawrence's scheme a symbol may present itself as an image, but it contains no images; it is as empty of images as it is empty of allegory and metaphor - *intentionality* has no place in its makeup. Which makes myth "an attempt to narrate a whole human experience, of which the purpose is too deep, . . . for mental explanation or

description.”⁷ By this measure myth cannot be explained; it is “*being felt and suffered now*” beyond accepted ideas and notions.⁸ (my italics.) It is the mystery of the conscious/unconscious matrix consciously appreciated without the self succumbing to the limitations of reason. It is religious experience in its primary mode registering as evaluative feeling, and at its most intense as a numinous charge or *sensus numinis*. We are, in other words, walking laboratories within whom imagination informs reason as to its next creative move beyond language, moves simultaneously subservient to the limitations language must necessarily impose on all such experiences. Here then is Eric Sharpe’s *uanalysable* religious experience and Jung’s *archetypal* template for interpreting the symbol-laden dreams and reveries of his patients, a realm of mythic wholes within which the ego resides oblivious to the larger context of psyche.

A marvelous example of Lawrence's definition of symbols is found in his attempt to deal with the Christian *Apocalypse*. Applying his own artistic sensibilities to the book's structure and content, he tells us that John of Patmos is unlikely to have composed such a book, that it was more likely written by other Jewish Apocalyptists around two centuries before Christ, and that it had its Christian allegorical meaning plastered on top of its original symbolism.⁹ Lawrence flatly rejected an allegorical meaning for the *Apocalypse*; the book's symbols, he tells us, "belong[ed] to a bigger age than that of John of Patmos."¹⁰ The Christian attempt to reduce such a mighty book of symbols to the level of superficial allegorical meanings was, in his eyes, an injustice to the original text. Symbols did not carry *meanings*; they were "organic units of consciousness with a life of their own", their value not in the meanings they were mistakenly *believed* to carry, but in their dynamic, emotional content in relation to *body and soul*.¹¹ To drive this point home, he adds, "An allegorical image has a *meaning*. Mr. Facing-both-ways has a meaning. But I defy you to lay your finger on the full meaning of *Janus*, who is a symbol."¹² Which makes Lawrence's notion of symbols psychical, not social or existential in origin, a point already explored in chapter seven in relation to Carl Jung's interpretation of mythic images being *full of meaning and purpose*.

Combining the attributes of scholar, critic and poet, Herbert Read tackles many aspects of the above problem in *The Form of Things Unknown* (1960), a book-length essay towards an aesthetic philosophy within which he explores the nature of the creative mind and its role in sustaining civilised values. And he enters the fray at exactly the point we have been discussing in relation to Lawrence's claim that symbols in themselves do not carry meanings.

. . . the purpose of a work of art is not necessarily definable in the terms of rational discourse. Art is a form of symbolic discourse, and its elements are not linguistic but, as Conrad Fielder recognised seventy years ago, perceptual. We are not in the realm of abstract thought at al¹³ . . .

A work of art exists not because of the meanings it is believed to express, but "only in virtue of a particular organisation of its constituent material elements."¹⁴ Which means that a work of art should not be confused with notions of *content*, but appreciated in its entirety, in its *existence as a whole*. A novel quite obviously carries meanings, but it is not meaningful *because* of those meanings; it is meaningful only in terms of its *being* in existence. The "constituent material elements" of a novel are of course organised formally, but as Read points out, "any metrical analysis of form, any morphology of art, does not yield up art's secret."¹⁵ All artistic forms are aesthetic in nature, that is, they are thought to *appeal* to the senses through concepts of natural proportion such as the Golden Section, but for Read that in itself does not explain a work of art. Nor did it for Wolfgang von Goethe who perceived the supra-personal effect of art as conveying *the deepest secrets of creation*.¹⁶ For Read, it is the quality of *feeling* that matters, "for it must never be forgotten that in art the way from the personal to the supra-personal lies along the path of sensation",¹⁷ a route travelled by Lawrence through an opening up of the self in relation to "body and soul"¹⁸ - a dynamic described as exhibiting *a life of its own*.

Finding Herbert Read's comments at this juncture was, to say the least, helpful, particularly as he happened to introduce Carl Jung into the conversation and show him to have been more sensitive to both the nature of art and the nature of artistic expression than I have previously suggested. In terms of a psychology based on Western scientific principles, Jung certainly believed that unconscious psychological factors affecting human behaviour ought to be made conscious, but in terms of the arts he was, apparently, not wholly of that opinion. Arriving in on this very question, Read quotes Jung as saying that art is supra-personal, and that one has to make a distinction between works of art created by the artist's conscious will and judgment, and those produced spontaneously. Which is to say *fully formed* before delivery, the artist having acted merely as a channel.¹⁹ A spontaneous work of art was, according to Jung, "a force of nature that effects its purpose, either with tyrannical might, or with that subtle cunning which nature

brings to the achievement of her ends",²⁰ a strangely worded explanation developed further in terms of the creative process being:

an autonomous complex . . . a detached portion of the psyche that leads an independent psychic life withdrawn from the hierarchy of consciousness, and in proportion to its energetic value or force, [that] may appear as a mere disturbance of the voluntarily directed process of consciousness, or as a superordinated authority which may take the ego bodily into its service."²¹

The idea of a detached portion of the psyche being capable of independent activity is a challenging concept, for as Read points out, we are prejudiced in favour of the unity or integrity of the personality.²² How then can such a state exist? Jung's explanation for this phenomenon is intriguing; he conjectured that the essential nature of art lay outside the province of psychology and was beyond psychological investigation because the problem of what constituted the essential nature of art was an aesthetic-artistic problem that only an aesthetic-artistic approach could solve. Which causes Read to interpret Jung's approach to this problem in terms of the Ancient Greek idea of the *daemon*, a psychic force, or energy, with a history stemming back to Heraclitus; a concept Jung would certainly have been familiar with. Question is, what might an aesthetic-artistic approach to art be in itself, and how does such an approach relate to what an artist experiences during acts of inspired creation?

At this point, according to Read, Jung breaks his own ruling²³ and attempts to link artistic experience to his theory of archetypes, the primordial perceptions he believed to lie at the deepest levels of psyche; a depth metaphorically so great it constituted both the psychical *and* the physiological base from which all other perceptions of reality eventually formed. Which led him to describe archetypes as "the chthonic portion of the mind . . . that portion through which the mind is linked to nature, or in which, at least, its relatedness to the earth and the universe seems most comprehensible."²⁴ Most comprehensible to whom, and in what terms? I ask this question because what Jung is dealing with here is the almost impossible to imagine emergence of mind from matter. Quoting the philosopher Susan Langer, Read then delves into the highways and byways of perceptual experience, and through Langer's eyes makes our ancestors' unconscious perceptions of reality the root of all abstraction, rationality itself being said to stem from our early ability to organise the sensory field into groups and patterns of sense data and

create perceptual forms. But what, one has to ask, has any of that got to do with some detached portion of psyche being capable of independent activity? It certainly helps explain how the conscious mind became progressively more and more conscious, more rational and more logical, but it does not explain how some unconscious portion of mind manages to overpower the conscious mind with creative insights that often transcend the conscious mind's rational deliberations.

The heart of this problem lies, I think, with Jung's conception of consciousness as a "hierarchy", a notion that may well be inadequate in that it is so rationally sensible. Allow the idea of mental hierarchy to dominate one's thinking, and the creative force in psyche has to be perceived as a detached psychic portion with a double agenda: authentic creativity and/or neurotic imbalance depending on the individual's stress levels; that is, his/her psychological capacity to handle the tensions (energies) of psyche as they are subjectively experienced. Jung states this quite clearly when he likens this complex to a living organism carrying an "energetic value" or "force" that may erupt either as a "disturbance" or as an "authority" capable of taking the ego body into its service.²⁵ That's quite a claim; it's tantamount to suggesting that the Ancient Greek notion of a possessing *daemon* does have credence in psychological terms. And as *daemons* were divided into good and evil categories and held responsible for a person's behaviour, the old pagan/Christian superstitions built around unseen forces cannot help but come alive again. But what if this creative force in psyche is quite other than that as imagined by Jung? What if this *daemon* is not a detached portion of psyche, but actually psyche as a whole speaking through symbolic images and sensation intensities (energies) to the conscious aspect of itself whose primary task is to ward off threat from the physical environment *through making sense of it*. Making sense of the world would then not be an end product, or crowning evolutionary achievement, more a continuous updating of our need to survive in relation to the dangers posed by physical reality *and* our ever-expanding, yet always limited, rational categories. Which raises the question of what it is we are actually protecting. Is it, as we suppose, the physical body as carrier of the evolved conscious self, or is it psyche *as a whole*? And not just in the sense of "Well, that has to be the case, doesn't it? We need a subconscious/unconscious mind in which to store stuff, don't we?" Such thinking pushes us back into Jung's hierarchy of mental states, a hierarchy taken up by modern psychology with varying levels of emphasis and enthusiasm. No, what I'm suggesting is quite different. I'm suggesting we take D. H. Lawrence seriously when he posits a "dynamic self beyond [conscious] comprehension" and accommodate that self, not in the sense of "hierarchy", but as signifying an integral unity of mind not only beyond conscious comprehension, but integral to comprehension in its deeper and more profound aspect as *being*.

The *dynamic self beyond comprehension* spoken of by Lawrence takes us into the presence of ourselves as beings capable of realising our *being in existence* beyond rational categories. Such an experience is not composed, as Jung surmised, of profound experiences from the earliest evolutionary period; it is an experience *beyond* primordial memory in that it belongs to psyche *as such*, not to mind in its infancy. This is not to say that our earliest existential experiences do not exist as residues deep in the physical brain;²⁶ it is to carefully differentiate between such ancient forms and the *realisation of being* which necessitates a disengagement of the conscious mind from such forms, and from all subsequent existential forms through a momentary, or sustained, relinquishing of engaged thinking. There is no doubting the influence of ancient forms of thought and experience as they are sometimes expressed in dreams, or in moments of reverie (archaic symbols capable of allegoric or metaphoric interpretation are well documented), but the creative space being talked of here as "autonomous" and "detached" takes us into another dimension of experience where trance-like creative states, or consciously approached meditational/contemplative states, tease us away from engaged thinking towards experiences of a transcendental *emptiness*. Which tells us that what Lawrence was intuiting as he delved ever more deeply into what it meant to be a human being was creatively *beyond* that generally associated with the novel, or any other creative medium for that matter; he was in fact experiencing *intimations of being* as his sometimes excathedra statements suggest, experiences that so captured his attention that everything he wrote about human beings, never mind the style in which he wrote about them, ended up pointing in that philosophically obscure direction.

Here then is the aesthetic-artistic approach advocated by Jung pushed beyond its normal limits, an approach abandoned by Jung as he struggled to explain what he meant by a "detached" and "independent" portion of psyche in relation to creative genius and the primordial beginnings of the human species. And it is in relation to *genius levels of creativity* that he makes what I believe to have been an uncharacteristic mistake; he grounded his theory of creative genius on the notion of this mysterious force displacing conscious, deliberate thought to such an extent that he conceived such individuals to be possessed by what sounds like a psychic intruder. What had actually happened, I suspect, was quite other, for genius levels of creative expression are in fact no different in type from regular, everyday experiences of creative insight; they're just more extensive. But there is a break-off point between the two forms, and that is where the creative experience becomes an exercise in deep self-discernment leading to a radical diminution of engaged thinking. This is the next stage in creative involvement, the next vital stage leading up to an interception of the conscious self by the *dynamic self beyond comprehension* which, in itself, is none other than the experience of *one's own ontological existence*, that is, an

experience beyond all existing existential categories whether primordial or otherwise. Intimations of a dynamic self beyond [conscious] comprehension is, therefore, not a form of possession leading to a displacement of the conscious self, it is a displacement of conscious thought which leaves the conscious self *out of the equation*, so allowing the *whole self* to function at levels of cognisance beyond that of the ordinary. Ultimately, human beings, like works of art, should not be equated with the meanings they carry, but with the supra-personal meaning their *being in existence* announces through their presence, or lack of presence, either to themselves, or to others.

Jung's Ubiquitous Archetypes

Herbert Read is one of the few to accuse Jung of being a materialist, albeit a materialist who continually muddied the waters around that materialism with a form of psychological mysticism. Referring to Jung's use of the word *archetype* as a "somewhat theological term which may hide, from the uncautious, the essentially materialistic base of the whole conception", ²⁷ Read attempts to pull Jung out of the psychological shadows and show him to have been a hard-headed scientist in spite of how many viewed, and continue to view, his contribution to psychology. Interpreting everything to do with consciousness from the stand point of the brain's primordial beginnings, Jung is said to have extended psychology's grasp of the human mind in relation to the body, but in his enthusiasm to explain the images arising in his patients' dreams and reveries he so coated his observations in myth and fable that the scientific aspect of his thinking became obscured. In an attempt to accommodate this problem, Read notes that

the term 'archetype' was preceded by the equivalent term 'primordial image', which was more concrete and more directly related to the current terminology of psychology. Indeed, while for the historical description of the archetype we may have to range over wide fields of myth and fable, as phenomena they are nevertheless firmly rooted in the physiological structure of the brain.²⁸

I think that neatly sums up the problem faced by Jung during his own lifetime, and by those who continue to denigrate his contribution on the basis that it was a mythic mess. There is an element of truth in that, but as the many, many discarded, or semi-discarded, psychological theories of the last few decades plainly show, no one has as yet got it completely right. Or ever will, perhaps. There are too many psychological/physiological

variables for a Grand Theory of the human to emerge, too many uncertainties and ambiguities for any one theoretical model to hold centre stage for very long. And the same applies to philosophy in spite of the physicalist conception of mind now prevalent in that quarter; philosophy, too, is at a crossroads in its conception of what constitutes mind and consciousness, the perambulations of some philosophers around the question of what it means to *be in existence* viewed as a kind of intellectual tomfoolery. But at the back of it all lies a sincere attempt to produce a coherent, truthful overview of the human reflective of the reality we now know so much about. No one is trying to subvert either our conception of that reality, or our conception of how we fit into that reality; it is, all of it, a process of slow, painful exploration which, if the present tendency in psychology and philosophy is left unchecked, may deliver up a big fat nothing in terms of our having any meaning at all. Which means we may have to change intellectual focus and cultivate alongside our major intellectual disciplines an aesthetic-artistic approach to the same problems as Jung and Lawrence so astutely advocated. To do that, however, we will have to come to a whole new comprehension of what the arts signify in themselves, and how they can, and have, been subverted to a purpose well below their inherent nature. For if the arts can be subverted due to too conscious and deliberate an interference from the conscious mind, then what is to stop the same happening to psychology and philosophy, never mind to science in general? Some will say immediately that science is science and that's the end of the matter, but that is a shortsighted view of science based on a rather lifeless logic that has tripped us up more than once. Science is not science because it is *called* science; it is science because it is not afraid to tackle avenues of thought believed by the less imaginative to be of no consequence. Science is not just about facts and figures; it is also about *imagination*, and imagination is that which links us back into ourselves in ever greater depth.

Back to Rudolf Otto's *Numinosum*

Experiences of the "numinous" were perceived by Rudolf Otto as transcending all religious forms and ought not to be appropriated to any particular religious tradition. Jung agreed with Otto, but interpreted the *numinosum* in terms of "a dynamic existence or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will [but as something that] seizes and controls the human subject, which is always rather its victim than its creator."²⁹ He then adds: "The numinosum is an involuntary condition of the subject, *whatever its cause may be.*" (my italics) The term "victim" is of course used by Jung in the sense of an individual having no conscious control over such an event, although he then proceeds to offer circumstances through which a numinous experience can be enticed to occur by way of "certain devices

of a magic nature, such as invocation, incantation, sacrifice, meditation and other yoga practices, self-inflicted tortures of various descriptions and so forth."³⁰ Self-inflicted tortures? Is this really Jung speaking? Yes, it is, and he means every word of it, for as already noted in chapter five and chapter seven, Jung perceived yogic meditation as a *giving in* to internal forces that could overwhelm or even destroy the conscious mind. This was of course the Western psychologist speaking, the doctor speaking, the one-time close associate of Freud's for whom the so-called unconscious was a pit of despair and filth. Jung did not perceive the unconscious/subconscious in those terms, but he was nevertheless nervous when confronted by its obvious power in relation to neurosis and examples of creative brilliance. He couldn't quite make out what was going on in the depths of psyche, and that in spite of many astonishingly accurate formulations around mental processes at depth.

Jung knew that consciousness could be altered by such experiences, but as the religious forms built on numinous experience suggested, there was no one way to interpret what triggered such forms into existence: all religions and creeds were "codified and dogmatised forms of original religious experience" pushed out of experiential focus by religious institutions. Of that Jung was certain; what he was not certain about was what psyche was in itself.³¹ A materialistic prejudice explained psyche as an "epiphenomenal byproduct of organic processes in the brain",³² and there was an undeniable connection between brain and psyche, but that did not make the epiphenomenal argument an unshakable truth. There were too many instances on record of a neurosis having no detectable physical cause for the materialistic argument to remain unchallenged. Fine, but Jung then lunged in the direction of Freud by suggesting that we ought to be afraid "of those non-personal forces dwelling in the unconscious mind."³³ forces he explained in terms of inexplicable behaviours in relation to crowds and the *primordial urges* that surface in crowds. These he describes as "the dynamic of the collective man set free - beasts or demons which lie dormant in every person till he is part of a mob."³⁴ The human psyche was not merely a personal affair; it was also a collective phenomenon in that it was, at base, governed by *ancient fears and responses*.

That there is an archaic dimension to psyche that can erupt in relation, say, to crowds, or stress,³⁵ is not under question, but there is, as Jung was well aware, much more to psyche than that. The unconscious, primordial dimension of psyche is not the fundamental problem; conscious minds *exiled from psyche* are the problem in that they have little direct access to psyche in its non-personal, non-temporal mode, and may cause

psyche to respond out of its primordial base by way of correction: when our lives go severely out of kilter there is a self-correcting mechanism in psyche that makes its presence known through diverse avenues of expression. This process of self-correction may mean breakdown in terms of neurosis or even pathology, but there is behind it a creative urge towards psychological stability not yet convincingly explained by our major psychologies. Hence Jung's *Individuation Theory*, his belief that psyche was constantly attempting to right itself when things went wrong, and that this process was ongoing in terms of life as a whole. Problem is, if psyche was at base no more than a primordial, tribal-based force burgeoning for attention, then what was doing the correcting? Jung struggled with that question, and in his *Psychological Reflections* (1953), he has this to say

The only thing that can be established with certainty, in the present state of our knowledge, is our ignorance of the nature of psyche.

There is thus no ground at all for regarding the psyche as something secondary or as an epiphenomenon; on the contrary, there is every reason to regard it, at least hypothetically, as a factor *sui generis*, and to go on doing so until it has been sufficiently proved that psychic processes can be fabricated in a retort.³⁶

Herbert Read's materialistic view of Jung's archetypal theory is therefore a little askew in relation to what Jung perceived primordial images to be in themselves. In Jung's scheme they were not just physiological: they were also *psychical*, that is, simultaneously physical and psychical. Psyche was, in essence, a curious state of inbetweenness, a psychophysical dimension constituting a non-temporal, non-personal matrix within which our now highly evolved egos were a point of conscious focus, a waxing and waning focus dependent on that matrix for its very existence. Slipping constantly in and out of awareness focusings, the ego's capacity for spontaneous, as opposed to deliberate, creative thinking was tied experientially to this matrix, closer and closer encounters with psyche determining creative outcomes in relation to self, other or world.

Resituating Depth Psychology

It is necessary at this point to double back to chapter three and readdress Steven Pinker's assurance that "every aspect of our mental lives depends entirely on physiological events in the tissues of the brain [and that the] information-processing activity of the brain causes the mind, or . . . that it is the mind."³⁷ That, in essence, is what Jung was referring

to when he talked of the materialistic prejudice and assumption that psyche is no more than an epiphenomenal byproduct of the brain, and suggested that an aesthetic-artistic approach to psyche might solve the problem. How? By *pushing so far beyond such questions they melt into insignificance*. Not because such questions are unimportant, but because the experiential evidence for a more expansive view of psyche is readily available in psychology, philosophy and the arts if we care to look. Such was Lawrence's experience. Such was Blake's. Such is the experience of anyone who fully engages with their own fathomless depths. In this sense, art, as an aesthetic rendering of reality, is a form of meditation, artists of worth being in themselves trained meditators whose metaphorical descent or focusing of the conscious mind allows psyche to *come on line*. And that takes us back to Jung's contribution to psychology, for it wasn't just any old psychology Jung was advocating, it was *depth* psychology.

An audible groan will escape the lips of some readers at this point; the very mention of 'depth psychology' is anathema to many - particularly psychologists under the influence of neuroscience. Jung, they will tell you, was certainly at the heart of it all; in fact he singlehandedly bedevilled the whole psychological landscape with his subjective nonsense for decades. So goes the gripe, and it goes deep. But was Jung single-handedly responsible for depth psychology? Well, no, actually. Freud also played his part, and even today holds scientific credence over Jung for having advocated a fundamentally reductionist approach to human beings in spite of that. He, too, has been sidelined, of course, but caps continue to be doffed in his direction for having stuck to scientific principles and for having eschewed Jung's perceived mysticism. Freud may have fathered the notion of the unconscious - a notion of psychological importance picked up and developed, in Freud's opinion, wildly by his pupil Jung - but he kept his theoretical ideas under strict control. Alarmed by what Jung was beginning to suggest about unconscious forces, he tried to put his once promising pupil back on the rails of scientific sanity, but demonstrably failed.

The above is a reasonably accurate sketch of how most people view Freud, Jung, and depth psychology today, but it contains one major flaw: Freud did not single-handedly discover the unconscious, and as such was not Jung's only conduit to the notion of 'depth' in relation to psyche. There were, although it is hard to detect in today's psychological literature, numerous advocates of depth psychology long before Freud and Jung took up cudgels in that direction, and a principle figure in this little-mentioned group of researchers was the redoubtable psychologist and philosopher, William James. But there were others, and these others were, in their day, house-hold names. Of such an ilk were George Miller Beard, Max Dessoir, Jules Dejerine, Theodore Flournoy, Paul DuBois, Pierre Janet, F.W.H. Myers, Morton Prince and Roberto Assagioli. As Eugene Taylor shows in his 2002 paper "William James and Depth Psychology", there were

"many depth psychologies beside Freud's that flourished in the late-nineteenth century."³⁸ So the question must be: why is today's psychological literature so deficient in this regard? Taylor's answer to this question sets off a whole chain-reaction of questions:

Academic psychologists . . . are generally too wedded to the assumptions of reductionist science to acknowledge the reality of the unconscious, preferring today to confine themselves largely to the domain of cognitive behaviourism, social attribution theory, and brain science.³⁹

Eugene Taylor has a PhD in the history and Philosophy of Psychology and is a lecturer in Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School. But as the title of his paper suggests, he also knows a thing or two about William James' life and work, and that is not surprising given that he is also the author and co-editor of numerous books on James' *ever-developing* comprehension of the human condition. Which causes him to note that in "nearly all explorations to date, with the exception of a precious few, James' interpreters have no depth psychology, no conception of a growth oriented dimension to the personality, nor any iconography representing the experience of transcendence."⁴⁰ In other words, James has been rendered harmless, his earlier views taken to represent the whole man in spite of radical changes to his philosophy in his mature years. Interpreted almost wholly in terms of what fits with today's psychological profile of the human, he has been neutralised as a thinker and made fit into a paradigm which, if he were alive today, he would consider retrograde in many of its pronouncements.

So who was William James? And why the games being played around his contribution to psychological understanding?

William James, to place him in a proper historical context, was at the centre of discussions to do with consciousness in philosophy, psychology, religion, and medicine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was one of the seminal figures who helped tease psychology towards a more mature view of itself, albeit one progressively ignored as Freud's influence gained strength. Of primary interest, however, is James' evolving model of consciousness, a model of "nearly a half dozen stages over the course of his professional career."⁴¹ Taylor arrows in on those changes and shows James to have gone through a biological phase in relation to abstract philosophy (1860), a positivist and reductionist phase in relation to cognitive psychology (1890), and a dynamic

psychology phase in relation to the subconscious and its effects on society (1896). By 1902, however, he was acknowledging "a growth-oriented dimension to personality", and soon after was highlighting not only "the primacy of the mystical, transcendent experience as the primary source of enduring personality transformation", but hinting that such experience was "the very source of the discursive intellect."⁴² Building on Frederick Myers' discovery of subliminal influences on the conscious mind, he was then led into a study of the entire spectrum of human experience, and came to the radical conclusion that consciousness "ranged from the psychopathological to that of the transcendent" with waking rational consciousness somewhere in the middle of this spectrum.⁴³ By 1904 he had articulated a metaphysics of experience (radical empiricism), and soon after posited an "overarching framework within which a full-spectrum psychology of consciousness could be understood."⁴⁴

A major influence on James during the 1860's was A. A. Liebeault's *Sleep and Analogous States*, a study detailing Liebeault's experiments with hypnotism, a practice frowned upon by the medical profession at that time. Ignored by his peers, Liebeault nevertheless became quite famous for his bold reporting on hypnosis, and by 1870 James had opened his own laboratory in experimental psychology at Harvard College, his prime area of interest being the difference between functional and organic disorders.⁴⁵ As noted by Jung, there were too many instances on record of a neurosis having no detectable physical cause for the materialistic argument to remain.⁴⁶ It would however be the practice of hypnosis that would steal the show, so to speak, Jean Martin Charcot in Paris having detected a direct transference of epileptic symptoms to hysteric patients due to overcrowding in his asylum facility. Concluding that morbid processes of suggestion were responsible, Charcot convincingly demonstrated to the Academy of Science that hypnosis could induce physiological changes, and that such changes were psychopathological in origin.⁴⁷ While in Paris, James formed a link between the French Experimental School of the Subconscious and what Taylor describes as "the burgeoning fields of experimental psychopathology, personality theory, and social psychology in the United States."⁴⁸ The scene was set for some major changes in James' thinking, a meeting with the French philosopher Alfred Binet, Charcot's primary interpreter, preparing him for the insights of Myers in relation to subliminal theory. Charcot had however categorised hypnosis as a symptom of pathology in itself, and it would take Hippolyte Bernheim, a follower of Liebeault, to straighten matters out. Arguing that

hypnosis was a phenomenon to which some people responded more than others, Bernheim identified "suggestibility" as its trigger, and interpreted hypnotic outcomes as normal rather than abnormal.

In 1889, Paris was the scene of the First International Congress of Experimental Psychology, a venue eagerly attended by the English, and by the Americans.⁴⁹ It was here that James met up with Theodore Flournoy, professor of experimental psychology at the University of Geneva, and where, according to Taylor, "Lurking in the background as an auditor was the young Sigmund Freud, still in his 'years of glorious isolation'."⁵⁰ Jung, too, would soon enter the picture, the French Experimental School of the Subconscious being the centre of a world-wide development in psychotherapy and psychical research, the latter being an area of study known to Jung since early childhood. In England, psychical research had concentrated on the question of life after death, an association that had almost bankrupted the society,⁵¹ whereas in American, because of an emphasis on the discovery of "consistent laws of mental action",⁵² those involved had escaped serious censure. The French influence on all concerned was therefore considerable: Jung followed Freud "in the tradition of the late-nineteenth century psychologies of transcendence", Freud, following himself, developed a more medically-based approach with sex as a ubiquitous presence. Which tells us that Jung's principle sources of influence were James, Myers and Flournoy, so forming what Taylor describes as "the French-Swiss-British-American psychotherapeutic axis",⁵³ their thinking being dominated by Myers' discovery of subliminal forces operating in psyche. A physiologically-based psychology dependent on the dissection of frogs had been replaced by a dissociation model of consciousness, the human personality conceived as a plurality of integrated internal states with the conscious ego situated somewhere in the middle.

Eugene Taylor asks the all-important question near the end of his so-informative paper on James and his psychology, that question being "did William James have a depth psychology?" Answer: Yes. And so did many another between the 1860s and the turn of the century. Depth psychology was, therefore, not invented by Freud, nor by a recalcitrant Jung in reaction to Freud's sexual theories; it had its roots in the thinking of the French and American schools of psychology. As is abundantly clear from Taylor's historical sketch, James was influenced by a host of great European thinkers prior to reaching his final conclusions about the human psyche, and it is on record that he interacted with both Freud and Jung, classifying Freud as "a man of fixed ideas" whom he suspected would have a telling influence on twentieth-century psychology, and Jung as someone to whom

he could relate because of similar interests.⁵⁴ Jung would acknowledge James' influence on his model of consciousness during his Harvard Tercentenary address in 1936, a fact of some importance when placed in the context of Depth Psychology being an already burgeoning presence. The subjective, phenomenological field of human experience would be progressively downgraded as behaviourism and then neuroscience developed their reductive philosophy of mind, but in the background Depth Psychology would continue to irritate, many of its past observations proving too resilient to be ignored.

The present situation as perceived by Eugene Taylor finishes on a particularly challenging note: ". . . it is clear," he says, "that solving the conundrum of the brain/mind interface will require neuroscientists to take more seriously James' clues if an adequate science of consciousness is to be constructed. However, possibly the most important point of James' message is that progress in our understanding of consciousness may end up altering the very nature of science itself."⁵⁵ One has to wonder, surely, what Taylor means by such a statement given that in the opening quote to this chapter he draws a line of distinction between James and the humanistic tradition of Western philosophy. Is he suggesting, perhaps, that the humanistic tradition, as it has developed, is letting us down?

References and Notes:

- 1) Neumann, Erich, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Bollingen Series, xlii Princeton, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1973, p. 41. See also Carl Jung's *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (pp. 70-72) where he speaks of artistic experience in terms of the permeability of the partition separating the conscious and the unconscious. Managing this permeability is the function of Great Art, he tells us; it is what constitutes the artist's *gift* and it separates the artist from those governed by the need for continuity and reliability in a social context. Denial of unconscious influence can however result in a powerful counter-position building up in the unconscious of non-artists, and this can lead to the unconscious intervening in disturbing and unpredictable ways. According to Jung there is no actual "cure" for such intrusions beyond our becoming more aware on an ongoing basis, but as that constitutes the artist's "gift", greater awareness resulting in creative acts becomes the challenge faced by those to whom social continuity and reliability has taken precedence over personal growth and maturity.
- 2) Lawrence, D. H., *Letters of* edited and with an introduction by Aldous Huxley, Introduction, p. xxxii.
- 3) Lawrence, D. H., *Phoenix*, p. 296.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Ibid. (Author's note): The deep emotional self is also the dreaming self; it *wells up inside* and should be left alone to do so. Jung and Freud saw things differently. James Hillman, the Jungian-trained psychologist mentioned in chapter four did not agree with Jung on this issue. Jung contended that making a dream's unconscious content conscious served the dream's purpose and linked the unconscious wish *of the conscious mind* to his theory of individuation, a natural process of psychological maturity in relation to ego growth and stability. Freud, *extend the domain of awake consciousness*. Hillman did not agree with either approach; he wanted the dream to emerge into the dayworld of literal meanings *on its own terms*, not by way of ego-based formulations in words. For Hillman, dreams did not exist to be understood in commonsense terms; they existed to tease us away from such modalities towards *seeing into the darkness of psyche itself*. It was we who had to adjust to the dream, not the dream to us. It was not the dream's business to be understood; it was our business to enter the dream's territory of images, resemblances and correspondences, and learn how to let dream speak to us in its own symbolic, shape-shifting language. Dreaming was not

a playground for the conscious mind while comotose, a form of entertainment to ensure sleep continuity, or a replaying of conscious experiences to clear the brain of debris; it was, or could be, an *intimation of being* that could only be understood in psyche's own oblique language of images. And occasionally in a word or two - psyche was not altogether linguistically inept. However literal and sequential the language of psyche might appear to be, it was in fact a timeless dimension of mind within which the dreaming ego escaped the strictures of time and experienced another dimension of the self, the self's psychic *immediacy*, a dimension far removed from dayworld experience. Dreaming was not dayworld residues being mindlessly processed; it was the interstices point between two dramatically different forms of comprehension within which "play", or "the play" harboured intimations of an extended self.

- 5) Ibid.
- 6) Ibid.
- 7) Ibid.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Ibid, p. 295.
- 10) Ibid.
- 11) Ibid.
- 12) Ibid, Lawrence's observation" is not so easily got at is reflected in arthur Koestler's book *Janus, A Summing Up* (1978), where the two-faced Roman God is likened to a *holon*, holons having "the dual tendency to behave as quasi-independent wholes, asserting their individualities, but at the same time as integrated parts of larger wholes in the multi- hierarchies of existence."
- 13) Read, Herbert, *The Form of Things Unknown, Essays towards an Aesthetic Philosophy*, p. 50.
- 14) Ibid, p. 49.
- 15) Ibid. (Author's note): This also applies to dreaming. Dreaming is the interstices point between two dramatically different forms of comprehension, one allied to being awake, the other to being asleep. This is not to suggest that dreams should be read for literal messages in relation to everyday life, but that they can sensitise us to psyche's backgrounding presence, and to its highly unusual way of communicating in relation to the self's existential immediacy. Communicating? Again, not in the sense of messages; more in the sense of a profound and sometimes disturbing atmosphere generated through unusual image sequences or combinations. The sheer strangeness of a dream can sometimes take one's breath away, its effects last for years, if not a lifetime. Which tells us that a particular dream was in some sense potent, that it carried an unusual quality of energy, and that that energy, in some strange timeless sense, is still with us - in fact still with us *because* it was timeless. It's as if we have two ways of experiencing the world, but are in the habit of only recognising one, the other having to do with a hidden, but dulled capacity for collapsing multiple factors into one experiential frame of reference. So it is not so much what a dream seems to say, but what it *does* that's important; through their overall effect dreams lower the barrier between psyche and the I-me-my-mine threshold of awareness - particularly at the hypnogogic entrance to sleep, and at the hypnopompic exit from sleep where, in a semi-awake state, our minds function like at no other time. Which tells us that we have available to us two kinds of thinking, and that they are radically different. Also two forms of language, one linguistic, one imagistic, although they do often overlap during creative moments, and in essence form one communicative system.
- 16) Ibid, p. 51.
- 17) Ibid.
- 18) Ibid, p. 295.
- 19) Ibid, p. 52.
- 20) Ibid.
- 21) Ibid.
- 22) Ibid, p. 53.
- 23) bid, p. 52.
- 24) Ibid, p. 54.
- 25) bid, p. 52.
- 26) Ibid, p. 54.
- 27) Ibid, p. 53.
- 28) Ibid, p. 54.
- 29) Jung, Carl, *Psychology of Religion*, p. 4.
- 30) Ibid, p. 5.
- 31) Ibid, p. 10.
- 32) Ibid.
- 33) Ibid, p. 15.

- 34)I bid.
35) Ibid.
36) Jacobi, Jolande (ed), *Psychological Reflections*, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1974, p. 4.
37) Pinker, Steven, *The Blank Slate*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press 2002, p. 41.
38) Taylor, Eugene, 'William James and Depth Psychology', *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 11-12, 2010, p. 14.
39) Ibid.
40) Ibid, p. 16.
41) Ibid.
42) Ibid.
43) Ibid.
44) Ibid.
45) Ibid, p. 17.
46) bid.
47) Ibid, p. 18.
48) Ibid.
49) Ibid, p. 20.
50) Ibid, p. 21.
51) Ibid, p. 20.
52I bid.
53) Ibid, p. 21.
54) Ibid, p. 30.
55) Ibid, p. 33.

