

CHAPTER 2

The Spiritual Unconscious

We now arrive at an essential revision of the prevalent concept of the unconscious, or more specifically, of its extent. We have to expand its limits because it turns out that there is not only an instinctual unconscious but a spiritual unconscious as well. Thus the content of the unconscious has been differentiated into unconscious instinctuality and unconscious spirituality.

Previously we have tried to supplement psychotherapy in the strict sense of the word by introducing logotherapy as a psychotherapy centered and focusing on the spiritual—which constitutes the noölogical dimension as distinct from the psychological dimension. Having thus included the spiritual into psychology in general, we now include it in particular into depth psychology—that is, into the psychology of the unconscious.

Freud saw only unconscious instinctuality, as represented in what he called the id; to him the unconscious was first and foremost a reservoir of repressed instinctuality. However, the spiritual may also be unconscious; moreover, existence is *essentially* unconscious, because the foundation of existence cannot be fully reflected upon and thus cannot be fully aware of itself.

Since the instinctual and the spiritual are both unconscious, and the spiritual may be conscious as well as

unconscious, we now have to ask ourselves how sharp these two distinctions are. The border between the conscious and the unconscious is a very fluid one—it is permeable—for there is a constant transition from one to the other. We need only consider what psychoanalysis has termed repression: In the act of repression something conscious becomes unconscious; vice versa, in the removal of repression something unconscious is made conscious again.

In contrast to the "fluid" border between the conscious and the unconscious, the line between the spiritual and the instinctual cannot be drawn sharply enough. This fact has been expressed most concisely by Ludwig Binswanger when he spoke of "instincts and spirit" as "incommensurable concepts." Since human existence is spiritual existence, we now see that the distinction between conscious and unconscious becomes unimportant compared with another distinction: The real criterion of authentically human existence derives from discerning whether a given phenomenon is spiritual or instinctual, whereas it is relatively irrelevant whether it is conscious or unconscious. This is due to the fact that—in contrast to the psychoanalytic concept—being human is not being driven but "deciding what one is going to be," to quote Jaspers (*entscheidendes Sein*), or to quote Heidegger: *Dasein*. I would say that being human is being responsible—existentially responsible, responsible for one's own existence.

Existence thus may well be authentic even when it is unconscious, but man exists authentically only when he is not driven but, rather, responsible. Authentic existence is present where a self is deciding for itself, but not where an id is driving it.

It might be said that psychoanalysis has "id-ified," and "de-self-ified," human existence. Insofar as Freud degraded the self to a mere epiphenomenon, he betrayed the self and delivered it to the id; at the same time, he den-

igrated the unconscious, in that he saw in it only the instinctual and overlooked the spiritual.

Before, we stated that the line between the spiritual—as the human in man—and the instinctual cannot be drawn sharply enough. In fact we may conceive of it as an ontological hiatus that separates the two fundamentally distinct regions within the total structure of the human being. On one side is existence, and on the other side is whatever belongs to facticity: Whereas existence, according to our definition, is in essence spiritual, facticity contains somatic and psychic "facts," the physiological as well as the psychological. And whereas the line between existence and facticity, that ontological hiatus, must be drawn as sharply as possible, within the realm of facticity the line between the somatic and the psychic cannot be drawn clearly. Any physician who has ever tried to elucidate the multidimensional etiology of a psychosomatic condition knows very well how difficult it is to differentiate between psychogenic and somatogenic components.

As the dichotomy "conscious-unconscious" has become only a secondary issue, so the age-old psychophysical problem now proves to have lost its primary significance. It has to recede behind the much more essential problem of spiritual existence versus psychophysical facticity. This issue is not only a problem of greater ontological import, but also one of greater psychotherapeutic relevancy. After all, a psychotherapist is continually concerned with spiritual existence in terms of freedom and responsibility, and with marshaling it against the psychophysical facticity that the patient is prone to accept as his fate. The awareness of freedom and responsibility that constitutes authentic humanness must be set against this neurotic fatalism.

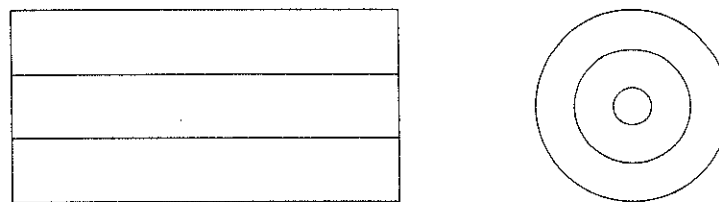
But we must not neglect the fact that being human is always individualized being. As such, it is always centered

around a core, and this core is the person, who, in the words of Max Scheler, is not only the agent but also the "center" of spiritual activity. I would say that this spiritual personal center is encompassed by the peripheral psychophysical layers. Now instead of talking of spiritual existence and psychophysical facticity, we may speak of the spiritual person and "its" psychophysical overlay. By "its" we mean to emphasize that the person "has" a psychophysical overlay, whereas the person "is" spiritual. After all, I am not really justified in saying "my self," not even "myself," since I do not "have" a self, but I "am" a self. If anything, I can "have" an id, but precisely in the sense of psychophysical facticity.

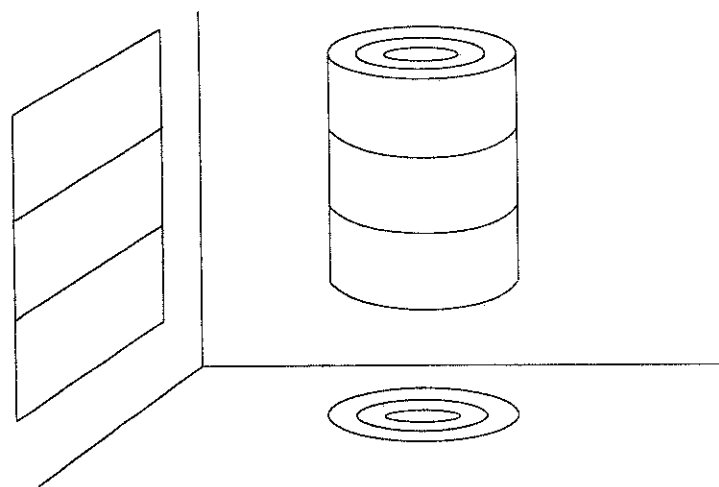
By being centered around the existential, personal, spiritual core, being human is not only individualized but also integrated. Thus the spiritual core, and only the spiritual core, warrants and constitutes oneness and wholeness in man. Wholeness in this context means the integration of somatic, psychic, and spiritual aspects. It is not possible to overstate that it is this threefold wholeness that makes man complete. In no way are we justified in speaking of man as only a "somatic-psychic whole." Body and psyche may form a unity—a psychophysical unity—but this unity does not yet represent the wholeness of man. Without the spiritual as its essential ground, this wholeness cannot exist. As long as we speak only of body and psyche, wholeness has eluded us.

As far as the structure of the human being is concerned, we have so far given preference to the model of layers versus the model of strata. In fact, we have replaced the vertical hierarchy of unconscious, preconscious, and conscious strata with the model of concentric layers, a model propounded by Max Scheler.

But why not go one step further by combining the strata model with the layers model? Why not conceive of the concentric layers as the ground plan of a three-dimensional structure? We would only have to imagine that the



personal core—the spiritual center that is encompassed by the peripheral somatic and psychic layers—is prolonged so that we would have to conceive of it as an axis. This axis then would extend, together with the peripheral layers encompassing it, throughout the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious strata.



In other words, we have put together two two-dimensional models and made them into a three-dimensional one. Now the two former models have been reconciled, as it were, having become the two-dimensional projections of a three-dimensional model that more accurately depicts the human reality we are describing.

Any human phenomenon, whether belonging to the personal axis or to the somatic-psychic layers, may occur on any level: the unconscious, preconscious, or conscious.

To take up once more the issue of "depth psychology" we have to extend the meaning of this concept, because up to now depth psychology has followed man into the depth of his instincts, but too little into the depth of his spirit. Since "depth" refers to the unconscious, it necessarily follows that the person in his depth, the spirit in its depth, or, for that matter, human existence in its depth is essentially unconscious. This is due to the fact that spiritual activity so absorbs the person as the executor of spiritual acts that he is not even capable of reflecting on what he basically is. The self does not yield to total self-reflection.¹ In this sense, human existence is basically unreflectable, and so is the self in itself. Human existence exists in action rather than reflection.

Insofar as human existence cannot fully be reflected upon by itself, it cannot be fully analyzed either. That is why existential analysis can never be an analysis of existence but only an analysis toward existence. Human existence remains an *Urphänomen*, i.e., an unanalyzable, irreducible phenomenon. And this holds for each of its basic aspects, e.g., such human phenomena as consciousness and responsibility. If these are to be illuminated, we have to transcend the ontic plane toward the ontological dimension. Within the plane of psychological immanence, both consciousness and responsibility are and remain unsolvable problems. However, as soon as we transpose them into the ontological dimension they cease to be problems. For then they are taken as *Urphänomene*, constitutive of human existence, or in Heideggerian terms, they are "existentials," attributes that belong to the very foundations of human existence.

To sum up, spiritual phenomena may be unconscious or conscious; the spiritual basis of human exist-

ence, however, is ultimately unconscious. Thus the center of the human person in his very depth is unconscious. In its origin, the human spirit is unconscious spirit.

Precisely at the place of its origin, the retina of the eye has a "blind spot," where the optic nerve enters the eyeball. Likewise, the spirit is "blind" precisely at its origin—precisely there, no self-observation, no mirroring of itself is possible; where the spirit is "original" spirit, where it is fully itself, precisely there it is also unconscious of itself. We may therefore fully subscribe to what has been said in the Indian Vedas: "That which does the seeing, cannot be seen; that which does the hearing, cannot be heard; and that which does the thinking, cannot be thought."

However, the spirit is unconscious not only where it originates, that is, in its depth, but also in its height. In fact, that which has to decide whether something is to be conscious or unconscious is itself unconscious. Just consider the fact that there is something in the sleeping man that decides whether or not he should continue sleeping. This guard, for example, has the sleeping mother awake as soon as the breathing of her child becomes irregular, whereas she sleeps through loud noises from the street. Even in states of hypnosis this guard does not fail—the subject wakes up as soon as he becomes uncomfortable with the hypnotic suggestion. Only in deeper states of narcosis is this guard put to silence—put to sleep itself. Otherwise it keeps watch over man as if it were conscious, and yet it is at best quasiconscious. True, it somehow must know what happens around the sleeper, but this has nothing to do with actual consciousness. That which decides whether an experience will become conscious or will remain unconscious is itself unconscious. In order to make such a decision, however, it must somehow be able to discern. Since both deciding and discerning are spiritual acts, again it follows that these spiritual

acts not only can be, but must be, unconscious—unconscious and unreflectable.

CHAPTER 3

Existential Analysis of Conscience

The phenomenon of conscience serves well as a model to further illuminate our concept of the spiritual unconscious. As we said in the preceding chapter, conscience, along with responsibility, is a true *Urphänomen*, an irreducible phenomenon that is inherent in the human being as a deciding being, as *entscheidendes Sein*. Now whatever we have previously attempted to derive theoretically must let itself be shown phenomenologically through the medium of the phenomenon of conscience. In fact, conscience reaches down into unconscious depths and stems from an unconscious ground; it is precisely those momentous, authentic—existentially authentic—decisions that take place completely without reflection and thus unconsciously. Precisely where it originates, conscience delves down into the unconscious.

In this sense conscience is irrational; it is alogical or, better put, prelogical. Just as there is a prescientific understanding and, ontologically even prior to it, a prelogical understanding of being, so there is a premoral understanding of meaning, and this is conscience. The premoral understanding of meaning precedes any understanding of values, and therefore is not contingent upon morals.