

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS AND JUNG'S PSYCHOLOGY¹

MYTHOLOGY is replete with stories of the childlike wisdom which dares and does where the wise and prudent of this world quail and fail. Fr. Witcutt knows the value of mythology and has learned its lesson. His *Catholic Thought and Modern Psychology* is no profound and learned academic treatise. It is, on the contrary, a naive book; indeed a spritely book. Neither the depths of the unconscious nor the heights of theological and philosophical speculation hold any terrors for him. From one to the other he passes—we might almost say he gambols—with enviable ease and assurance, unintimidated by any excessive concern for the complexities of the problem he has set himself, or any inhibiting regard for pettifogging accuracy.

It would be a great mistake to neglect his book on that account. 'Some,' said Aristotle, 'require exactness in everything, while others are annoyed by it. . . for there is something about exactness which seems to some people to be mean. . . ; hence one must be trained how to take each kind of argument.'² The job Fr. Witcutt has undertaken desperately needed doing. For it is a job which the pundits neither of 'Catholic Thought' nor of 'Modern Psychology' have hitherto attempted to do; a job which they still seem far from being ready to do. From among the Catholics, Dalbiez, it is true, after a magnificent restatement of Freud, and a less satisfying endeavour to free Freud's psychology from Freud's philosophy, has attempted a dubious mutual non-intervention pact between psychoanalysis and religion. Allers has modified Adler in a direction more acceptable to Catholics; at the expense, however, of abandoning depth-psychology altogether. There has been a good deal of unprincipled eclecticism. But at co-ordination and synthesis there has hitherto been little or no attempt. The very 'religiousness' of Jung has scared off the religiously minded hardly less than it has scared off the materialistically minded. A theoretical dichotomy between religion and practical psychotherapy, even at the cost of fostering schizophrenia, has seemed to the more timid preferable to the risks of admitting the psychotherapist into the holy precincts of

¹ *Catholic Thought and Modern Psychology*, by W. P. Witcutt, LL.D. Burns, Oates, 4s. 6d.

² *Metaph.* II.iii.

religion itself, or to the still greater risk of luring the pastor of souls away from the security of his textbook lore to face the realities of the human psyche in the raw. The belief that spiritual and mental disorder are independent of each other saves a great deal of trouble to the practitioners in the treatment of either; but it is as untenable by the Catholic theology of *gratia perficit naturam* as it has been proved to be unsound and disastrous therapeutically. But nor are the risks wholly illusory, so long at least as the respective roles of pastor and psychotherapist are not clearly differentiated and coordinated. The psychologist who abandons scientific psychology for the role of lay-preacher, and the pastor who abandons the ministry of Word and Sacraments for the role of lay-psychologist, are a menace equally to religion and psychology. If the two are to be combined, as they must be combined, it is essential to know which is which. This involves a good deal of hard work and clear thinking. Fr. Witcutt's fifty-seven pages will not dispense the experts from covering the same ground with more pedestrian thoroughness, scientific exactness and theological acumen. But they must be indebted to him for his aerial reconnaissance of the unexplored territory where they must walk with equal courage, but perhaps greater circumspection.

Truly enough, the territory covered by Fr. Witcutt is not quite so comprehensive as his title might suggest. His 'Modern Psychology' is limited to the Freudian thesis, the Adlerian antithesis, and the Jungian synthesis. Freud, rather unexpectedly, is firmly assigned to the Epicurean band-wagon and speedily dismissed after due acknowledgments have been paid to his discoveries. We are doubtful, for our part, whether things will work out quite so smoothly between Epicurus and Freud as Fr. Witcutt seems to suppose. Epicurus, after all, made 'Pleasure' the very conscious aim of a very conscious *ethic*; an ethic which moreover demanded a rigorous asceticism. Freud's 'Pleasure-Principle' is not primarily an ethical principle at all (however much he and his disciples have been inclined to employ it as such), but the perfectly valid generalisation of the perfectly accurate empirical observation that pleasure (*delectatio*) is the factual and automatic motivation of infra-intellectual psychological functioning—a fact of which Aristotle and St. Thomas (for instance) were well aware³; making of it an essential presupposition of their own ethic.

Adler is even more speedily dismissed; and then Fr. Witcutt comes to his real subject—Jung. 'Jung made a synthesis of the

³ Cf. Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*. II. iii, 1.

theories of Freud and Adler, and added a range of new material of his own, so effectively that his system is now in process of superseding the other two . . . Jung is the coming man' (p. 5). Freud and Adler are, for all the value and importance of many of their researches and conclusions, 'incompatible with Catholic teaching' (*ibid*) and the Christian doctrine of man. But, 'The Jungian psychology can be a potent instrument for good, and most of all in the hands of someone who knows what he is about, that is, a Catholic philosopher or theologian' (p.34). With these conclusions the present writer is in fullest agreement; and for this reason he believes Fr. Witcutt's book to be an important event. But perhaps, in fairness to Jung himself, it should be added that Fr. Witcutt's hero expressly and repeatedly disclaims any pretensions to finality: 'It is my firm conviction,' Jung writes, 'that the time for an all-inclusive theory, taking in and presenting all the contents, processes, and phenomena of the psyche from one central viewpoint, has not yet come by a long way; I regard my theories as suggestions and attempts at the formulation of a new scientific conception of psychology based in the first place upon immediate experience with human beings'⁴. And in fairness to the reader it should perhaps also be added that there will be found in Jung's writings, interpretations of, and inferences from, this experience which cannot always be accepted uncritically.

Any attempt to present Jungian psychology in mere words is beset with inherent limitations which cannot be too strongly emphasised. It is not primarily a *theoria* but a *praxis*; the theory is only incidental to the therapeutic art—the *Heilsweg*, the method of liberation and healing. Hence, as Dr. Jacobi has pointed out, 'Theoretic conceptions and explanations are adequate only up to a certain point for the comprehension of Jung's system, for in order to understand it completely one must have experienced its vital working within oneself'⁵. Jung is first and foremost, not a philosopher, but a healer; a theorist only in so far as he generalises from his therapeutic experience. It is perhaps unfortunate that, in introducing Jung to the general, and more particularly to the Catholic, public, Fr. Witcutt has almost entirely neglected this primary concern of all Jung's work. Jung's claim on the attention of Catholics lies less in the compatibility of his theories with those of the *De Anima* of Aristotle and St. Thomas, than in the fact that he offers a therapeutic technique, which is not only free from the external 'conditioning' which has made much modern psychotherapy rightly suspect in

⁴ Foreword to J. Jacobi's *Psychology of C. G. Jung*.

⁵ J. Jacobi, *op. cit.* p. 59.

Catholic eyes, but which follows the Christian pattern of life, death and resurrection, not as an a-priori theory imposed from without, but as called for by the demands of the *vis medicatrix naturae* within. Jung's is a therapy in which the practitioner makes no arrogant claim to 'suggest,' still less to force, the patient into any pre-conceived mould of alleged 'normality,' but, on the contrary, one in which his task is solely to assist in uncovering the sources which hinder the patient from fulfilling his individual destiny. This he does, not by leading, but rather by humbly following and interpreting the material provided by the patient, thereby enabling the patient himself to reconstruct his own life and to transform the unconscious sources of frustration and disintegration into conscious sources of life, power and integrity. A therapy, therefore, whose aim and effect is in no way to restrict the patient's freedom and responsibility, but on the contrary one which makes the fullest demands upon them as the decisive factor both in the process and the result. Jung's very fearlessness as an empirical scientific worker, which resolutely refused to disregard the facts which came under his observation in his 'immediate experience with human beings' when these did not happen to fit in with a-priori pseudo-scientific theories of his time, enabled him to rediscover the perennial 'testimony of the soul'—the *anima naturaliter christiana* in Tertullian's sense. His very science compelled him to repudiate 'scientism,' and to see the necessity for science itself to make use of postulates 'beyond science.' It was on this issue precisely that he was compelled to break with Freud. His substitution of 'undifferentiated libido' for 'sexuality' was, however unwittingly, a return to the conviction of the *philosophia perennis* that no particularised science can establish its own first principles, but must accept them from a higher and more general science.

Despite the claim of Fr. Witcutt's blurb-writer that Jung's psychology is 'ultra-modern,' it has become increasingly clear to Jung himself that his psychology is less a new discovery than a re-discovery of ancient and universal principles of spiritual and mental healing and hygiene; readapted, it is true, to the particular needs of modern 'civilised' Western man. And it is equally unquestionable that the theories to which he has in consequence been led have approximated more and more to the *philosophia perennis* which is enshrined in 'Catholic Thought,' and perhaps especially in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas. Fr. Witcutt does well to be at considerable pains to point this out; but unfortunately he is very much less at home with St. Thomas than he is with Jung. As yet very little work has been done on the direct bearings of St. Thomas's

teaching on psychotherapy⁶. If we would compare and co-ordinate the work of St. Thomas and that of Jung, it is essential that at the outset we differentiate clearly between the several preoccupations and methods of the two men. Both, of course, start with the same data—the only available data, the actual workings of the human psyche. Both undoubtedly (however much the fact may be obscured in the conventional manuals of 'Thomist Psychology') are keen and fearless observers of brute psychological fact. But in their *treatment* of the facts they, more often than not, differ widely. St. Thomas is a philosopher; perceiving facts he argues to their causes, observing acts he infers potencies—he *infers* the psyche, the soul, itself.⁷ As a philosopher, his concern is with *explanation* of the phenomena. Such is not Jung's role; he has repeatedly and rightly disclaimed it. For him, quite rightly within the limits of his empirical methodology, the psyche itself is not an established conclusion but a postulate.⁸ Observing the same phenomena, his primary concern is not with rational explanation, but with the practical problems of sickness and health; with co-ordination and balance of the parts with a view to the health of the whole. We shall misread him entirely if we read into his writings a philosophical answer to such problems as that of the origin of ideas—or even of the origin of the 'archetypes' (concerning which, indeed, he has expressly confessed his ignorance.)⁹ Still less can we afford to confuse ideas with archetypes¹⁰, or Thomist or Augustinian *potencies* with Jungian *functions*¹¹. Fr. Witcutt himself seems to be in two minds about it, and follows these red herrings only to abandon them (pp.20ff.). His portrayal of St. Thomas's psychology is not even very coherent. He can write on the same page that, 'The Thomist . . . regards the soul as the "form or vital principle of the body"', and that 'When the Thomist talks about a "soul" he is thinking of the life principle in so far as it can be disconnected from the body.' On the whole, he seems to favour the strange idea that Aristotle and St.

⁶ An interesting beginning has however recently been made by E. Eduardo Krapf, *Tomas de Aquino y la Psicopatología* (Monografías de 'Index de Neurología y Psiquiatría.' Buenos Aires, 1943).

⁷ Cf. *Commentarium in 'De Anima'* (ed. Pirotta), §§111, 235.

⁸ C. G. Jung, 'Postulates of Analytical Psychology' (*Modern Man in search of a Soul*, pp. 200 ff).

⁹ C. G. Jung, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*, pp. 71 ff.

¹⁰ 'The Archetypes do not consist of inherited ideas but of inherited predispositions to reaction.' *Ib.* p. 139.

¹¹ St. Thomas's 'potencies' are *principles* of action (*QQ. Disp. De Anima*, i); Jung's 'functions' are 'a form of psychic activity that remains theoretically the same under varying circumstances . . . a *phenomenal* form of *libido* . . .' (*Psychological Types*, p. 547).

Thomas are exclusively concerned with the soul as *mens* or *intellectus*; and he can even venture the unqualified assertion that 'Aristotle aimed at developing only a part of man, albeit the highest part.'

It should not be necessary to read very far into the *De Anima* or the Ethics of Aristotle or St. Thomas to realise that this is nonsense. But if we are to see *how* St. Thomas and Jung are to be co-ordinated, it is essential that we neither separate their respective 'material objects' nor confuse their respective 'formal objects'; neither assuming their subject matter to be different, nor their standpoint and method the same. Fr. Witcutt, we think, does both. He writes, 'When the Jungian is talking about his "psyche" and the Thomist mentions a "soul," they are talking about different things.' Even though he adds, 'although the conception "psyche" includes the conception of "soul,"' it is clear that no synthesis or co-ordination is possible if Jung and St. Thomas are talking about diverse *things*. On the other hand, Fr. Witcutt seems to assume that they are both concerned with the same *ratio cognoscibilis*, the same aspect of, and way of studying, these things, when (for instance) he assumes that Jung can throw any light on St. Thomas's controversy with the Augustinians and Avicenna (whom he has confused with Averroes) on the origin of ideas and similar philosophical problems.

We hope we may be pardoned for drawing attention to an initial confusion which, we think, may seriously hamper what promises to be a fruitful endeavour at collaboration, and the very real and important service which 'Catholic Thought' can render to Jungian psychology. Fr. Witcutt himself gives a valuable specimen of this service when he shows the correspondence between St. Thomas's *amor* and Jung's undifferentiated 'libido' as against Freud's 'sexuality.' St. Thomas, it is here seen, complements Jung precisely by providing a rational justification and analysis of what for Jung is, and can be, no more than a postulate. But, as Fr. Witcutt also suggests, St. Thomas can do more than establish Jung's meta-psychological postulates as rational conclusions; for in so doing he reveals their deeper implications which, in their turn, are of immense importance for the psychotherapist in his own work. Thus this *amor*, or *libido*, is found to imply a 'natural desire' for the possession of God—a conclusion which Jung's own empirical work constantly suggests and confirms, but is unable to establish.

This is but one example, but it is an important one, of the way in which St. Thomas can complement Jung, precisely because his treatment of the human psyche transcends, though it is based upon, purely empirical observation. Even of his own basic 'four functions' Jung writes, 'I can give no a-priori reason for selecting just these

four as basic functions; I can only point to the fact that this conception has shaped itself out of many years' experience'¹² But with St. Thomas's principles, demonstrating that cognition *must* be either perception or judgment, and that each of them must be either 'per modum cognitionis' or 'per modum inclinationis,' we are enabled, I believe, to establish that Jung's division is intrinsically necessary and irreducible, and incidentally, perhaps, to define these functions and to differentiate the cognition from the resultant conation, with greater exactness than Jung himself has done¹³. In Aristotle's discrimination of 'the two parts of the soul, one irrational and the other capable of reason,'¹⁴ we shall find the reasoned and conceptual justification of Jung's Ego and Anima-Animus—nor shall we be surprised when we recall that Aristotle recognised that philosophy was the reasoned statement of what in earlier times had received only mythological expression.¹⁵ There is much too to be learned from St. Thomas's neglected treatment of the influence of angelic illumination and of the 'heavenly bodies' on man's psychological functioning.¹⁶ Modern Thomists have tended to soft-pedal, and even to blush for, these elements of their master's teaching, with the result that Thomist psychology has itself become grievously impoverished. Jung's fearless empiricism has put them all very much on the map again. That St. Thomas attributes these phenomena to projections by angels and heavenly bodies upon the human psyche, while Jung regards them as projections of the human psyche upon angels and heavenly bodies, is relatively unimportant so long as both confess, as they do confess, that they are unable to provide any adequate definition of their terms.¹⁷

¹² *Psychological Types*, p. 547.

¹³ For explicit recognition of the two judgment-functions, see *Summa Theol.* I.i.6 ad 3, and numerous parallel passages. Forms of the two perception-functions, defined and contrasted, may be suggested by *De Veritate* X.5. St. Thomas's account of 'natural prophecy,' the causation of dreams, etc., demand, in addition to mere perception of fact (Jung's 'Sensation-function'), perceptions conditioned by unconscious and extra-personal factors, precisely in the manner of Jung's 'Intuition-function.' That, on a still higher level, there is perception, as well as judgment, 'per connaturalitatem,' has been convincingly argued by John of St. Thomas, O.P., in connection with the *donum intellectus*. *Cursus Theol. in I. IIae S. Thomae*, Disp. XVIII., arts. 3 and 4.

¹⁴ *Nic. Ethics*, I.xiii.9.

¹⁵ *Metaph.* I.ii.

¹⁶ Cf. *Summa*, I.III, 1, 3, 4; 115, 4; *De Ver.* xii.3.

¹⁷ For Jung, as has been seen, the 'psyche' which 'projects' is no more than a postulate, and one whose limits cannot be defined nor its contents exhausted. For St. Thomas, the positive ratio either of angels or of 'heavenly bodies' is unattainable by the human mind in its earthly condition (cf. *Summa*, I.88. 1, 2).

Yet, just because Jung's psychology is first and foremost not a theory but a practice, it is to the ethical teaching of Aristotle and St. Thomas rather than to their *De anima* that we shall look for the most striking parallels and mutual confirmations. And we shall not look in vain. Aristotle, on his side, is insistent that some knowledge of psychology is an essential pre-requisite to ethics¹⁸; Jung, for his part, on the teleological character of his method: 'That in his treatment he includes and correlates all the possibilities lying in the psyche, starting from the present psychological situation and aiming towards the construction of a psychic totality in the individual, justifies Jung in naming his method a *prospective* one, in contrast to a retrospective one. . . It is therefore, as a way to self-knowledge and self-control, as an activation of the ethical function, by no means limited to sickness or neurosis'¹⁹. For Aristotle and Jung equally, the goal is the 'Four-Square Man'—*τετράγωνος ἄνευ ψογοῦ*²⁰; for Jung, no less than for Aristotle, 'as a set goal it is also an ethical postulate, a goal for realization—and that is the characteristic point in Jung's system, that it challenges and leads one to ethical decisions'.²¹ For both equally, though their language differs, the way to that goal is the way of conscious acceptance and integration of the unconscious; the making of the *ἄλογον* itself to participate in *λόγος*. For both, therefore, a way of *ἀρετή* rather than of *ἐγκράτεια*; an ethic whose aim is effortless and spontaneous *being* and *having* rather than effortful and reflective *doing* and *striving*,²² though, man being the fallen and contradictory creature he is, the former is unattainable without some measure of the latter. Jung's substitution of indetermined 'libido' for Freud's determined 'sexuality' was a challenge to the disastrous contemporary error—assumed too commonly to-day by the moralist and the immoralist alike—that instincts are predetermined to their objects, and that if they cannot be exercised on those objects they cannot be exercised at all. Jung reaffirmed, not only the transformability of instinct, but that instinct is *meant* to be transformed, and that therein lay the way to the integration of the personality. As the ethic of Aristotle and St. Thomas require, rather than *resistance* to the sensitive

¹⁸ *Nic. Ethics*, I.xiii.7.

¹⁹ J. Jacobi, op. cit., p. 125.

²⁰ *Nic. Ethics*, I.x.11.

²¹ J. Jacobi, op. cit., p. 124.

²² *Nic. Ethics*, I.xiii.7; VII passim. For St. Thomas's comparison between 'restraint' ('*continentia*') and 'virtue' (as good-working and good-making power and disposition) see especially *Summa Theol.* I-II.58.3 ad 2; II-II.145.1; 155.1.,4; III.7.2 ad 3.

appetite, the cardinal virtues of *temperantia* and *fortitudo* in and of the sensitive appetite by themselves participating in right reason, so Jung's psychology fosters the transmutation of the very 'power which wills evil' into the power which wills good—the very serpent of temptation in the garden becomes the instrument of health and life in the desert. If we would seek an Aristotelian parallel to Jung's conception of the symbol as the instrument of this transformation, we shall perhaps find more than a hint of it in the *Poetics* with their insistence on the emotional catharsis wrought by drama.²³

Yet, as is well known, Aristotle himself could give no coherent picture of the ultimate goal of it all. Reason itself compelled him to the view that the end of man was to be realised in the just and equitable society, and individual ethics was to be subordinated to social ethics; yet reason equally compelled him to the view that the end of man was in the supreme, action-free, lonely contemplation of the *optimum intelligibile*—the heaven-on-earth of the anti-social parasite, the 'magnanimous' prig. Each ideal cancelled out the other, and each—men being the unvirtuous beings they are—was intrinsically impracticable. He oscillates between the view that the good, even of the individual man, is the good of the highest, 'divine' part in man, and the (humanly speaking incompatible) view that it is the good of the whole rational and social *animal*. Moreover the absolute Good—he is forced to declare at the beginning of his *Ethics*—'clearly will not be practicable or attainable by men.'²⁴ And neither is It, *unless*, as Aristotle could not know, the Absolute Good were to communicate himself in beatific vision to *risen* men in a heavenly *society*. Only divine power and grace *can* solve the contradictions inherent in any natural, teleological ethic.

So for Jung also, working within the limits of the framework permitted by his empirical investigations, the goal of it all—'Integration,' the 'Self'—is and can be no more than an 'unattainable' postulate, 'which can be scientifically justified, but not scientifically proved'.²⁵ It is a symbol to the realisation of which one can approximate, but which, so far as this-world psychology can know, one can never reach. Fr. Witcutt certainly says more than Jung says—or as a psychologist could say—when he says that belief in immortality and resurrection is necessary for psychic health, or that many of the archetypes are really symbols of the Christian hope, or

²³ So, at least, thought Lessing. Havelock Ellis disagrees, *Psychology of Sex*, p. 309.

²⁴ *Nic. Ethics*, I.vi.12.

²⁵ C. G. Jung, *Integration of the Personality*, p. 176, cf. p. 287 on its 'unattainability.'

that libido itself is man's 'natural desire' for God. Yet, as a theologian, he is justified in thus amplifying Jung. And it is still more to the *theology* of St. Thomas than to his psychology or even his natural ethics, that we must look for the answers to the problems of an integral human psychology such as Jung's seeks to be. For the whole purpose of the 'Sacred Teaching' is that from the God, to whom alone it is known, the end of human existence and the way thither through the God-Man and the grace of the indwelling Spirit may be made known to men²⁶.

So the Catholic has all the answers? Yes; and all the Sacraments and transforming symbols of healing grace as well. Jung and his psychology are therefore no concern of his? It is hardly as simple as that; because for many others at least, Jung's psychology bids fair to be a potent instrument in our age to effect a restored sense of the void which Catholicism is meant to fill. And if the Catholic is not ready to meet it, it is not unlikely that the reawakened need will seek substitute satisfaction in sectarian -isms and -sophies of more or less Gnostic hue. It may happen also that, though the Catholic has the answers, he too is so infected by the *malaise* of modern Western man that he has forgotten the questions. He 'believes' his religion, but somehow it seems to bear no relation to his personal life and problems as he sees them; provide him with no perceptible liberation, healing, vitality; indeed his religion itself may seem to involve him in a morbid problem rather than provide him with a solution. Jung has written, 'Professor Murray at Harvard University, confirming my own previously reported experience, has demonstrated on the basis of comprehensive statistical material that the tendency to form complexes is on the average most frequent in Jews, Protestants occupying the second place, and Catholics only the third'.²⁷ But the neurotic Catholic exists; and the half-alive, half-frustrated Catholic is not uncommon. His treatment, if the therapist sticks strictly to his own job and the priest helps and not hinders, is a relatively simple matter; all the problems of 'transference' which complicate and burden the treatment of unbelievers being eliminated. Jung continues: 'So when I am treating a practising Catholic, I withdraw, by virtue of my office of physician, from the problem of the transference and steer that problem over to the Church. But if I am treating a non-Catholic, this way out is closed to me . . .' It is no small credit to Jung that, on purely empirical

²⁶ *Summa Theol.* I.i.1.

²⁷ Paper read to the Kommission für Psychotherapie of the Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Psychiatrie, Zürich, July 19th, 1941.

grounds, he has discovered that, in his dealings with Catholics, his task is solely that of *removens prohibens*, and that the effective sources of healing are to be sought from the Church.

Fr. Witcutt, in short, has opened up immense vistas for further research, inquiry and co-relation. He has, moreover, revealed a considerable talent in presenting Jung in English idiom and against a background of English folklore and literature; the dissemination of Jung's psychology in England has hitherto been not a little hindered by the ungainly Teutonic dress in which it has commonly been presented. An immense debt of gratitude is due to him for introducing Jung to the Catholic public at all; and often so attractively and skilfully. If we have ventured to criticise or query some points in his presentation, while passing over much that calls for unstinting praise, it is because in so important a task we can afford to make no false start; for *parvus error in principio magnus est in fine*.²⁸

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²⁸ 'A small mistake at the beginning is a big mistake at the end'—St. Thomas, quoting Averroes, *De Ente et Essentia*, I.