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Fantasia of the Unconscious

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FANTASIA
of the
UNCONSCIOUS

BY
D. H. LAWRENCE



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FORWARD

The present book is a continuation from "Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious." The generality of readers had better just leave it alone. The generality of critics likewise. I really don't want to convince anybody. It is quite in opposition to my whole nature. I don't intend my books for the generality of readers. I count it a mistake of our mistaken democracy, that every man who can read print is allowed to believe that he can read all that is printed. I count it a misfortune that serious books are exposed in the public market, like slaves exposed naked for sale. But there we are, since we live in an age of mistaken democracy, we must go through with it.

I warn the generality of readers, that this present book will seem to them only a rather more revolting mass of wordy nonsense than the last. I would warn the generality of critics to throw it in the waste paper basket without more ado.

As for the limited few, in whom one must per[viii] force find an answerer, I may as well say straight off that I stick to the solar plexus. That statement alone, I hope, will thin their numbers considerably.

Finally, to the remnants of a remainder, in order to apologize for the sudden lurch into cosmology, or cosmogony, in this book, I wish to say that the whole thing hangs inevitably together. I am not a scientist. I am an amateur of amateurs. As one of my critics said, you either believe or you don't.

I am not a proper archæologist nor an anthropologist nor an ethnologist. I am no "scholar" of any sort. But I am very grateful to scholars for their sound work. I have found hints, suggestions for what I say here in all kinds of scholarly books, from the Yoga and Plato and St. John the Evangel and the early Greek philosophers like Herakleitos down to Fraser and his "Golden Bough," and even Freud and Frobenius. Even then I only remember hints—and I proceed by intuition. This leaves you quite free to dismiss the whole wordy mass of revolting nonsense, without a qualm.

Only let me say, that to my mind there is a great field of science which is as yet quite closed to us. I refer to the science which pro-

ceeds in [ix] terms of life and is established on data of living experience and of sure intuition. Call it subjective science if you like. Our objective science of modern knowledge concerns itself only with phenomena, and with phenomena as regarded in their cause-and-effect relationship. I have nothing to say against our science. It is perfect as far as it goes. But to regard it as exhausting the whole scope of human possibility in knowledge seems to me just puerile. Our science is a science of the dead world. Even biology never considers life, but only mechanistic functioning and apparatus of life.

I honestly think that the great pagan world of which Egypt and Greece were the last living terms, the great pagan world which preceded our own era once, had a vast and perhaps perfect science of its own, a science in terms of life. In our era this science crumbled into magic and charlatanry. But even wisdom crumbles.

I believe that this great science previous to ours and quite different in constitution and nature from our science once was universal, established all over the then-existing globe. I believe it was esoteric, invested in a large priesthood. Just as mathematics and mechanics and physics are defined and expounded in the same [x] way in the universities of China or Bolivia or London or Moscow to-day, so, it seems to me, in the great world previous to ours a great science and cosmology were taught esoterically in all countries of the globe, Asia, Polynesia, America, Atlantis and Europe. Belt's suggestion of the geographical nature of this previous world seems to me most interesting. In the period which geologists call the Glacial Period, the waters of the earth must have been gathered up in a vast body on the higher places of our globe, vast worlds of ice. And the sea-beds of to-day must have been comparatively dry. So that the Azores rose up mountainous from the plain of Atlantis, where the Atlantic now washes, and the Easter Isles and the Marquesas and the rest rose lofty from the marvelous great continent of the Pacific.

In that world men lived and taught and knew, and were in one complete correspondence over all the earth. Men wandered back and forth from Atlantis to the Polynesian Continent as men now sail from Europe to America. The interchange was complete, and knowledge, science was universal over the earth, cosmopolitan as it is to-day.

Then came the melting of the glaciers, and [xi] the world flood. The refugees from the drowned continents fled to the high places of America, Europe, Asia, and the Pacific Isles. And some degenerated naturally into cave men, neolithic and paleolithic creatures, and some retained their marvelous innate beauty and life-perfection, as the South Sea Islanders, and some wandered savage in Africa, and some, like Druids or Etruscans or Chaldeans or Amerindians or Chinese, refused to forget, but taught the old wisdom, only in its half-forgotten, symbolic forms. More or less forgotten, as knowledge: remembered as ritual, gesture, and myth-story.

And so, the intense potency of symbols is part at least memory. And so it is that all the great symbols and myths which dominate the world when our history first begins, are very much the same in every country and every people, the great myths all relate to one another. And so it is that these myths now begin to hypnotize us again, our own impulse towards our own scientific way of understanding being almost spent. And so, besides myths, we find the same mathematic figures, cosmic graphs which remain among the aboriginal peoples in all continents, mystic figures and signs whose true cosmic or scientific significance is lost, yet which continue [xii] in use for purposes of conjuring or divining.

If my reader finds this bosh and abracadabra, all right for him. Only I have no more regard for his little crowings on his own little dunghill. Myself, I am not so sure that I am one of the one-and-onlies. I like the wide world of centuries and vast ages – mammoth worlds beyond our day, and mankind so wonderful in his distances, his history that has no beginning yet always the pomp and the magnificence of human splendor unfolding through the earth's changing periods. Floods and fire and convulsions and ice-arrest intervene between the great glamorous civilizations of mankind. But nothing will ever quench humanity and the human potentiality to evolve something magnificent out of a renewed chaos.

I do not believe in evolution, but in the strangeness and rainbow-change of ever-renewed creative civilizations.

So much, then, for my claim to remarkable discoveries. I believe I am only trying to stammer out the first terms of a forgotten knowledge. But I have no desire to revive dead kings, or dead sag-

es. It is not for me to arrange fossils, and decipher hieroglyphic phrases. I couldn't do it if I wanted to. But then I can do some [xiii] thing else. The soul must take the hint from the relics our scientists have so marvelously gathered out of the forgotten past, and from the hint develop a new living utterance. The spark is from dead wisdom, but the fire is life.

And as an example—a very simple one—of how a scientist of the most innocent modern sort may hint at truths which, when stated, he would laugh at as fantastic nonsense, let us quote a word from the already old-fashioned "Golden Bough." "It must have appeared to the ancient Aryan that the sun was periodically recruited from the fire which resided in the sacred oak."

Exactly. The fire which resided in the Tree of Life. That is, life itself. So we must read: "It must have appeared to the ancient Aryan that the sun was periodically recruited from life."—Which is what the early Greek philosophers were always saying. And which still seems to me the real truth, the clue to the cosmos. Instead of life being drawn from the sun, it is the emanation from life itself, that is, from all the living plants and creatures which nourish the sun.

Of course, my dear critic, the ancient Aryans were just doddering—the old duffers: or babbling, the babes. But as for me, I have some [xiv] respect for my ancestors, and believe they had more up their sleeve than just the marvel of the unborn me.

One last weary little word. This pseudo-philosophy of mine—"pollyanalytics," as one of my respected critics might say—is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse. The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need which one has for some sort of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experiences as a writer and as a man. The novels and poems are pure passionate experience. These "pollyanalytics" are inferences made afterwards, from the experience.

And finally, it seems to me that even art is utterly dependent on philosophy: or if you prefer it, on a metaphysic. The metaphysic or philosophy may not be anywhere very accurately stated and may be quite unconscious, in the artist, yet it is a metaphysic that governs

men at the time, and is by all men more or less comprehended, and lived. Men live and see according to some gradually developing and gradually withering vision. This vision exists also as a dynamic idea or metaphysic—exists first as [xv] such. Then it is unfolded into life and art. Our vision, our belief, our metaphysic is wearing woefully thin, and the art is wearing absolutely threadbare. We have no future; neither for our hopes nor our aims nor our art. It has all gone gray and opaque.

We've got to rip the old veil of a vision across, and find what the heart really believes in, after all: and what the heart really wants, for the next future. And we've got to put it down in terms of belief and of knowledge. And then go forward again, to the fulfillment in life and art.

Rip the veil of the old vision across, and walk through the rent. And if I try to do this—well, why not? If I try to write down what I see—why not? If a publisher likes to print the book—all right. And if anybody wants to read it, let him. But why anybody should read one single word if he doesn't want to, I don't see. Unless of course he is a critic who needs to scribble a dollar's worth of words, no matter how.

Taormina

October 8, 1921

FANTASIA OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

[1]

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

L

et us start by making a little apology to Psychoanalysis. It wasn't fair to jeer at the psychoanalytic unconscious; or perhaps it *was* fair to jeer at the psychoanalytic unconscious, which is truly a negative

quantity and an unpleasant menagerie. What was really not fair was to jeer at Psychoanalysis as if Freud had invented and described nothing but an unconscious, in all his theory.

The unconscious is not, of course, the clue to the Freudian theory. The real clue is sex. A sexual motive is to be attributed to all human activity.

Now this is going too far. We are bound to admit that an element of sex enters into all human activity. But so does an element [2] of greed, and of many other things. We are bound to admit that into all human relationships, particularly adult human relationships, a large element of sex enters. We are thankful that Freud has insisted on this. We are thankful that Freud pulled us somewhat to earth, out of all our clouds of superfineness. What Freud says is always *partly* true. And half a loaf is better than no bread.

But really, there is the other half of the loaf. All is *not* sex. And a sexual motive is *not* to be attributed to all human activities. We know it, without need to argue.

Sex surely has a specific meaning. Sex means the being divided into male and female; and the magnetic desire or impulse which puts male apart from female, in a negative or sundering magnetism, but which also draws male and female together in a long and infinitely varied approach towards the critical act of coition. Sex without the consummating act of coition is never quite sex, in human relationships: just as a eunuch is never quite a man. That is to say, the act of coition is the essential clue to sex.

Now does all life work up to the one consummating act of coition? In one direction, it does, and it would be better if psychoanalysis plainly said so. In one direction, all life works up to the one supreme moment of coition. Let us all admit it, sincerely.

[3]

But we are not confined to one direction only, or to one exclusive consummation. Was the building of the cathedrals a working up towards the act of coition? Was the dynamic impulse sexual? No. The sexual element was present, and important. But not predominant. The same in the building of the Panama Canal. The sexual impulse, in its widest form, was a very great impulse towards the

building of the Panama Canal. But there was something else, of even higher importance, and greater dynamic power.

And what is this other, greater impulse? It is the desire of the human male to build a world: not "to build a world for you, dear"; but to build up out of his own self and his own belief and his own effort something wonderful. Not merely something useful. Something wonderful. Even the Panama Canal would never have been built *simply* to let ships through. It is the pure disinterested craving of the human male to make something wonderful, out of his own head and his own self, and his own soul's faith and delight, which starts everything going. This is the prime motive. And the motive of sex is subsidiary to this: often directly antagonistic.

That is, the essentially religious or creative [4]motive is the first motive for all human activity. The sexual motive comes second. And there is a great conflict between the interests of the two, at all times.

What we want to do, is to trace the creative or religious motive to its source in the human being, keeping in mind always the near relationship between the religious motive and the sexual. The two great impulses are like man and wife, or father and son. It is no use putting one under the feet of the other.

The great desire to-day is to deny the religious impulse altogether, or else to assert its absolute alienity from the sexual impulse. The orthodox religious world says faugh! to sex. Whereupon we thank Freud for giving them tit for tat. But the orthodox scientific world says fie! to the religious impulse. The scientist wants to discover a cause for everything. And there is no cause for the religious impulse. Freud is with the scientists. Jung dodges from his university gown into a priest's surplice till we don't know where we are. We prefer Freud's *Sex* to Jung's *Libido* or Bergson's *Elan Vital*. Sex has at least *some* definite reference, though when Freud makes sex accountable for everything he as good as makes it accountable for nothing.[5]

We refuse any *Cause*, whether it be Sex or Libido or Elan Vital or ether or unit of force or *perpetuum mobile* or anything else. But also we feel that we cannot, like Moses, perish on the top of our present ideal Pisgah, or take the next step into thin air. There we are, at the

top of our Pisgah of ideals, crying *Excelsior* and trying to clamber up into the clouds: that is, if we are idealists with the religious impulse rampant in our breasts. If we are scientists we practice aeroplane flying or eugenics or disarmament or something equally absurd.

The promised land, if it be anywhere, lies away beneath our feet. No more prancing upwards. No more uplift. No more little Excelsiors crying world-brotherhood and international love and Leagues of Nations. Idealism and materialism amount to the same thing on top of Pisgah, and the space is *very* crowded. We're all cornered on our mountain top, climbing up one another and standing on one another's faces in our scream of Excelsior.

To your tents, O Israel! Brethren, let us go down. We will descend. The way to our precious Canaan lies obviously downhill. An end of uplift. Downhill to the land of milk and honey. The blood will soon be flowing faster[6] than either, but we can't help that. We can't help it if Canaan has blood in its veins, instead of pure milk and honey.

If it is a question of origins, the origin is always the same, whatever we say about it. So is the cause. Let that be a comfort to us. If we want to talk about God, well, we can please ourselves. God has been talked about quite a lot, and He doesn't seem to mind. Why we should take it so personally is a problem. Likewise if we wish to have a tea party with the atom, let us: or with the wriggling little unit of energy, or the ether, or the Libido, or the Elan Vital, or any other Cause. Only don't let us have sex for tea. We've all got too much of it under the table; and really, for my part, I prefer to keep mine there, no matter what the Freudians say about me.

But it is tiring to go to any more tea parties with the Origin, or the Cause, or even the Lord. Let us pronounce the mystic Om, from the pit of the stomach, and proceed.

There's not a shadow of doubt about it, the First Cause is just unknowable to us, and we'd be sorry if it wasn't. Whether it's God or the Atom. All I say is Om!

The first business of every faith is to declare its ignorance. I don't know where I come from—nor[7] where I exit to. I don't know the origins of life nor the goal of death. I don't know how the two par-

ent cells which are my biological origin became the me which I am. I don't in the least know what those two parent cells were. The chemical analysis is just a farce, and my father and mother were just vehicles. And yet, I must say, since I've got to know about the two cells, I'm glad I do know.

The Moses of Science and the Aaron of Idealism have got the whole bunch of us here on top of Pishgah. It's a tight squeeze, and we'll be falling very, very foul of one another in five minutes, unless some of us climb down. But before leaving our eminence let us have a look round, and get our bearings.

[8]

They say that way lies the New Jerusalem of universal love: and over there the happy valley of indulgent Pragmatism: and there, quite near, is the chirpy land of the Vitalists: and in those dark groves the home of successful Analysis, surnamed Psycho: and over those blue hills the Supermen are prancing about, though you can't see them. And there is Besantheim, and there is Eddyhowe, and there, on that queer little tableland, is Wilsonia, and just round the corner is Rabindranathopolis....

But Lord, I can't see anything. Help me, heaven, to a telescope, for I see blank nothing.

I'm not going to try any more. I'm going to sit down on my posterior and slither full speed down this Pishgah, even if it cost me my trouser seat. So ho! — away we go.

In the beginning — there never was any beginning, but let it pass. We've got to make a start somehow. In the very beginning of all things, time and space and cosmos and being, in the beginning of all these was a little living creature. But I don't know even if it was little. In the beginning was a living creature, its plasm quivering and its life-pulse throbbing. This little creature died, as little creatures always do. But not before it had had young ones. When the daddy creature died, it fell to pieces. And that was the beginning of the cosmos. Its little body fell down to a speck of dust, which the young ones clung to because they must cling to something. Its little breath flew asunder, the hotness and brightness of the little beast — I beg your pardon, I mean the radiant energy from the corpse flew

away to the right hand, and seemed to shine warm in the air, while the clammy energy from the body flew away to the left hand, and seemed dark and cold. And so, the first little[9] master was dead and done for, and instead of his little living body there was a speck of dust in the middle, which became the earth, and on the right hand was a brightness which became the sun, rampaging with all the energy that had come out of the dead little master, and on the left hand a darkness which felt like an unrisen moon. And that was how the Lord created the world. Except that I know nothing about the Lord, so I shouldn't mention it.

But I forgot the soul of the little master. It probably did a bit of flying as well—and then came back to the young ones. It seems most natural that way.

Which is my account of the Creation. And I mean by it, that Life is not and never was anything but living creatures. That's what life is and will be just living creatures, no matter how large you make the capital L. Out of living creatures the material cosmos was made: out of the death of living creatures, when their little living bodies fell dead and fell asunder into all sorts of matter and forces and energies, sun, moons, stars and worlds. So you got the universe. Where you got the living creature from, that first one, don't ask me. He was just there. But[10] he was a little person with a soul of his own. He wasn't Life with a capital L.

If you don't believe me, then don't. I'll even give you a little song to sing.

"If it be not true to me
What care I how true it be . . ."

That's the kind of man I really like, chirping his insouciance. And I chirp back:

"Though it be not true to thee
It's gay and gospel truth to me. . ."

The living live, and then die. They pass away, as we know, to dust and to oxygen and nitrogen and so on. But what we don't

know, and what we might perhaps know a little more, is how they pass away direct into life itself—that is, direct into the living. That is, how many dead souls fly over our untidiness like swallows and build under the eaves of the living. How many dead souls, like swallows, twitter and breed thoughts and instincts under the thatch of my hair and the eaves of my forehead, I don't know. But I believe a good many. And I hope they have a good time. And I hope not too many are bats.

I am sorry to say I believe in the souls of the[11] dead. I am almost ashamed to say, that I believe the souls of the dead in some way reënter and pervade the souls of the living: so that life is always the life of living creatures, and death is always our affair. This bit, I admit, is bordering on mysticism. I'm sorry, because I don't like mysticism. It has no trousers and no trousers seat: *n'a pas de quoi*. And I should feel so uncomfortable if I put my hand behind me and felt an absolute blank.

Meanwhile a long, thin, brown caterpillar keeps on pretending to be a dead thin beech-twigg, on a little bough at my feet. He had got his hind feet and his fore feet on the twig, and his body looped up like an arch in the air between, when a fly walked up the twig and began to mount the arch of the imitator, not having the least idea that it was on a gentleman's coat-tails. The caterpillar shook his stern, and the fly made off as if it had seen a ghost. The dead twig and the live twig now remain equally motionless, enjoying their different ways. And when, with this very pencil, I push the head of the caterpillar off from the twig, he remains on his tail, arched forward in air, and oscillating unhappily, like some tiny pendulum ticking. Ticking, ticking in mid-air, arched away from his planted tail.[12] Till at last, after a long minute and a half, he touches the twig again, and subsides into twigginess. The only thing is, the dead beech-twigg can't pretend to be a wagging caterpillar. Yet how the two commune! However—we have our exits and our entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts. More than he dreams of, poor darling. And I am entirely at a loss for a moral!

Well, then, we are born. I suppose that's a safe statement. And we become at once conscious, if we weren't so before. *Nem con*. And our little baby body is a little functioning organism, a little developing

machine or instrument or organ, and our little baby mind begins to stir with all our wonderful psychical beginnings. And so we are in bud.

But it won't do. It is too much of a Pisgah sight. We overlook too much. *Descendez, cher Moïse. Vous voyez trop loin.* You see too far all at once, dear Moses. Too much of a bird's-eye view across the Promised Land to the shore. Come down, and walk across, old fellow. And you won't see all that milk and honey and grapes the size of duck's eggs. All the dear little budding infant with its tender virgin-al mind and various clouds of glory instead of a napkin. Not[13] at all, my dear chap. No such luck of a promised land.

Climb down, Pisgah, and go to Jericho. *Allons*, there is no road yet, but we are all Aarons with rods of our own.

[14]

CHAPTER II

THE HOLY FAMILY

W

e are all very pleased with Mr. Einstein for knocking that eternal axis out of the universe. The universe isn't a spinning wheel. It is a cloud of bees flying and veering round. Thank goodness for that, for we were getting drunk on the spinning wheel.

So that now the universe has escaped from the pin which was pushed through it, like an impaled fly vainly buzzing; now that the multiple universe flies its own complicated course quite free, and hasn't got any hub, we can hope also to escape.

We won't be pinned down, either. We have no one law that governs us. For me there is only one law: *I am I*. And that isn't a law, it's just a remark. One is one, but one is not all alone. There are other stars buzzing in the center of their own isolation. And there is no straight path between them. There is no straight path between you and me, dear reader,[15] so don't blame me if my words fly like dust into your eyes and grit between your teeth, instead of like mu-