CHAPTER VII

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND
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Psychology tries to understand the mental processes; it tries to find out what the mind is and how it works. Greene has made use of many of the concepts of modern psychology in his works. While pointing out the need or appetite for religion in human beings, he attempts a synthesis between religion and psychology. His heightened sensitivity enables him to apprehend psychic processes with great insight. He has a grasp of what psycho-analysis tells us about the mind and its functioning that is rarely met with outside professional psycho-analytic circles.

Freud, the founder of psycho-analysis, made a momentous contribution to the interpretation of human motivation. One of the important discoveries of Freud is that our earliest experiences have a strong influence on our later life. Very early in the history of psycho-analysis, Freud was impressed with the importance of the feelings clustering around the relationship of children and their parents. He soon found that a disturbance in the normal development of this relationship was at the root of all neuroses.

Another important theory of Freud is that dreams and delusions spring from the same source -- the repressed memories and experiences of the past. The unconscious is the storehouse for all past experiences that cannot be
be recalled at will. "Strictly speaking, there is no experience that is forgotten beyond recall, providing it made some impression on our minds at the time we had it. It is now known that even the impressive experiences of infancy can be recalled in an adult when hypnotised, whilst those of early childhood can be recalled without the aid of hypnosis." ¹

Freud maintained that there is a constant activity going on in the unconscious, and that similar mental laws are at work here as on the conscious level. The whole psychological theory of dreams is based on the assumption of unconscious activity. Outside the conscious mental area there is a vast store-house which conserves all the memories of our past experiences. We give this vast store-house the name "unconscious mind", and within it there are mental laws operating in much the same way as they operate on the conscious level. These memories are not only conserved in the unconscious, but they influence the conscious behaviour.

"Psychology has come to recognise that no amount of

study of the comprehensive illuminated mental life which appears in conscious reflection, however aided and abetted by exploratory devices, will ever reveal the inward and complete man; that revelation requires the inclusion of the subconscious, indeed the emphasis upon it."

Greene makes great use of the introspective recollections of his characters under the provocation of free association, of dream incidents and childhood fantasies, to illuminate the past of these characters as well as the development of their personalities.

Psychologists point out that recollection is not only dependent on what we retain in our minds, but also on the bonds of association. One thing recalls another, and if we continue the process of remembering, it is amazing what past memories find their way to the conscious level. The technique of psycho-analysis is based on this process of association. The patient who is being analysed is persuaded to let thoughts come into his mind without criticising them, and each follows on the track of the previous one because of some bond of association that holds them together in the mind.

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Greene frequently makes use of these laws of association -- that of "contiguity", and that of "similarity" to illustrate the past events in the lives of his characters. "The law of contiguity simply means that if two experiences have happened about the same time or in the same place, when the one is remembered, the other also is remembered... The law of similarity functions when two experiences are remembered at the same time because of their resemblance to each other." 

Greene shows a great awareness of these laws of association in his description of the thoughts passing through the minds of his characters.

For instance, in THE POWER AND THE GLORY, when the Chief of Police shows the lieutenant the newspaper photograph of a first communion party taken years ago, the sight of the white muslin dresses in the photograph makes the latter remember some of the experiences of his childhood. He remembers the smell of incense in the churches of his boyhood, "the candles and the laciness and the self-esteem, the immense demands made from the altar steps by men who didn't know the meaning of sacrifice." He remembers the old peasants kneeling there before the holy images with their arms held out in the attitude of the cross, squeezing out a further mortification after the long day's labour.

in the plantations, and the priests "abusing them for their small comforting sins, and sacrificing nothing at all in return — except a little sexual indulgence." We notice here Greene making use of the laws of association while describing the thoughts passing through the lieutenant's mind on seeing the photograph of the first communion party.

Similarly, in THE COMEDIANS, when Mr. Brown returns to his hotel in Port-au-Prince, after a few months' stay in New York, he finds the dead body of Doctor Philipot, the Secretary for Social Welfare, coiled up under the diving-board of the dry swimming-pool. He sends his servant Joseph to bring Doctor Magiot. While he is waiting for Doctor Magiot near the swimming pool, he hears a drum beat, far up in the mountains beyond Kenscoff. Suddenly he recollects those happy days, before Papa Doc took over the rule of the island, when his hotel was doing a roaring business and was well-known throughout the Caribbean. He remembers how his own bathing-pool used to be crowded with girls in bikinis and how the famous drummer in his hotel used to play under the thatched roof of the bar. He recollects: "A few years ago I had employed three gardeners, two cooks, Joseph, an extra barman, four boys, two girls, a chauffeur, and in the season.................I would have taken on extra help.................Now, even though

the curfew had been lifted, there was not a sound, and without a moon not even a dog barked. It was as though my success had gone out of ear-shot too." Here we notice that the sound of a drum beat in the distant mountain, by the laws of association, makes Mr. Brown recollect the glorious days of his hotel in the past.

Breuer and Freud discovered the effective release of sub-conscious secrets by inducing their patients to assume a passive attitude and talk about themselves freely and intimately. This is the "talking cure", or "chimney sweeping", or "psychic house-cleaning or catharsis" practised by psycho-analysts. Many modern psychologists have pointed out the similarity between psycho-analytic probing and religious confession. Religious confession, like psycho-analytic probing, is a psychic cathartic. It is a way of getting disturbing conflicts out of one's system.

Thouless, in AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION, explains the psychological value of the Catholic practice of auricular confession. Religion wants its followers to be conscious of their sins and at the same time to be free from morbid obsessions like those from which John Bunyan suffered. Here lies the practical value of religious confession.

of confession. Thouless says that simply at the psychological level, the value of confession appears to lie in the fact that it maintains a predominantly healthy-minded attitude towards sin, as well as providing a disciplinary remedy against it." 8.

Modern psychologists have found out that the mere opening of moral conflicts to another person is often sufficient to prevent them from becoming the source of morbid obsessions. Greens, on many occasions, points out the parallel between this belief of the modern psychologists that talking things out helps and the Catholic belief that confession is good for the soul. The confessional technique uncovers the underground currents that result in mental conflicts and neurotic behaviour.

Speaking of confession, the priest, Mr. Opie, in STAMBUL TRAIN, tells Dr. Czinner that there is a great deal to be said in favour of this practice of the Roman Church. Mr. Opie says: "Modern psychology is working on parallel lines. There is a similarity in the relationship between the confessor and the penitent and that between the psycho-analyst and the patient. There is, of course, this difference, that one claims to forgive the sins. But the

difference is not after all very great. In the one case the sins are said to be forgiven and the penitent leaves the confessional with a clear mind and the intention of making a fresh start; in the other the mere expression of the patient's vices and the bringing to light of his unconscious motives in practising them are said to remove the force of the desire. The patient leaves the psychoanalyst with the power, as well as the intention, of making a fresh start." We feel that Greene seems to have made use of Mr. Opie as his mouthpiece to explain the Catholic practice of confession in terms of the concepts of modern psychology.

Greene refers to the urge for confession felt by his characters, particularly in moments of crisis, very frequently in his works. Dr. Czinner, in STAMBOL TRAIN, feels this urge when he realises that he is about to be captured by his enemies and put to death. He is very eager to confess his sins. His sins, however, begin to worry him only when he becomes aware of his failure. All his vanities, meannesses, and small sins would have been swept into darkness in the thrill of victory. Now, in the moment of his failure, he remembers the religion of his childhood and feels an overwhelming desire to confess.

Similarly, Jones in THE COMEDIANS, feels a deep desire to confess when he becomes aware of the fact that he will be confronting death very soon. He is unable to repress this urge and is ready to confess his sins to anyone. "If I had a dog here tonight instead of you, I'd confess to the dog," he tells Mr. Brown. Greene brings about a fine blending of religion and psychology while depicting the states of mind of his characters in such moments of crisis.

Psychology tries to understand the whole of man, and religion is as much a part of his nature as any other. Man's need for God has manifested itself throughout human history. His religious feelings first found their expression in crude, inarticulate, and primitive ways, but later through refined forms of worship. Psychology tries to explain the mental processes that go on in man's mind when he experiences fellowship with God. It has made, in recent years, a valuable contribution in revealing the emotional basis of belief as well as of agnosticism. Often what appear as intellectual reasons for belief or

11. THE COMEDIANS, p.287.
agnosticism are fundamentally emotional.

Greene, in his works, often makes a psychological study of his religious characters and makes it clear that the foundations of belief lie in the depths of human nature. He shows that belief lies deep in man's emotional constitution and that religion has its specific part to play in human culture and in communal life. In THE POWER AND THE GLORY, he shows in the characterisation of the lieutenant that even an agnostic has to live by faith -- by faith in humanity and the possibilities of its improvement.

Belief in Providence and belief in the immortality of the soul are not merely philosophical doctrines. They are the outcome of the deepest human cravings. For instance, belief in the immortality of the soul is the result of that desire for continuity in human life and the traditional relationship between the generations, which is the very essence of human culture. Religious belief thus grows out of the emotional needs of man. The root of all the beliefs connected with the human soul lies in man's attitude towards death. Death as the extinction of one's own personality, or the disappearance of those who are near and dear, is a fact which has always baffled
human understanding. It is a mystery which science and rational philosophy have not been able to solve. Here religious revelation steps in and affirms life after death and the immortality of the soul. This revelation gives sense to life, and solves the contradictions and conflicts connected with the transience of human existence on earth.

Religion, moreover, does not merely affirm an abstract truth as an idle comfort for thought and emotion. Through the revealed truth, religion tells man how to behave and how to lead his life on this earth. Religion puts man in harmony with his environment and destiny. It gives him an inkling of a working Providence in the surrounding universe.

With great psychological acuteness Greene points out the influence of the story of Creation, of the Fall, of the Expulsion, of the promise of a Redeemer, and, finally of the Redemption itself on the Christian mind. He also gives a psychological explanation for the great fascination that rituals have for the common people and for the fact that religious faith survives in spite of repeated attacks on it. Describing Mexico city when the religious persecution was there at its worst, Greene writes: "I went to eight o'clock Mass in the cathedral...

......... An interior all white and gold with pale refined
un-Spanish statuary, and three girls doing the Stations of the Cross, giggling and chattering from agony to agony. The very old priest at the altar knelt and rose and raised God in his hands; what did it matter in the long run, anyway? God didn't cease to exist when men lost their faith in Him; there were always catacombs where the secret rite could be kept alive till the bad times passed: during the Calles persecution God had lain in radio cabinets, behind bookshelves. He had been carried in a small boy's pocket into prisons; He had been consumed in drawing-rooms and in garages. He had Eternity on His side. Greene describes the fascination that rituals have for the common people. He writes: "I went into the Temple del Carmen, as the dark dropped, for benediction... The Virgin sat on an extra-ordinary silver cloud like a cabbage with the Infant in her arms above the altar; all along the walls horrifying statues with musty purple robes stood in glass coffins; and yet it was home... Old men came plodding in in dungarees on bare feet, tired out with work, and again I thought: how could one grudge them the gaudy splendour

of the giltwork, the incense, the distant immaculate figure upon the cloud?" 13. Incense, pictures, processions and fireworks, are repugnant to the highly refined and reflective type of religious consciousness. But every ritual performance is a traditionally enacted miracle and to the common man it represents the very essence of religious faith.

Greene frequently refers to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist with great awe. This sacrament was instituted by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper and the Holy Eucharist is believed by all Catholics to contain the true living body and blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Greene often emphasizes the fact that the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the very epitome of everything that the Catholic believes in - the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity, His sacrifice on Calvary and the institution of the sacrament by which He perpetually reappears on the earth and unites Himself with every believer in the Sacrament of the Communion.

In THE HEART OF THE MATTER, Greene describes very vividly Scobie's reluctance to go to Communion.

and to take God in his mouth in a condition of mortal sin. He makes many excuses to Louise to postpone the event. He even pretends to have a pain in his chest to avoid going to Communion. He becomes aware of the pale papery taste of his eternal sentence on the tongue when at last he is forced by Louise to go to Communion and to take God in his mouth in a state of mortal sin.

Although the Holy Eucharist is a great mystery, and consequently beyond human understanding, it exercises a very great effect on the mind of the believer. The believer sees, with the eyes of faith, Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. He feels that the Holy Eucharist is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. At every Communion, the believer mystically experiences the divine grace which comes from union with God.

Greene points out that religion satisfies man's spiritual needs and that it gives a sense and direction to the course of life and a value to individual personality. It binds the individual to the other members of his community, and keeps him in constant relation with the spiritual world. All religious beliefs have their firm roots in human emotion. The belief in providence

assists man to face and fight not only the ordinary forces of nature, but also chance, ill luck, and the mysterious designs of destiny. The belief that beyond the brief span of life on this earth there is compensation in another existence helps man to undergo the sufferings, injustices and inequalities of this life patiently. The spiritual force of this belief not only integrates man's own personality, but is also indispensable for the cohesion of the social fabric.

Greene makes it clear that our behaviour is often not the purely rational thing we sometimes think it is; it often springs from our instincts, and is motivated by our sentiments. The individual is not merely the result of impressions made upon him by his social environment, but the possessor of primary forces -- instincts -- which sometimes cause him to rebel against society. "When the instinct cannot find a natural outlet there is a state of tension or conflict which may be painful, and it would appear that nature relieves that state by repressing the instinctive urge; that is, by removing it from the conscious level of mental life and driving it into the unconscious". 15. Freud discovered that dreams are the

15. W.E. Sargent, PSYCHOLOGY, p.57.
the product of the unconscious, breaking through the repression of conscious control and he interpreted dreams to reveal the personality of the dreamer and the nature of his mental conflicts. Greene often makes use of dreams to throw light on the inner life of his characters and the nature of their emotional conflicts.

Greene's pre-occupation with psychology is seen even in his earliest works. His earliest novel, *The Man Within*, deals with man's double nature. The divided mind is explored in this novel in terms of cowardice and conscience. It is expressed through the contending higher and lower natures of the young coward, Andrews. Andrews had a brutal father and an ineffectual mother and his double nature is explained in terms of his parentage. Andrews, analysing his own character, declares: "It is not a man's fault whether he is brave or cowardly. It is all in the way he is born. My mother and father made me. I didn't make myself." 16. Andrew's father had been domineering, brutal, insensitive; Andrew's mother had worshipped her husband with "the severe faithfulness of a completely broken will". 17.

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explains the double nature of Andrews in terms of his parentage and heredity.

Greene also points out that people are victims of their environment and are not strong enough to rise above it. They are warped by the pressure of their surroundings. But self-expression and self-justification are urges that have to be satisfied. Characters like Pinkie and Raven turn to violence for a release from their emotional frustration. Crime provides them with the satisfying release for which they crave. These criminals assert themselves and get emotional relief through violence. Greene emphasises the truth that the motives for our actions are often psychological and not economic. For instance, in *THE CONFIDENTIAL AGENT*, the young man who helped "D" to escape and who blew up the mine did not do it for the "right" reasons, but because they had scores to settle and because it was "fun".

Greene's familiarity with modern psychological ideas can be seen everywhere in his works. This is seen, for instance, in *A BURNT-OUT CASE*, when he shows Dr. Colin analysing Querry's motives for settling down in the leprosaria. He tells the Superior that few people would choose a leprosaria as a holiday resort and that when
Querry asked him to give the leper Deo Gratias to work as his servant, giw he was afraid for a moment that they might have a leprophil on their hands. Dr. Collin tells the Superior: "You know very well that leprophils exist, though I daresay they are more often women than men. Schweitzer seems to attract them. They would rather wash the feet with their hair like the woman in the gospel than clean them with something more antiseptic. Sometimes I wonder whether Damien was a leprophil. There was no need for him to become a leper in order to serve them well. A few elementary precautions -- I wouldn't be a better doctor without my fingers, would I?" 18.

Dr. Colin adds: "You remember that little leproserie in the bush that the nuns ran. When D.D.S. was discovered to be a cure, they were soon reduced to half a dozen patients. Do you know what one of the nuns said to me? 'It's terrible, doctor. Soon we'll have no lepers at all'. That surely was a leprophil." 19.

Upto the end of the nineteenth century, English literature is generally characterised by an unwillingness to look sexual facts in the face. But, by the beginning of the twentieth century, English writers were greatly

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influenced by the light thrown by Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud on the psychology of sex. Freud made a great contribution to the interpretation of human motivation by assigning a very important place to sex in the psychic life of individuals. That the sex element plays an important part in the successful adaptations to the outer world of reality and our inner creative life has been amply proved by Freud and his followers. Sexual impulses have made a significant contribution to the highest cultural, artistic, and social achievements of the human mind. Freud's belief in the importance of sexual life as one of the main determinants of behaviour has influenced writers of the twentieth century to a great extent. We see the earliest influence of Freud's ideas in English literature in the novels of H.G.Wells, James Joyce, D.H.Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, and others. Greene also shows a great understanding of the psycho-sexual life of the individual in his works.

In the characterisation of Andrews in *THE MAN WITHIN*, Greene shows his familiarity with the Freudian concept of "Oedipus Complex". In the "Oedipus Complex", the "boy's libido is directed towards the mother, his envy towards the father, whose place he wishes to usurp." 20. It is characterised by a hostile attitude towards the father. We clearly see the presence of the "Oedipus Complex" in Andrews from

the hostility he always feels whenever he thinks of his father, even after he is dead. Similarly, in THE CONFIDENTIAL AGENT, the young Rose Cullen uses the psychological term, "father-fixation", to explain her own infatuation with 'D', who was a middle-aged man. She tells 'D': "This is what always happens. I know. I told you. I'm not romantic. This is what's called a father-fixation. You hate your own father - for a thousand reasons, and then you fall for a man the same age."

We see scattered throughout Greene's works references to the concepts of modern psychology. His comprehension of human motives is profound and deep. His sensitivity of perception enables him to apprehend psychic processes with great insight. His preoccupation with religion and his firm grasp of the concepts of modern psychology have resulted in a fine fusion of these two elements in his works.