

Foreword

TO many, I suspect, neither Harry Guntrip's name nor his work will be well-known. It is now some 35 years since he died and while his work remains significant within the psychoanalytic world, his impact on the Churches has been less – or at least overtly less. It is good to see the appearance of a new study of his thought. In recent years there has been an explosion of counselling and therapy and increasing good practice in the secular world, such that pastors need to enhance their skills if they are to rise to an equal excellence. Harry Guntrip is a valuable teacher in this quest.

In the early 1950s Dr Guntrip gave a series of talks on the BBC "Silver Lining" programmes. These were eventually published in 1951 as *You and Your Nerves*, and then in a revised edition, *Your Mind and Your Health*, which was still widely available in the 1970s. He always wrote in a clear and readable style, and was widely translated – he showed me, I remember, a copy of the Japanese edition.

An illustration of his enduring influence is the presence of a trust in Leeds which sponsors psychoanalytic conferences, and also the Harry Guntrip Memorial Trust in Scotland. This second trust is a branch of the Scottish Institute of Human Relations based in Edinburgh and Glasgow, which provides bursaries for training and therapy from the Institute, both of them reflections of the debt the psychoanalytic world feels it owes to Guntrip. There has not been as much appreciation, it would seem, in the Churches as a whole, perhaps because he was a minister of one of the smaller denominations, was working in the North and was a cross-disciplinary teacher. Whatever the reasons, it has been a loss.

Dr Guntrip trained as a therapist while serving as a Congregationalist minister in Leeds. For many years he travelled weekly to Scotland to see the analyst, Ronald Fairbairn. After Fairbairn, and as late as the 1960s, he was journeying the other way, to see Donald Winnicott in London. He kept detailed notes of the experience and his whole analysis has been brought together in Jeremy Hazell's psychoanalytic biography.

Guntrip was a pioneer both in his work as a theorist and as a therapist. As a Freudian and student of Fairbairn – and therefore much influenced by Melanie Klein and the ego-psychologists – his major theoretical contribution was his two-volume study of the inner structure of the person and schizoid phenomena. This work explores its subject matter in detail, and of particular note is his criticism of the concept of the “id”. His important argument was that whatever instinctive, animal-like features of the human there are, they are as much endowed with the personal as are the higher feelings. There is no doubt that this fundamental insight, though by no means acceptable to all, is of the utmost importance in the dialogue with Christianity.

Other things aside, his vision certainly made for humanity. When he was in the US, he wrote to my wife and me from Los Angeles where he had been lecturing: “I’ve had a most enthusiastic reception. The psychiatrists and analysts, all but a few Freudian ‘hard-liners’ are fascinated by my definitely human and personal approach and are hungry to be helped to relate to their patients as real human beings, not as specimens for radical observation and manipulation.” He detested an impersonal approach. Human love for the suffering person was at the heart of his therapeutic work, as I discovered when I went to him for training. I was living in Sunderland in the North East of England and he had been recommended as a good analyst, who lived not too far away. He would see “patients” in his consulting room at his home in Leeds and I, along with at least two other priests – there were no doubt others – would make our way there. He told me once, when we were discussing the dilemma of a therapist who could work with only one or two patients amidst such enormity of personal suffering, that he regarded his training work as his way of spreading an expertise which could then reach out to far more. Maurice Kidd was one of these, and he has developed an extensive healing, counselling and writing ministry in Kent. Jeremy Hazell was another, and he became an analyst as well as Guntrip’s biographer and editor. My own ministry of counselling and therapy has remained in the region where my familiarity with Guntrip began, the North East of England.

As a minister and lay therapist, Dr Guntrip was regarded with some caution by the psychiatrists amongst whom he was teaching in the department of psychiatry in the University of Leeds. Again, the problem of the cross-disciplinary innovator! Despite this – and perhaps partly because of it – his teaching was immensely valued and appreciated by his students. One of them was Dr Frank Lake, a medical missionary who returned from

India to study psychiatry at Leeds. If Harry Guntrip is not now as well known for his own writing, the work of Frank Lake through his Clinical Theology movement – now the Bridge Foundation – has gone some way to making amends. Still, to have this new study of his theological and psychoanalytic experience is of great value. It will add to the growing literature on the dialogue between faith and psychotherapy.

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