

## PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC RE-ORIENTATION AND RELIGIOUS RE-BIRTH.

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THE methods of analytic psychotherapy, owing to its intuitive pre-occupation with allegory, have always shown a close analogy to religious experience. Psycho-therapeutic re-orientation leads via disturbing experiences, in the course of which hitherto undreamt-of unconscious psychic relationships become apparent, to the expansion of the conscious mind of the patient. There is a psychic catharsis. This process has clear analogies with the initiation experiences of the ancient mysteries. In the course of psychotherapy things are evaluated from their beginnings in their relations to reality, and the effect of this is to re-establish normal contact with reality. One plunges into the psyche, however, only as far as is necessary to attain this end. The results that can be achieved depend therefore on the following three factors :

- (1) The amounts of energy to be set free.
- (2) The opportunities for a creative formulation for this energy, whether by means of the physical strength of the body or of the psychical equipment.
- (3) The wish to achieve such creative activity.

This will to creative use of energy depends on the patient's sense of value, of worth-whileness, that is whether he can still find value or meaning in such energetic formulations. Physical strength and intellectual endowment are constitutional factors the psychotherapist cannot definitely modify in any way. What he can do is to liberate energy, to set free once more the patient's creative drive, that is to say, give him an affirmative attitude to life. This can generally be done without fundamentally shattering his sociological and religious pattern. The psycho-therapist will endeavour, unless it is absolutely necessary, to leave these adjustments alone if they are not of an obviously disturbing kind, or where their absence is not contributory towards the neurosis. Usually the psychotherapist deals with the recognized collective values to which he re-introduces the patient on a new valuation of their meaning and function. In this way the patient learns to renounce a part of his demand for power and love in favour of the community, and to enter upon a new productive relationship with it. If, however, the disintegration of collective values is too marked, then this re-integrative process cannot take place in the simple way described above.

An orientation to the community can only occur if the subjective values of the collective norms—as has been said, it is essentially the sociological and religious that is being dealt with—are re-experienced again from the foundations, if they are, so to say, born anew from the depths of the psychic.

A spontaneous re-living of these values beyond the already existing forms they have been given, and often even within the framework of the latter, is to observe experiences in religious awakenings or re-birth. In such cases a primitive religious pattern has erupted and subjugates the entire personality. Frequently a fixation to this primitive pattern is the result and a new religion or sect comes into being. It is only seldom that anyone who re-experiences such a primitive pattern is able to transcend it and succeed in realizing only its inner meaning. This is the path that is followed in a depth analysis when one has become unavoidable. In a depth analysis the inner meaning and value of collective norms is relived anew from the beginning. In this way the patient both transcends the external primitive form while at the same time accepting it. On this journey through the depths of the unconscious he achieves a very painful liberation from the collectivities that have hitherto afforded him support and protection. This support and protection he can now find only within his inner self which relates him with the universe. We see that same kind of re-orientation in the accounts of religious re-birth experiences. These, too, occur at varying depth levels. They lead to a sense of support that is similarly found within the individual and makes itself known there, and is felt to be a manifestation of God. New relationships between life and death and destiny now become evident to the experiencing subject. The psychotherapeutic re-orientation as well as the religious re-birth experiences both deal with a widening of the field of consciousness. In the psychotherapeutic adjustment of lesser degree, consciousness remains confined to the ego sphere that is concerned with power and self-fulfilment. In the deep reorientations of depth analysis, as in the religious re-birth experiences, the ego-sphere is broken through, the sphere of consciousness is widely expanded, and impinges upon the cosmic consciousness in the phenomena of religious re-birth.

R. M. Bick has collected a series of cases of religious re-birth experience under the title of *Cosmic Consciousness*. Further material is to be found in W. James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*.

It is possible to make the more superficial psychotherapeutic adjustments more significant if the relationships that are being expressed in the complexes are dealt with not only from the individual point of view, but also in relation to the laws of life with which the individual is in conflict. In such a procedure, which will be illustrated by a number of cases in the lecture, psychotherapeutic adjustments and religious re-birth experiences meet in the recognition of an inner law of living. At first the individual necessarily repudiates this with the development of the self-willed ego consciousness (the fall of man); in association with suffering, however, a re-orientation can be achieved that corresponds

to a religious re-birth, if not completely so, yet sufficiently closely to lead to it. The natural law that has to be accepted varies for every age phase. The deeper religious adjustments often coincide with especially important moments in the stream of life—for instance at puberty, at the meridian of life, and at the climacterium. A deeper insight into many religious teachings shows that they aim also at the achievement of the inner acceptance of the laws of life in the sense in which it has been considered here.