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| FORTY YEARS AS JUNGIAN ANALYSYT IN ISRAELGustav Dreifuss(Lecture presented at the Congress of Jungian analysts in Mediterranean countries (Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Israel and Tunisia) at the University of Naples, Department of Psychology, organized by Prof. Antonio Vitolo, February 1999)Allow me first of all to explain why I, who was born and brought up in Switzerland, and whose family had lived there for over 200 years, nevertheless left the country of my birth and settled in Israel.Already, as a boy, I felt somehow out of place as a Jew living in a Christian country. This was particularly so on the Jewish high holidays, when we used to go to the synagogue, which in Zurich is situated in the centre of the town. As I walked to the synagogue with my father and grandfather, all of us dressed in our holiday clothes, the people in the streets glanced at us curiously, which made me feel very uneasy. For the Christian population this was an ordinary working day, and we must have appeared very odd to them. In the year 1932, I was visiting my grandparents who were taking a holiday in Baden-Baden, in Germany. And there, for the first time, I saw and heard Hitler's Storm Troopers marching noisily down the street. When Hitler came to power in January 1933, I was only eleven years old, but I could sense the aggressive anti-Semitism, that seemed to fill the air, even in Zurich where I lived. The "Nationale Front", the Swiss Nazi Party, shouted anti-Semitic slogans while campaigning for elections to the Town Parliament. The famous Bahnhofstrasse of Zurich, was littered with flyers inscribed with the words "Judah verrecke" which means "death to the Jews". Relatives of ours who lived in Milan did not encounter any overt anti-Semitism there. Mussolini had not yet come under the influence of Hitler.I served in the Swiss Army during W.W.II, and I vividly remember the battle of Stalingrad in 1942, when the German advance was finally halted, and there was now hope for the total defeat of the Germans. At the same time news of the mass destruction of the Jews in the death camps started to reach us. And I was deeply disturbed. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 made a tremendous impact on me. Now, at last, after 2000 years of subjection and persecution, the Jewish people would be masters of their fate. They had lived on foreign soil, cultivating the spirit and time and again were exiled. Now at last they could reunite with their own land, as promised to them in the Bible. On this topic I have published many papers on Jewish psychology, among them one on "Current Jewish History and its Archetypal Background" and a book, together with co-author Judith Riemer on "Abraham, the Man and the Symbol".My studies at the Jung Institute in Zurich strengthened my wish to settle in Israel--as a therapist I wanted to help victims of the Holocaust to return to a more or less normal life despite their deep psychic wounds. This wish to settle in Israel was confirmed by some dreams I had during this period. In one dream I loaded my books on a lorry and sent them to Israel. In another dream I bought a piece of land in Israel.When I finally emigrated to Israel and settled in Haifa in 1959, I was a lone Jungian in a community of Freudian therapists.Many European doctors and psychologists had emigrated to Israel during the 1930's, and all the psychologists had a Freudian background with the exception of Erich Neumann, who worked in Tel Aviv as a Jungian analyst. In Haifa, where we had settled, I contacted Dr. Kritz, the chief psychiatrist of the Health Fund, who had come from Vienna. We found we had much in common and established a friendly relationship. He had known Freud personally and I had known Jung personally. This gave us a feeling of mutual self-respect, having met the two founders of depth-psychology face to face.At this time, in 1959, the study of psychotherapy had not yet been included in the curriculum of the various Israel Universities. Israel was still a very young State. There was a need, therefore, for therapists: "No matter whether Freudian or Jungian", as Dr. Kritz put it. The Kibbutzim,the Collective Settlements, in particular, were very open to psychotherapy.After two months in the country, when I had acquired a working knowledge of Hebrew, I told Dr. Kritz that I was now ready to receive patients. He sent me two analysands, one spoke German and the other spoke English. After about a month, Dr. Kritz sent for these two people to find out how I worked. Within a month or two, I had a full practice. At that time, the Health Fund sent their patients to private psychologists and covered a large part of the cost. This is no longer the case, for now the Health Fund have their own psychotherapists. But their therapists do not undertake long term treatment, so there is still a demand for therapists in private practice.For many years, I worked with Holocaust victims. I was confronted on the one hand with man's unbounded capacity for evil, and on the other hand with man's capacity to suffer and yet survive. It was difficult even to listen to the endless tales of atrocities, and difficult to imagine how victims of the Holocaust, who had undergone such terrible experiences, could continue to live their everyday lives. Empathy and patient listening were my main tools for helping my patients. I believe in the healing power of compassion and have used it to alleviate the suffering and enable the victim to live with his wounds.In the l980's I was invited to Berlin to give a seminar to Jungian analysts on the Holocaust. Here I encountered the now adult children of Nazis, and I came to realize that their experiences were in one respect comparable to those of children of Jewish Holocaust survivors. Jews who had survived very often did not tell their children anything about their appalling experiences, in order to spare them their parents' mental anguish. The children nevertheless felt that some secret was being withheld from them. There is some similarity between Jews and Nazis withholding information from their children. Yet there is a fundamental difference between the victimizers, the Nazis, and the victims, the Jews: The Nazis were ashamed of their past and the Jews wanted to protect their children from the confrontation with their suffering. Yet, for the victims of the Holocaust, their gruesome memories remain with them all the their lives. For many years, before and after the founding of the State, the people living in Palestine and later Israel, old-timers and newcomers from the camps, were occupied with building a new society and struggling for a livelihood. There was a kind of taboo about looking back and talking about the Holocaust. But now, in the present decade, most of the Holocaust survivors are telling their stories and recalling their memories. And much material on the subject is being published. In the course of the seminar in Berlin the problem of anti-Semitism was raised and discussed. I am often reminded of the words of a Jewish writer (I forget his name) who said that whenever he sees Jesus, the Jew, crucified on the cross, he is reminded of the millions of Jews murdered and crucified throughout the centuries.Although more than fifty years have passed since the Holocaust, its traumatic effects are still in evidence among its victims. Very recently I received a patient, a survivor of the Holocaust. While visiting relatives in Germany she had to undergo a blood test. But as the German doctor was about to inject the needle into her arm she was reminded of Dr. Mengele's experiments on her. Consequently she could not and would not submit to the blood test, and became profoundly disturbed. The traumatic memories of the past were still active within her. Ten years ago the same woman had come to see me, as her psychiatrist was not available. She was in a state of acute crisis. A certain organization had asked her to write her memories of the Holocaust, and the mere thought of it had caused her to panic. We see therefore that the traumatic effects of the Holocaust are still alive. And not only for the survivors but also for their children and grandchildren who have also been among my patients; and some still are.I have always attached particular importance to the interpretation of dreams. And I have been struck by the common occurrence of Jewish symbols in the dreams even of secular Jewish patients. Here are some examples:1. A woman with a negative father complex dreamt that she was travelling (by train) to Jerusalem with an elderly man, a cantor, who throughout the journey sang cantorial songs (Chasanut) and embraced her warmly. This gave her an agreeable and very satisfying feeling.The elderly cantor symbolized for her a father figure who gave her the warmth and affection she longed for, but had not received from her biological father. It connected her with her Jewish roots.The journey to Jerusalem-up to the hills-symbolized a spiritual ascent into wholeness and unity. Jerusalem symbolizes at the same time both a concrete and spiritual city.2. A twenty-nine-year-old male patient had the following dream: "A certain Mrs. X performs a second circumcision on me, and also circumcises my wife."This dream was an archetypal experience that caused the dreamer to understand his Jewish background from a Jungian symbolic point of view. This dream provides a good example of how the collective symbol of circumcision and sacrifice acquired a personal meaning for the dreamer and influenced him to clarify further their meaning. 3. A woman in her thirties, who was living a life in conflict with her true nature and instincts, dreamt: "The Shofar was blown, and its ancient sound cast a spell over me. My heart said: even today the ram's horn is still blown."The dreamer is moved by the sound of the Shofar and overpowered by her irrational, unconscious being. When the Shofar is blown in the synagogue, God is present in time and space. It is a numinous, mystical experience. But the dream also contains the motive of atonement. By blowing the horn and by praying, the believers hope to move God to absolve them on the Day of Judgement. And God, so to speak, renounces his destructive side and forgives. The dream gave her a feeling of a new beginning, a rebirth. 4. A woman, 50 year old dreamt: "I went up to the flat stone roof of a building in the old city of Jerusalem. The scenery had a rare beauty: domes, arches, and a town that was all golden. There was a clear golden light, like a cloudless day in the fall. And over the town, like a canopy, lay a clear blue sky. I had a feeling of elation."This is the dream of a rational woman who was gradually confronted with the irrational in her individuation process. Jerusalem as the city of peace and a holy place for the three Abrahamic religions, was experienced as numinous and connected her with the deepest layers of her soul. Althoughthe dreamer was born and raised in Jerusalem, the dream clearly also had an archetypal meaning. The feeling of elation points to a spiritual experience and bears a warning of inflation, of being carried away from "material" reality. The dreamer had to be warned of this danger. In inflation, which indicates an overvaluation of one's importance, humility is lost. As mentioned before, Jerusalem is a symbol of wholeness, uniting material and spiritual reality, a mother and father symbol. The union of the "mother" and "father" represent the Self. For the dreamer it provided an insight into the Self, a sign, that she was clearly involved in the individuation-process. 5. A woman analysand, 60 years old, in the course of her inner development, arrived at a point, in which a relationship to the being, to the "numen", to the Self became vital. Her husband had died several years earlier and two years after his death she came for analysis.After one and a half years of intensive analysis she had the following numinous dream: "I see a green wave, not of water, coming from the right side on which is written in Hebrew: "I am that I am" (ehyeh asher ehyeh, Exodus 3:14). She was deeply moved by this dream, which was a numinous experience helping her to feel the transpersonal roots of her soul. The eternal spirit was to be found in the depth of her soul. The wave was firm, coming from the right. The green color points to natural growth. From another point of view this dream can be explained as a mystical experience: The Ego melts or fuses into eternity, or the Ego and the Self are one for a moment. As this patient was firmly rooted in outer reality, there was no danger of being swept over by the wave.Jewish symbols in dreams are an expression of man's deep need to return to his roots and to rediscover. Israel is a country in constant conflict with its neighbors. I have to treat victims of its various wars and, more recently, victims of the uprising in the West Bank.After the Yom Kippur war in 1973, a man came to see me, who had seen his close friend and comrade-in-arms killed as they fought side by side. More recently I had to treat a victim of the Intifada (the uprising in the West Bank) who suffered from severe burns which disfigured his whole body. He had spent a long period in hospital wrapped in bandages, which seriously diminished his body image. He was a scientist, happily married, with three children. I was able to help him regain his confidence in himself and regain also his self-esteem, by stressing his human qualities, his sincerity, and his loving nature. I also encouraged him to resumehis creative work, and he is now again writing poetry and short stories, and so exercising the talent he has neglected for so many years. Self-esteem and creativity are of utmost importance for mental health.It is obvious that the constant tensions in Israel influence everyone: the therapists, their patients as well as the general population. Border incidents in the North and successive losses, as well as hostile encounters with Palestinian extremists, are daily news. Also within the State of Israel there are tensions between Moslems and Christians, and also among the various segments of the Jewish population. Secular Jews want a free democratic secular State without any religious coercion, whereas the extreme orthodox Jews tend towards a theocratic State. Religious fanatics do not even recognize the State. They wait for the coming of the Messiah, to bring peace and redemption. Many secular Jews would like a separation of Religion and State. Peace between the three monotheistic religions, the so-called Abrahamic religions, is a precondition for attaining global peace. Abraham is the father of the three monotheistic religions and "his children", Jews, Christians and Moslems, will have to find a way to relate peacefully to one another. When these three great monotheistic religions learn to live side by side in love and tolerance, that is, in the spirit of true religion, peace will prevail throughout the world.  |
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