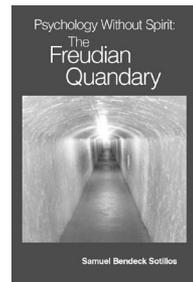


Psychology Without Spirit: The Freudian Quandary

By Samuel Bendeck Sotillos

Kazi Publications, 2018, 500 pp.

Reviewed by Charles Upton



This volume is a worthy successor to the author's first two books, namely *Psychology and the Perennial Philosophy* and *Behaviorism: The Quandary of a Psychology without a Soul*. The first of these, published in its entirety by World Wisdom in its resurrected *Studies in Comparative Religion* series, is his attempt to marry the doctrines of the Traditionalist School with Transpersonal Psychology, thus putting the latter discipline on a firm metaphysical footing, though this "insurgency" initially met with little success. The second, also brought out by Kazi, is his incisive deconstruction of Behaviorism from the same perspective. This trilogy constitutes a powerful challenge to contemporary psychology, as well as a challenge to re-envision that ambiguous discipline as a true spiritual art that could stand as a worthy modern application of the traditional understanding of the human soul, rather than what it has now become: a shrunken, chaotic and reductionist caricature of its original.

The present book would still be of great value if it were no more than a thorough history of the various critiques of Freud and Freudianism by his colleagues, his opponents and his rebellious successors, coupled

with a catalogue of numerous self-contradictory statements and damning confessions by Freud himself that reveal his great uncertainty as to the value of his methods, which he nonetheless did his best to turn into absolute dogmas, much as a propagandist will passionately assert the truth of claims that he or she does not necessarily believe in. Its real significance, however, lies in the author's erudite distinction between Freudianism—and modern psychotherapy as a whole—and the conception of the human soul held by the Traditionalist School and the great wisdom traditions.

The author presents psychoanalysis as more an ideology than a therapeutic technique, one that is intrinsic to the modern outlook, and whose influence is by no means a thing of the past; he demonstrates how Freud, who was uncertain as to the curative powers of his technique, nonetheless vigorously promoted it as a form of social engineering explicitly designed to alter the *weltanschauung* and remold society according to modernist and anti-religious ideas. And although most of Freud's theories have now been attacked and debunked from numerous directions, his achievement in altering the psychology of the masses remains largely untouched. This is due to the fact that the most formidable power of modernism is not the establishment and vindication of its first principles—for the most part those of Darwin, Marx and Freud, all of whose theories have been called seriously into question—but rather the destruction by these ideologies of the cultural memory of all that went before them.

The evolutionary primacy of “the natural selection of random mutations” has been criticized, revised and undermined from many directions, often from within the ranks of evolutionism itself; this, however, has in no way resulted in a return to the vision of nature as a Divine creation; consequently Creationism, even the sophisticated and scientifically-based arguments of Intelligent Design, has remained “implausible”, “unscientific” and a product of “medieval superstition.”

Marxism may have been proved false in many of its central principles—that Communism could only develop out of Capitalism at its most advanced stage, or that the industrial proletariat would be the “last historical class”—but not even the rise of the first true Communism in still-partly-feudal Russia, the triumph of Capitalism via fall of the Soviet Union a mere 70 years later, and the rise of the new, post-

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