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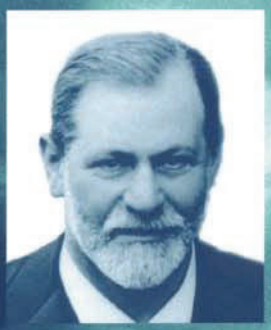
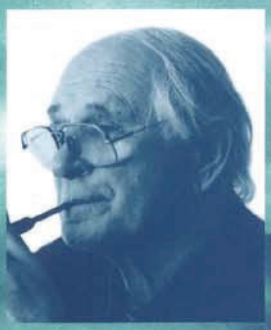
Controversies in Analytical Psychology

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(a) Analytical psychology, religion and the academy

Roderick Main

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, analytical psychology has had some notable success in becoming integrated within the academy (see, for example, Kirsch, 2000:55–56, 121–23). One major factor contributing to this is the appearance of an increasingly rigorous level of scholarly work on Jung by sympathetic academics (e.g., Ellenberger, 1970; Homans, 1979; Shamdasani, 1995; Bishop, 1995, 2000). Another is the increasing willingness and ability of some post-Jungian thinkers to engage with prevalent academic discourses on their own terms—for instance, in philosophy (e.g., Papadopoulos and Saayaman, 1991; R.Brooke, Adler, Gerhard 318 1993, 2001), literature (e.g., Rowland, 1999), or social and cultural theory (e.g., Adams, 1996; Hauke, 2000). However, even in the midst of this success, one can frequently notice considerable caginess, not to say embarrassment, when academics encounter the religious component within analytical psychology. Often, this religious component is alone sufficient grounds for academics to disregard Jungian contributions to their fields. Such embarrassment, though possibly less frequent and acute, is not absent even within religious studies, where Jungian theory provides more often the object than the method of study and where more rationalistic theoretical or methodological frameworks usually keep the religious attitude within Jungian thought safely pinioned. It is true that many commendable studies of the relationship between analytical psychology and religion have continued to appear—some with a more academic, others with a more clinical emphasis (see, for example, Heisig, 1979; Stein, 1985; Ryce-Menuhin, 1994; Lammers, 1994; Corbett, 1996; Palmer, 1997). However, this on its own does not seem to affect the overall academic disquiet about the religiosity embedded in Jungian theory.

The problem was highlighted a few years ago, when there was a discussion in the *Journal of Analytical Psychology* on 'Analytical psychology and academic studies' in which the contributors shared their reflections on the problems and potentialities of teaching Jungian ideas in the academy (see Tacey, 1997a, 1997b; Brooke, 1997; Papadopoulos, 1997; Ulanov, 1997). David Tacey, the primary

contributor, concluded his 'Reply to responses' by arguing that the powerful 'academic resistance to Jung' that he and others experience 'must be viewed as a "religious" problem'. In Tacey's view, 'Jung's response to the world and psychic reality is fundamentally religious':

> No amount of fancy post-modern footwork by the cleverest Jungian intellectual will manage to take this religious attitude away from Jung. And that is, I think, what ultimately sticks in the throat of the secular academy, and why it so fiercely opposes Jung, no matter how spruced up or reconstructed he is made to be. (Tacey, 1997b:315–316)

I have no difficulty agreeing with Tacey's characterization of Jung's outlook as 'fundamentally religious'. As articulated by Jung, such core concepts as the collective unconscious, archetypes, individuation, and the self presuppose a dimension of reality that is intelligent, purposeful, and irreducible to material, social, or cultural terms (see Jung, 1928–54: passim). Jung frequently equated his psychological concepts with traditional religious ones (see, for example, his analyses of the doctrine of the Trinity, 1942/1948; the symbolism of the Mass, 1942/1954; and the problem of evil, 1952a). He even designated experience of numinosity as the most important factor in therapy (Jung, 1973:376–377). However, the religious aspect of Jung's outlook is only half the story, for his outlook is also, and no less 'fundamentally', secular, by which I here mean concerned with natural, specifically scientific, and human-centred principles and methods of explanation rather than supernatural ones (see, for example, Jung, 1947/1954, 1952b). Jung' s claim to be an empiricist and a phenomenologist (1938/1940: para. 2), his concern for the actualities of lived human experience (1938/1940: para. 88), and his refusal to engage in theological speculation (1938/1940: para. 2) are all part of this. It is mainly this secular aspect within Jung's theory that recent post-Jungians have so ably appealed to and drawn on in their attempts to integrate analytical psychology into the academy.

This doubleness, at once religious and secular, is, I think, a tremendous potential both in Jung's own thought and in subsequent analytical psychology. It emerged, historically and biographically, out of Jung's lifelong struggle to resolve the tension he experienced between the claims of traditional religion and secular modernity, as he himself and many later commentators have related (e.g., Jung, 1961; Homans, 1979; Charet, 1993; Main, 2000). As an outlook that attempts to remain true to both the religious and the secular attitudes, Jung's psychology arguably embeds insights from both, as well as about how the two sides can productively co-exist (Main, 2000:92–97). In the following, I shall suggest a few reasons why this double nature of analytical psychology may be valuable, both for analytical psychology's engagement with the academy and for the academy's engagement with religion. First, I should explain why I think there may currently be an opportunity for these improved engagements.

RELIGION AND THE ACADEMY

Granted the basic problem voiced by Tacey that the academy is primarily oriented towards secular modes of thought, while analytical psychology embeds an inalienable religious aspect, nevertheless, the antipathy of the academy towards analytical psychology has often been exacerbated by at least two conditions. One is the academy's largely negative image of religion and the other is analytical psychology's frequently unsophisticated representation of itself. However, both of these conditions have considerably changed in recent years.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, there was a widespread view among intellectuals (e.g., Marx, Nietzsche, Freud) that religion no longer had any positive relevance as a force in the world and might, with luck, eventually disappear. This post-Enlightenment view has informed thinking throughout much of the academy, tacitly as well as explicitly. However, at the beginning of the twentieth-first century, religion remains a major player on the world stage; it is neither disappearing nor, looked at from a global perspective, declining. It is true that some manifestations of religion, such as church-going in Britain, may have waned, but others, such as the numerous forms of fundamentalism and alternative spirituality appearing throughout the world, are currently burgeoning (Beckerlegge, 1998:8–11). Quite apart from these explicit manifestations of religion, there is also a growing awareness of 'implicit religion' where a religious-style commitment informs secular activities (e.g., in politics, sport, or consumerism) (Hinnells, 1995:234–235). Both explicitly and implicitly, religion remains inextricably bound up with politics, economics, ethics, health, life-styles, and culture generally. In the face of this unexpected persistence of religion, those working in the academy can scarcely afford to dismiss religious issues from serious consideration. Any theoretical approach, such as analytical psychology, that has a record of engaging seriously with religious phenomena may find it an opportune time to try to gain the academy's ear.

Underlying much of the antipathy of the secular academy for religion (and of religion for the secular academy) is the assumption that there is a fundamental and clear-cut conflict between their core values. If both try to explain the same phenomena (e.g., the natural world, society, human beings), but do so in incompatible ways (e.g., one appeals to natural, the other to supernatural principles), then, it would seem, one outlook must be right and the other wrong. However, contemporary work on the relationship between religion and science (science being the prime exemplar of and influence on the secular approach) tends to recognize conflict as only one mode of engagement among other equally important modes such as independence, dialogue, and integration (see Barbour, 1998:77–105). If religion and science do not necessarily conflict, then the ascendancy of science and of the secularity that science supports—need not negate the potential value of religious approaches to understanding. The double nature of analytical psychology, then, may be a sign not of inner contradictions but of a theoretical complexity that better approximates to the experiential complexity of human life.

Furthermore, work in the history of science has demonstrated in detail the profound historical interdependence between religion and the very science that is so often set against religion by champions of secular modernity (see J.Brooke, 1991; Brooke and Cantor, 1998). With the increasing recognition that the modes of thought, the institutions, and the canonical figures of secular modernity have roots in religious soil, it becomes less easy to separate off and dismiss the dimension of religion even from the most hardcore secular fields. In the light of these developments in the history of science, the value of theoretical models, such as analytical psychology, that are conscious of and articulate about their past and present participation in the religious dimension, may increasingly come to be appreciated.

Another important factor is the postmodern challenge to the hegemony of the post-Enlightenment rationalism that has dominated the academy. As the limits of this rationalism have become apparent, so other kinds of rationality as well as avowedly non-rational approaches to understanding have begun to receive more attention. Thus, there has been a burgeoning of interest in and respect for the thought-worlds of pre-modern, non-Western, and other formerly marginalized cultures (see, for example, Tambiah, 1990). In such a climate, there is clearly space for the respectful reconsideration of religious attitudes and outlooks. Indeed, Tacey, when discussing the 'religious problem' of Jung and the academy, noted with a measure of optimism the 'spiritual possibilities in postmodernism itself, particularly in philosophical discourses of the 'Other' (Tacey, 1997b:316). His suggestion that Jungians might vigorously and creatively contribute to this debate has recently been taken up by Christopher Hauke (see Hauke, 2000: especially pp. 205–215).

ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

At the same time, recent years have seen some aspects of work on analytical psychology become considerably more sophisticated, so that those involved with the discipline, should they wish to do so, are now equipped to present a much more acceptable case for its religious aspect. The rigorous scholarship mentioned earlier has played a large part in this. Perhaps more formerly than now, there has been a tendency among adherents of analytical psychology to idealize Jung and to treat his insights and formulations, especially on religious topics, as having the status almost of revealed doctrines. Some have even written of his psychological model as a new religious dispensation (e.g., Edinger, 1984). Not surprisingly, these kinds of attitudes have prompted some equally uninhibited attacks on Jung (e.g., Noll, 1994, 1997). One value of some of the recent scholarship has been to introduce a moderating voice into these debates, presenting historical data or theoretical perspectives that make it harder to sustain either inflated or wildly denigrating religious images of Jung and analytical psychology (see, for example, Storr, 1999; Segal, 1999a, 1999b; Shamdasani, 1999). As more historical sources become available and are responsibly examined, a more realistic picture of the origin and

development of Jung's thought has begun to emerge (e.g., Shamdasani, 1995, 1998). In particular, the kind of contextual work initiated by Ellenberger (1970) has helped more accurately to locate Jung and analytical psychology within the history of ideas, revealing numerous affinities and continuities between Jung's work and the work of others within the same historical milieu. If Jung sometimes emerges as less original than formerly supposed, he also appears as less eccentric. For instance, his interests in spiritualism, occultism, Gnosticism, and oriental religions, which have often provided the grounds for his being summarily dismissed as a mystic, were by no means idiosyncratic in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe (see, for example, Webb, 1976; Charet, 1993; Shamdasani, 1994; Hanegraaff, 1996).

The prospect of gaining a better hearing for the religious side of analytical psychology may also have improved as a result of the recent successes in integrating its secular side. The more analytical psychology proves itself to the academy on the academy's own terms, the harder it becomes to dismiss analytical psychology, even when it brings its religious aspect to the fore. Particularly valuable in this respect is the increasing sophistication with which exponents of analytical psychology can engage in debates about epistemology (e.g., Papadopoulos, 1984, 1997; Nagy, 1991; R.Brooke, 1991, 2000a; Kugler, 1997). Jung himself stands out among the early depth psychologists for the extent to which he was aware of and willing to engage with epistemological issues. While his own presentation of his epistemological position can be criticized for some dubious logical moves and historical misrepresentations (see, for example, Heisig, 1979:103–145; Voogd, 1984; Bishop, 2000), various modified versions of it, as well as other positions inspired by it, can surely take a respectable place within the field of philosophical debate. At any rate, the vigour and intelligence with which contemporary post-Jungians are taking up and pursuing epistemological questions can only gain respect for the discipline that can prompt such deep and lively discussions. Moreover, whatever their secular starting point, once the specifically Jungian contribution enters the picture, such discussions tend towards a position where secular and religious assumptions are on an equal footing. For one of Jung's repeated arguments in this area is that the assumptions underlying the prevalent materialistic outlook are subject to precisely the same kinds of epistemological criticism as those underlying the religious outlook (Jung, 1939/1954: paras. 762–765; see also Main, 2000:96). Indeed, for Jung, any thoroughgoing epistemological discussion cannot avoid addressing religious and theological issues.

ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION

I have argued that analytical psychology has a double nature, inalienably involved in the spheres of both religion and secularity but fully identified with neither.

However, it is the secular aspect of analytical psychology that has received most attention when integration of the discipline within the academy is attempted. Nevertheless, I have suggested that because of changes both in the academy's perception of religion and in analytical psychology's representation of itself, a climate may now exist in which the religious aspect of analytical psychology can be brought more effectively into the intellectual mainstream. I shall now briefly suggest some ways in which an acknowledgement of the religious attitude within analytical psychology might be turned to account in the study of two of the most prominent contemporary manifestations of religion: New Age spirituality and religious fundamentalism. These two areas have been singled out as especially problematic by both Tacey (1997b:315) and Samuels (1998:31–32). Part of their special interest for analytical psychology, I think, is that, like analytical psychology itself, they can be understood largely as responses to secular modernity (see Marty and Appleby, 1991; Heelas, 1996).

New Age spirituality

Tacey describes the New Age as 'simply the re-emergence of the religious impulse in a predominantly secular time' (Tacey, 1997b:315), a view which, if we replace 'simply' with 'among other things', finds ample support in recent scholarship on the New Age (e.g., York, 1995; Heelas, 1996; Hanegraaff, 1996). In addition, the New Age is a response to secularity that has many significant points of similarity with the response of analytical psychology. For instance, both have an ambivalent but largely oppositional relationship to secular modernity. Both tend to react against the reductive tendencies of modern science while at the same time selectively appropriating ideas from modern science. Both place considerable importance on notions of psycho-spiritual transformation. Both engage eclectically with nonWestern, pre-modern, and esoteric traditions. Both frequently frame contemporary experience in terms of myth. Both prioritize personal experience over institutionalized beliefs. Above all, both locate authority in the individual self (see Main, 2002; also York, 1995; Heelas, 1996).

These affinities may be the result partly of Jung's direct influence on the New Age, partly of shared heritage, and partly of shared contemporary concerns (see Main, 2002). However, the very presence of the affinities means that those oriented within analytical psychology potentially have access to the inner thought-world of the New Age. For example, when New Agers evince interest in holistic science, creative visualization, spiritually oriented therapies, paranormal phenomena, alchemy, astrology, the *I Ching,* Indian and Chinese religions, indigenous African and North American religions, myths from across the world, myth-centred reinterpretations of Christianity, or UFOs, the underlying principles and aspirations in these interests should not be too unintelligible to Jungians. Indeed, the literature of analytical psychology, especially its more classically oriented literature, is replete with these topics. Whether or not a particular exponent of analytical psychology

shares or approves of such interests, the fact remains that they are woven into the history and theory of the discipline in a manner that could prevent summary dismissal and facilitate understanding when they are encountered in their New Age forms.

More specifically, Paul Heelas, in an extensive study of the New Age Movement, identifies 'self-spirituality' as its defining characteristic (1996:18–19). The precise extent to which the understanding of 'self' and 'spirituality' in this formulation equates with the way the terms are understood in analytical psychology is less important than that the two terms are conjoined. Very rarely in any contemporary academic discourse would the self be designated spiritual. In analytical psychology, however, such designation is usual. Arguably, then, the religious dimension of analytical psychology, as embedded in the notion of a spiritual self, provides an insider appreciation, less accessible to secular perspectives, of what is possibly the central tenet and motivation of the New Age.

Of course, there are also important differences between analytical psychology and New Age spirituality. Tacey, for instance, has recently argued that the New Age differs from Jungian psychology especially in its one-sided celebration of the feminine (an overcompensation for the former one-sided commitment to patriarchal values) and in its naive elevation of bliss over suffering (Tacey, 1999:36–42). It could be replied that the New Age is an expansive movement in which people participate in varying ways and at varying levels of sophistication (just as they do in analytical psychology and in religions), and it is certainly possible to point to some New Agers who do not exhibit the attitudes mentioned by Tacey (Main, 2002). Nevertheless, the differences Tacey identifies, as well as others, undoubtedly do exist in many cases and are important to bear in mind. Indeed, detailed awareness and discussion of such differences might be helpful in forestalling a tendency discernible in some analytical psychological writing of too readily denigrating the New Age for its superficiality and commercialism (for recent examples see YoungEisendrath and Miller, 2000:2, 4, 147, 176). Such criticism, itself often superficial, may serve to push the New Age out of consideration before it has been sufficiently understood. This would be unfortunate, since the New Age, if nothing else, is a very real social movement and as such a fit area for investigation by a culturally engaged analytical psychology (see Tacey, 2001). Clearer appreciation of the religious aspect of analytical psychology and its relation to secular modernity can serve here by providing the basis for a fairer assessment of the real similarities and differences between analytical psychology and the New Age.

Religious fundamentalism

The recent rise of fundamentalism within almost all the world's major religions stands in an often-noted relationship to the rise of secular modernity (Marty and Appleby, 1991; Beckerlegge, 1998:16–22). Put simply, with the increasing

domi-nance of secular values, traditional religious identities come under threat and respond by entrenching themselves. Moreover, they often do this in a way that leaves a seemingly unbridgeable gulf between religion and secularism. This presents a difficulty for those who wish to understand or engage with fundamentalism from an academic perspective. For the academy is, or fundamentalists often perceive it to be, a pre-eminent representative of the very secularity which fundamentalists oppose. Conversely, academics aligned with the values of secular modernity are unlikely to be able lightly to put aside their own deep opposition to the fundamentalist attitudes.

Analytical psychology has avoided any radical split between the religious and the secular domains. Indeed, it arguably has its origins largely in Jung's attempt to hold these two domains together. This may give exponents of analytical psychology certain potentialities for understanding phenomena such as religious fundamentalism—an area into which, with few exceptions (e.g., Brooke, 2000b), they have not yet ventured.

First, exponents of analytical psychology can empathize with religious fundamentalism in a way that secular academics usually cannot. However, in this case the capacity for empathy stems from a mediated rather than direct affinity. Few if any exponents of analytical psychology would share such extreme values and attitudes of religious fundamentalism as commitment to scriptural literalism, non-tolerance of religious diversity, and anti-individualism (Hinnells, 1995:177–178; Marty and Appleby, 1991:vii). However, fundamentalists are also likely to hold, less distinctively but just as essentially, that there is a transcendent reality, that knowledge can be divinely revealed, and that emotional commitment to revealed knowledge can justifiably override rational criticisms of it. Here, in this terrain that fundamentalism holds in common with much mainstream religion, there is some affinity with analytical psychology. For analytical psychology also recognizes and attends to a transcendent reality, accepts the possibility of revealed knowledge, and acknowledges the validity of non-rational modes of apprehending and evaluating truth. To be sure, major differences remain. In analytical psychology, there is less dogmatism and certainty in the characterization of the transcendent; the revelations (e.g., in the form of dreams) are individual and relevant primarily to very specific circumstances; and the valuation of emotional awareness is a helpful complement rather than a defensive alternative to reason. However, that analytical psychology respects these principles (in a way that the secular academy mostly does not) provides some participatory access to the world of thought of fundamentalism. That it nevertheless does not one-sidedly identify with them ensures that sufficient critical distance is maintained to generate academic understanding.

Second, because analytical psychology incorporates both secular and religious attitudes, it can help contain the impulse to pursue one or other attitude to extremity. A sensibility influenced by analytical psychology would find it difficult either to forget the sphere of religion when moving in secular contexts or to forget the need

for intellectual openness when moving in religious contexts. It could dialogue with both sides and even facilitate dialogue between the two sides. Above all, it could exemplify the possibility of a non-polarized position. This resource is present in relation to any manifestation of religion but is especially relevant in the case of fundamentalism where the tendency to polarization is so strong.

Third, because Jung and subsequent exponents of analytical psychology have themselves often had to struggle with the tension between the religious and the secular and have had to resolve in themselves tendencies towards the polarization and splitting of these domains, they may be in a position to appreciate some of the psychological dynamics that can be involved. Particularly helpful might be an understanding of the role of projection and projective identification in creating and sustaining the split. Simply put, the religious attitudes of the fundamentalists may be extreme partly because they are affected by not only their own religious needs but also the unconscious—and hence undifferentiated, split off, and projected—religious needs of the secularists. (Conversely, of course, the critical rationalism of the secularists may be extreme partly because they are affected by the unconscious critical rationality of the fundamentalists.) Awareness of such unconscious dynamics operating in this context may be sharper in analytical psychology than in other depth-psychological approaches for at least two reasons. One is because in analytical psychology there is an assumption that the unconscious of each person contains 'an authentic religious function' (Jung, 1938/1940: para. 3). The possibility that secularists may be projecting their unconscious religiousness onto and into fundamentalists would be less likely to occur to adherents of theories which have usually considered religious needs to be inessential, pathological, and, in favourable cases, eradicable. The other reason is that Jungians may have experienced being caught in the same dynamic as the fundamentalists. For as Tacey observes, many academics may 'project their own largely unconscious devotional, religious, or belief life upon the Jungians and condemn them' (Tacey, 1997a:281). As well as being condemned, Jungians may sometimes have been pushed by this into more extreme and obdurate expressions of religiosity than their theoretical inheritance requires.

CONCLUSION

Contrary to many confident predictions at the beginning of the twentieth century, religious phenomena are neither disappearing nor, looked at from a global perspective, declining. They continue to exist as a major force on the world stage and need to be engaged with intelligently. Analytical psychology has a long tradition of such serious engagement. In particular, analytical psychology, because it partly emerged out of tensions between traditional religion and secular modernity, embeds some potentially useful strategies and wisdom for responding to the complex and sometimes dangerously conflicting interactions between these domains. Because

of changing academic perceptions of the relation of religion to modernity and changing self-presentations of analytical psychology, there may currently be an opportunity for analytical psychology within the academy to be more forthright about its religious component. I have offered a few brief indications of how a forthright acknowledgement of this religious component could be useful for the academic understanding of New Age spirituality and religious fundamentalism. However, to conclude on a qualifying note, it needs to be borne in mind that the kind of religious sensibility embedded in analytical psychology by no means accounts for the entire phenomenon of religion. Religion is a multidimensional phenomenon (Smart, 1997), and Jung and subsequent exponents of analytical psychology have tended to focus on only some of its dimensions (in particular the experiential and mythic), while paying less attention to others (such as the social, economic, and political). What analytical psychology can offer, modestly but importantly, is a helpful additional perspective in the academic engagement with contemporary religion.

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